



Heroism in Stephen King's Fairy Tale: An Analysis Based on Christopher Vogler's Theory

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine heroism in Stephen King's Fairy Tale (2022) by using Christopher Vogler's theory of the Hero's Journey and Archetypes. This study employs a qualitative method, with data collected from reading the novel, taking notes, and analyzing them based on Vogler's theory (2007). The findings show that Charlie Reade, the main character, experienced all twelve stages of the Hero's Journey. Starting from the Ordinary World, Call to the Adventure, Refusal of The Call, Meeting With the Mentor, Crossing the Threshold, Test Allies, and Enemies, Approach to the Inmost Cave, Ordeal, Reward, The Road

Back, Resurrection and Return with Elixir. The study also identifies six of the eight archetypes in the novel based on Vogler's theory, which are Hero, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Shadow, and Ally.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature functions as a way to express human ideas, emotions, and experiences through language. Literature can reflect and interpret various aspects of human life, whether in the form of prose, poetry, or drama. Murmu (2023) emphasizes that literature can transform life perspectives and facilitate societal change. Throughout history, literature has experienced various changes in terms of the media used, writing style, and themes. On theme that continues to develop in literature is heroism. Heroes are often depicted as figures who have extraordinary physical strength or supernatural abilities, such as Hercules in Greek

mythology or Wonder Woman. “The traditional epic hero is typically portrayed as someone with great strength or courage, who lives and dies in pursuit of honour” (Franco et al., 2011). In some modern literature, heroes are no longer always depicted as perfect figures or as having powers from birth. Rather, they are individuals who, through a long journey and challenges, ultimately find strength within themselves.

In many heroic stories, the main character begins the journey as an ordinary individual with hidden potential. They face challenges, develop skills, and ultimately reach the peak of their physical, mental, and spiritual powers. This term is called the Hero’s Journey. According to Vogler (2007), “The Hero’s Journey begins when a hero leaves their comfortable, ordinary life to enter a difficult and unfamiliar world. In Vogler version, he divided twelve stages that a hero experiences throughout their journey, the stages are The Ordinary World, Call of the Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Meeting the Mentor, Crossing the First Threshold, Test, Allies, Enemies, Approach to the Inmost Cave, the Ordeal, Reward, The Road Back, Resurrection, and the last stage is Return with the Elixir and the hero isn’t alone in the transformation process. Usually, the hero or the main character in a literary work meets various supporting characters who support him throughout the Journey and play an important role in shaping him into a hero. This term is called Archetypes. Christopher Vogler categorized Archetypes into eight and for the first Archetypes is Hero, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Shadow, Ally, and the last Archetypes is Trickster. According to Vogler (2007), ‘Archetypes are crucial for understanding the roles and functions of characters in a story’.

As part of literature, novels are an effective means of exploring heroic themes. Through in-depth character development, authors can take readers on a hero’s Journey from beginning to end. One novel that depicts a hero’s is *Fairy Tale* by Stephen Kings, tells the story of Charlie Reade, an ordinary 17-year-old who experienced a difficult childhood. His mother died when he was 10, and his father has alcoholism because his beloved wife died. Charlie is forced to journey through strange worlds and be a hero to save others and his world. Charlie is a more relevant character who must overcome challenges and difficulties from his past to find courage and strength within himself.

Different from Juanda et al. (2023) research, this study analyzes the heroic journey of Arthur Curry in the movie *Aquaman*, who has extraordinary powers such as super physical strength, the ability to breathe underwater, and communicate with sea creatures. The research is interesting in analyzing fairy tale novels depicting the journey of transformation of Charlie Reade, an ordinary character, into a hero, and supporting characters are guiding, testing, and motivating Charlie to become a hero. The previous studies explored Joseph Campbell Hero's Journey theory and Hero Struggles by Goethals and Allison, to fill the gap in this study, employing Christopher Vogler's (2007) theory of the Hero's Journey and Archetypes.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze the hero Journey and the Archetypes of the novel *Fairy Tale* by Stephen King, focusing on the main character, Charlie. According to Moleong (2007), the qualitative method is used as a research procedure that results in descriptive data containing spoken and written words and people's behavior which can be observed. The research data analyzed using the hero Journey and the Archetypes based on Vogler's theory (2007). This research presents the stages of the hero's Journey and the Archetypes that help Charlie become a hero in the novel *Fairy Tale* by Stephen King. For collecting the data, first reading intensively the novel, second, taking notes of Charlie's Journey and last, marking Charlie meets the other characters in his journey, used Vogler's theory. Data analysis will be Re-reading, understanding the novel, Analyzing the notes based on the Hero's Journey and Archetypal theory proposed by Christopher Vogler, describing and compiling the analysis results.

