

# Introduction to screenwriting 1: The 5 elements

by Allen Palmer

Session 1  
Introduction

[www.crackingyarns.com.au](http://www.crackingyarns.com.au)

# Can we find a movie we all love?

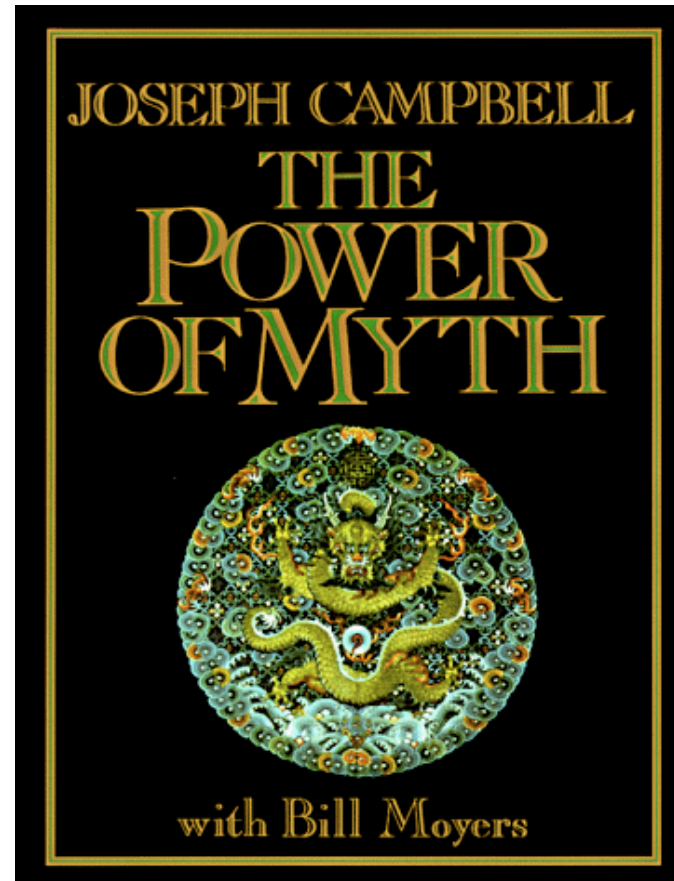
- Avatar?
- Lord of the Rings?
- Star Wars?
- Groundhog Day?
- Raiders of the Lost Ark?
- When Harry Met Sally?

# Why do people love movies?

- Entertained
- Escape
- Educated
- Provoked
- Affirmed
- Transported
- Inspired
- Moved - laugh, cry

# Why did Aristotle think people loved movies?

- Catharsis
- Emotional cleansing or purging
- What delivers catharsis?
- Seeing hero undertake journey that transforms



“I think that what we’re seeking is  
an experience of being alive ...

... so that we can actually feel the  
rapture being alive.”

Joseph Campbell  
“The Power of Myth”

# What are audiences looking for?

- Expand emotional bandwidth
- Reminder of higher self
- Universal connection
- In summary ...
- Cracking yarns

A LUCASFILM LTD. PRODUCTION



Me

# You (in 1 min or less)

- Name
- Day job
- Done any courses? Read any books?  
Written any screenplays?
- Have a concept?
- Which film would you like to have written?

# What's the hardest part of writing a cracking screenplay?

- Concept?
- Characters?
- Story?
- Scenes?
- Dialogue?

# Typical script report

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Concept			X	
Character		X		
Dialogue	X			
Structure				X
Emotional Engagement				X

Story without emotional  
engagement isn't story.

It's just plot.

Plot isn't the end.

It's just the means.

Stories don't happen in  
the head.

They grab us by the heart.

# What is structure?

- The craft of storytelling
- How we engage emotions
- How we generate catharsis
- How we deliver what audiences crave



# Is structure bad?

- Australian resistance
- “Hollywood” formula?

