

Fairy Tale Exercise

Before you read this week's EnSights, I invite you to create a three-paragraph story in the form of a parable, a fairy tale or myth. Use this structure as a guide with each part a paragraph in your story. You can do this in one sitting and three different sittings.

Part 1: The Journey Begins

The first part of your quest begins with you in your world. You are the "hero or heroine" of your own story. You can use a persona (be one of the gods in myths or princess in a fairy tale or an animal in the animal world) or tell the story as yourself.

Questions to ask yourself: What are the unique characteristics of the hero or heroine...the drives and longings.....the flaws and problems that he has that might send him/her on the journey.

The story takes place in ordinary time. It can be a "once upon a time", future time, present or even a made-up time. This ordinary world is the Hero's home, the safe haven from where the journey begins.

Questions to ask yourself: How will I describe my space and time? What metaphor might I use? What are some of the spiritual and emotional characteristics of this time and place?

The vision quest becomes a call. It sets the story in motion. The call can be the result of something discomfiting or disrupting to the hero's ordinary world, throwing things off balance. The call can be a challenge, a vision or a search for something, with often stakes if the call is rejected. The call always involves a leaving from ordinary time and place, entering a special world with risks and dangers. It is the call to go to the "far country", to the magical castle, the sacred city; to ascend the holy mountain; or to cross the great seas or deserts. In truth, the journey is always an inner mythical journey.

Questions to ask yourself: How does your calls come about...is it a subtle inner prompting, a vague sense of needing to leave or withdraw from external commitments, or wanting to make changes? What words do you hear yourself saying, "I must get on with the rest of my life, I am in a rut."? Or has there been a dream of embarking on a voyage?

How does the call happen? Who calls and why? What does the hero want so much that he is willing to go? Is the hero reluctant to leave and if so, what convinces him to go? Does he know what he is searching for or challenged to do? Why is it so important?

Part 2: Tests, Allies and Enemies

Once the threshold is crossed, the hero faces tests, strange encounters with the unfamiliar environment. He meets Allies who help him along the way with directions or valuable information and confronts enemies who test his courage and strength. Sometimes a sidekick may join the journey.

Questions to ask yourself: In your vision quest as an artist seeking to create authentic art, where do you go for help? What parts of yourself is an ally? What strengths and unique gifts do you possess to lead you forward. What blocks do you encounter in your journey?

There is a mentor who provides insights, advice, training or magical gifts. Sometimes the mentor comes early in the story to provide the initial push beyond the threshold. Sometimes the mentor comes toward the middle of the story to add the needed wisdom to get to the vision. The mentor can be an object such as a map or magic book, or a physical person like a wizard or wise person. Usually, the mentor is wise and embodies a code of honor or justice that becomes an important path for the hero.

Questions to ask yourself: What fears or frustrations do I have from my work as an artist? How does my higher-self mentor me beyond my fears and frustrations? What would my creative inner force say to me on this journey? Who comes to mind as a wise person? What is the insight I gain from our meeting?

There is often a place of power that needs to be approached with caution. This can be a cave or innermost place central to the quest. It is here that the ultimate battle must be fought or the Ordeal, the central life/death crisis takes place. The Ordeal is the central, essential and magical stage of the journey where a type of death takes place. Only through facing this ordeal can the hero be reborn, resurrected or granted the power of the vision.

Questions to ask yourself: Where do you go when you are at your most vulnerable? Whom do you want with you in this place, or must you face your fears alone? What are last defenses that almost hold you back in the process?

Part 3: Return Home

There is a gift, an insight or a vision embodied in something tangible that is transformative. The power is metaphorically speaking a new identity with often a new role as teacher, healer or seer.

Questions to ask yourself: How do you see yourself transformed on this journey? What insight do you have to bring home to your work as an artist? What is the gift you have been given?

The completed journey always ends with a return...a homecoming to the ordinary world of conventional reality that was left behind. But this world has been transformed, if the journey has been successful, into a new world seen with fresh eyes. The end of the journey is the beginning of a new empowered way of life.

Questions to ask yourself: What does your ordinary world look like with your new eyes of insight? How do you see yourself, your life and/or your art become different? What will you do with your new energy and wisdom? What has been cleansed or purified in you during this journey? How will you share your journey with others?

When you have completed your story, go on to read the EnSights.