

Preparation for your journey:

Yep, you read that right, Herox. Nope, it isn't a reference to bleach, Oreo knock-offs, or some organic compound you should remember from your chemistry class. Think Latinx. It is our attempt to disrupt the binary and masculinized nature of the original "hero" framework (despite the fact that Hero was a priestess in Greek mythology... so confusing!). If you have read anything about Joseph Campbell, originator of the Hero's Journey framework, you would get a sense that he would probably be in favor of the name tweak.

We hope this framework will be useful for you to move into the imaginational, narrative space as you consider what it means to become interculturally competent, to navigate successfully in a different set of norms and behaviors. The herox framework acknowledges the bridges and guides that are present, yet often invisible, with us on the journey. It can help us identify the skills and tools we needed/will need for our journey. Finally, the framework supports pre-flection about an impending return "home". This is important with intercultural development because when we develop different ways of seeing the world as we are "away" from home, when we return home things can be bumpy. We may not perceive ourselves as different, but our friends and family will. This difference can be isolating or lead us to settle back into the frame of reference we had before a journey. However, when we can see this situation coming, it is easier to see the change as a special power or gift earned along a journey that will help us thrive and even support others' growth.

As you begin to think about a journey you have taken (physically or otherwise), look through these points that Dr. Vesna Hart of James Madison University developed for learners to begin the task of building a narrative. (The Xs are ours).

A herox is a person who displays traits necessary for a culture to thrive.

A herox is a person -- usually not an ordinary person, and in your story of your life, you are not ordinary, right? What unique aspects of yourself do you bring to this world? (This is where the personal culture map comes in handy.)

A herox displays traits -- traits could be considered strengths or virtues; remember that virtues are our values internalized as a way of being; a hero usually displays positive traits, but weaknesses can be transformed into strengths, especially when facing an obstacle

A herox is cultural -- remember your personal culture maps? Who you are now is a result of your cultural background and experiences you've had throughout the life.

A herox survives and thrives -- surviving daily challenges and extraordinary threats 'earns' a prize that helps you thrive. What is that prize for you? What is it that you are developing or nurturing that will help you as you get back to the ordinary world? Might it be a new virtue? New awareness? Skill or knowledge?

Your mission, should you choose to accept it:

Identify a time in your life when you were asked to "go" somewhere unknown. It could be an international experience, a relationship, moving to a new community, beginning a new career, or experiencing a global pandemic.

Complete the sections on the following pages, focusing on events that happen and people you meet on the journey.

Your Herox's Journey:

Ordinary world - What was your world like at the beginning of the story?

Call to adventure - What happened to prompt the you to explore something new?

Refusal of the call - Did you initially feel hesitation about taking this path? If so, why?

Meeting with the mentor - Who helped you gain wisdom or make a decision?

Crossing the first threshold - When did you cross the point of no return in the journey? What happened?

Tests, allies, and enemies - How did others affect you along the way? What obstacles or support did they present?

Approach - Did any of your efforts fail? How and why? How did you respond?

Ordeal - What happened at the climax of the story? Was there a life-or-death moment or a big challenge to face?

Reward - How have you benefited from this journey? Were there material or intangible gains?

The road back - Did you (or will you) at some point try to return to your "normal life"?

Resurrection of the herox - What is the final test you faced (or will face) at journey's end?

Return with the elixir - What knowledge or skills did (or will) you bring back from the journey?

Your Final Reflection:

Now that you have documented your journey as a herox, we'd like you to review what you have written and consider what was happening inside you as you went from stage to stage.

Were you changing? What emotions do you remember experiencing?

How can you succinctly express to others who didn't accompany you on this journey how you are now different?