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Heroine's Journey: Gender and the Monomyth in Middle-Grade Fantasy

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Alexandra Massey Heroine's Journey: Gender and the Monomyth in Middle-Grade Fantasy. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree, November, 2013. 61 pages. Advisor: Brian W. Slama.

This content analysis of six fantasy novels for children aged approximately 8 to 12 discusses the archetypal Hero's Journey and its relation to the gender of the protagonist. These novels were read and analyzed for adherence to or departure from the traditional 17 stages of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The focus of the content analysis is whether female protagonists on quests face modified quests and employ stereotypically feminine techniques to overcome obstacles as opposed to their swashbuckling male counterparts. The modifications found in the six novels suggest that heroines rely on empathy rather than strength to complete quests.

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Abstract

This content analysis of six fantasy novels for children aged approximately 8 to 12 discusses the archetypal Hero's Journey and its relation to the gender of the protagonist. These novels were read and analyzed for adherence to or departure from the traditional 17 stages of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The focus of the content analysis is whether female protagonists on quests face modified quests and employ stereotypically feminine techniques to overcome obstacles as opposed to their swashbuckling male counterparts. The modifications found in the six novels suggest that heroines rely on empathy rather than strength to complete quests.

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6 Feminist literature and female heroines within the monomyth. 6.1 Jane Eyre. The phrase "the hero's journey", used in reference to Campbell's monomyth, first entered into popular discourse through two documentaries. The first, released in 1987, *The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell*, was accompanied by a 1990 companion book, *The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work* (with Phil Cousineau and Stuart Brown, eds.). The fantasy is a reassurance—promise that the peace of Paradise, which was known first within the mother womb, is not to be lost; that it supports the present and stands in the future as well as in the past (is omega as well as alpha); that though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings The Heroine's Journey and the Virgin's promise are the counterparts to the Hero's Journey that we need in storytelling. The Heroine's Journey (HJ), The Virgin's Promise (VP), and the monomyth (MM) share some elements, demonstrating that at least some components of heroic stories are universal: The protagonist rejects or suppresses part of themselves to fit in the normal world. HJ: Separation of the Feminine; VP: The Price of Conformity; MM: Call to Adventure. Rejection of the Call. We also present an approach and one that is more easily related to all along the gender spectrum. The first

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