A Few Good Men  
African Queen  
After Midnight  
American Graffiti  
Apollo 13  
An Officer & a Gentleman  
Arthur  
Back to the Future  
Being There  
Beverly Hills Cop  
Big  
Blood Simple  
Blues Brothers  
Body Heat  
Brokeback Mountain  
Bull Durham  
Casablanca  
Chinatown  
Dead Poets Society  
Dirty Harry  
Fargo  
Fast Times at Ridgemoor High  
Ferris Bueller's Day Off  
Five Easy Pieces  
Godfather  
Godfather 2  
Goodfellas  
Groundhog Day  
It happened one night  
It's a wonderful life  
Jagged Edge  
Jaws

## "Hollywood" Films

JFK  
Juno  
Kramer vs Kramer  
Lars and the Real Girl  
LA Confidential  
Little Miss Sunshine  
Lost in Translation  
M\*A\*S\*H  
Meet the Parents  
Men in Black  
Midnight Run  
Midnight Cowboy  
Mississippi Burning  
Moonstruck  
My Fair Lady  
No Country for Old Men  
North by Northwest  
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest  
Parenthood  
Psycho  
Pulp Fiction  
Quiz Show  
Raiders of the Lost Ark  
Remains of the Day  
Reservoir Dogs  
Risky Business  
Rocky  
Saturday Night Fever  
Schindler's List  
Sea of Love  
Serpico  
Shortcuts  
Shrek  
Sideways  
Star Wars  
Starman  
Stripes  
Taxi Driver  
10 Things I hate about you  
The Apartment  
The Big Chill  
The Empire Strikes Back  
The Fugitive  
The Goodbye Girl  
The Graduate  
The Incredibles  
The Maltese Falcon  
The Shining  
The Verdict  
Thelma & Louise  
There's something about Mary  
39 Steps  
Tootsie  
Toy Story  
Trading Places  
Twelve Angry Men  
When Harry Met Sally  
Virgin Suicides  
Vertigo  
Witness

# Is structure bad?

- Australian resistance
- “Hollywood” formula?
- Hero phobic?
- Limit to creativity?

# Film structure is harder than novels - why?

- Length: 90 - 110 pages
- Told in one, uninterrupted session
- Cost
- Expectation

# Structure is good

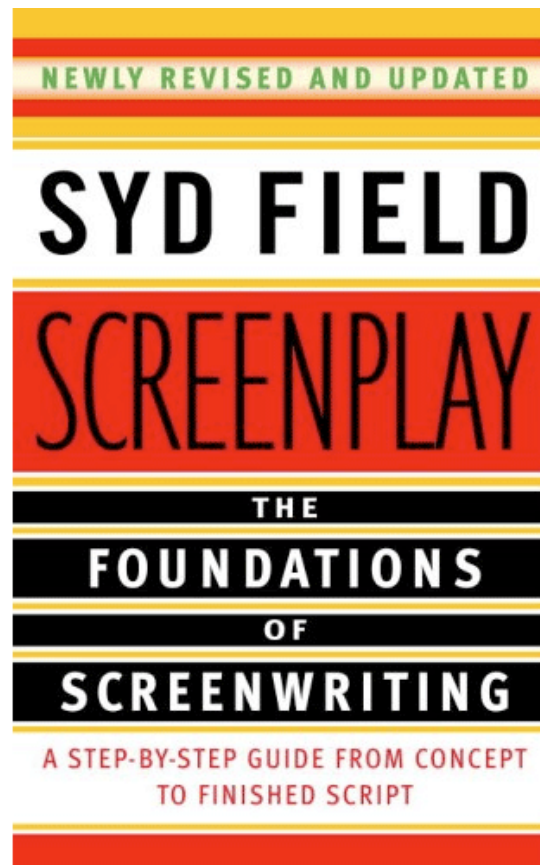
- But which structure?