RESULTS

Hero's Journey

In *Fairy Tale* by Stephen King, the main character, Charlie Reade, goes through all twelve stages of the Hero's Journey described by Christopher Vogler (2007). His story starts in the first stage, Ordinary World, living a normal life, until he gets the second stages, Call to

Adventure when he meets Mr. Bowditch and learns about a hidden portal in the shed. At first, Charlie shows a third stage, Refusal of the Call, feeling unsure about leaving his world. This changes after the four stages Meeting with the Mentor, where Mr. Bowditch gives him guidance. Then, Charlie crosses the First Threshold and enters a strange, dangerous world as the five stages. As the story continues, Charlie faces the six stages, Approach to the Inmost Cave, where the challenges get harder. He goes through seven stages, Tests, Allies, and Enemies, gaining help from Radar and meeting the villain like the Flight Killer. The eight stages, Ordeal, brings him face-to-face with great danger, followed by the nine stages, Reward, where he gains strength and knowledge. On ten stages, The Road Back, he returns to fight and defeat the villain, and after that he in the eleven stages. Resurrection when he breaks its curse and restores peace, and finally reaches the last stage, Return with the Elixir, bringing new lessons and elixir to his life.

Archetypes

From Vogler's eight archetypes, the story contains six archetypes. The first archetype is Charlie is the Hero, showing bravery, persistence, and strong values. The second archetypes is Mr. Bowditch being the Mentor, who guides Charlie and provides the help he needs. The third archetype, Charlie's father is the Threshold Guardian, representing the duties and ties to home that make Charlie hesitate at first. The Flight Killer is the Shadow as the four archetypes, the main enemy and danger that Charlie must defeat. Radar, Charlie's loyal dog, plays two roles of archetype: an Ally, giving friendship and support, and a Herald, helping to start Charlie's adventure. These archetypes work together to shape Charlie's journey, showing how guidance, challenges, and loyalty help him grow into a true hero.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the journey of the main character, Charlie Reade, in Stephen King's *Fairy Tale* using Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey theory and Archetypes. The findings show that all twelve stages of the Hero's Journey appear in the novel. However, of Vogler's eight Archetypes, only six are present: Hero, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Ally,

Shadow, and Herald. The Shapeshifter archetype is absent because no character changes form, attitude, or motive in a way that confuses or challenges Charlie's beliefs, as Vogler describes. Likewise, the Trickster archetype is missing, since there are no clown-like or comedic figures that lighten the mood. This absence aligns with the novel's dark fantasy tone, which is filled with fear, danger, and struggle rather than humor.

This study contributes to the understanding that heroism does not require superpowers but can emerge from personal experiences and emotional challenges. The analysis demonstrates how an ordinary individual can grow into a hero through structured narrative stages and the support of other characters. Vogler's theory proves useful for analyzing stories across media, novels, films, or games, particularly in understanding the function of supporting characters. However, the scope of this research is limited to one novel and one theoretical approach, which means other forms of heroism might be revealed through different frameworks. Despite this limitation, the study highlights the significance of narrative structure and character roles in shaping a hero's journey.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the heroic journey of the main character, Charlie Reade, in Stephen King's *Fairy Tale* novel using the theory of Hero's Journey and Archetypes by Christopher Vogler. The results of the analysis show that Charlie experiences 12 stages of the Hero's Journey theory as formulated by Vogler, starting from "Ordinary World" to "Return with Elixir". Each stage describes Charlie's transformation from an ordinary teenager to a heroic figure in the other world he enters. The study also identified six of Vogler's eight Archetypes: Charlie serves as the Hero, Mr. Bowditch as the mentor, Charlie's father embodies the Threshold Guardian, Flight Killer represents shadow, Radar as Ally and Herald. These Archetypes play an important role in shaping Charlie's into a hero.

Practically, this study offers valuable insight for readers and students of literature to better understand the structure and meaning behind heroic narratives. It also provides a useful model for applying Vogler's Hero's Journey and Archetype theory to literary analysis, especially in modern fiction. For future research suggests to combining Vogler's theory with

other approaches, such as literary psychology and feminist theory or use this theory in other media, such as comics, films, television series, or video games.

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