# Story paradigms

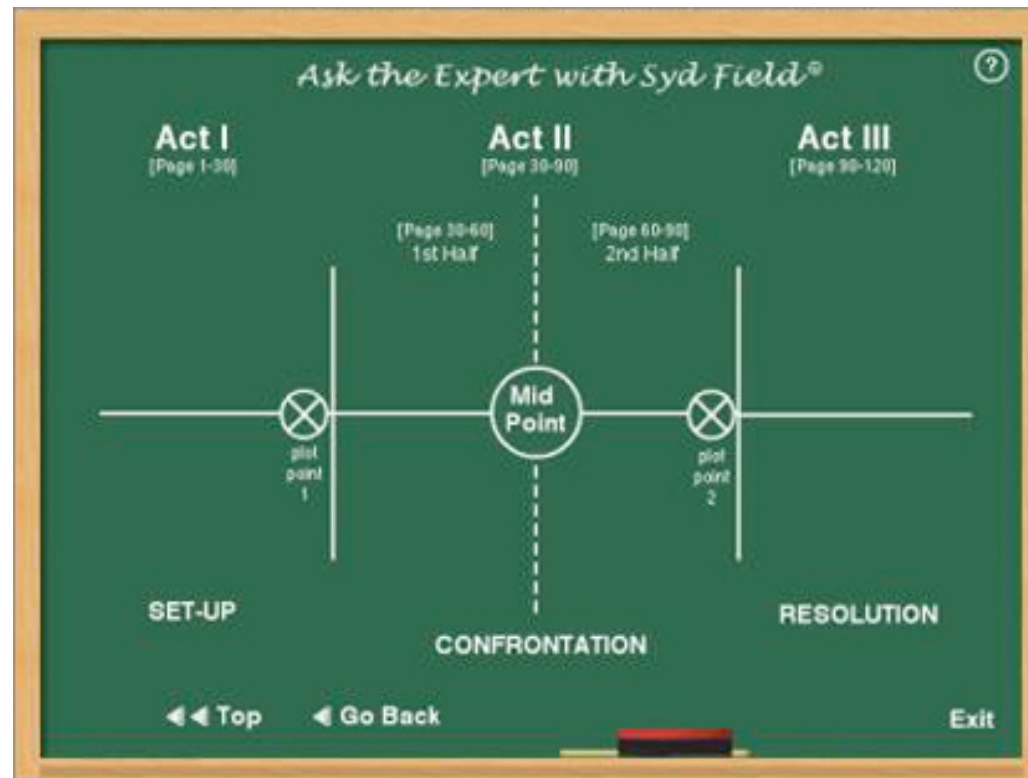
“A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles.”

Aristotle - The Poetics

# Story Paradigms

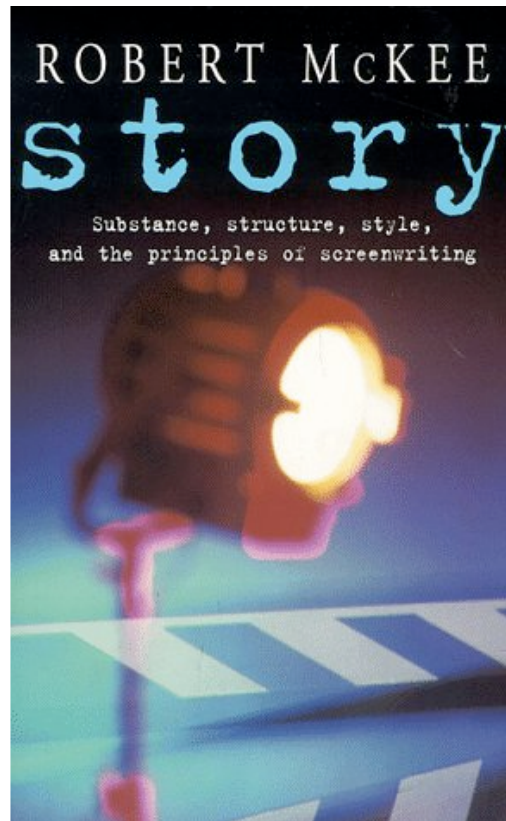


# Syd Field's Paradigm





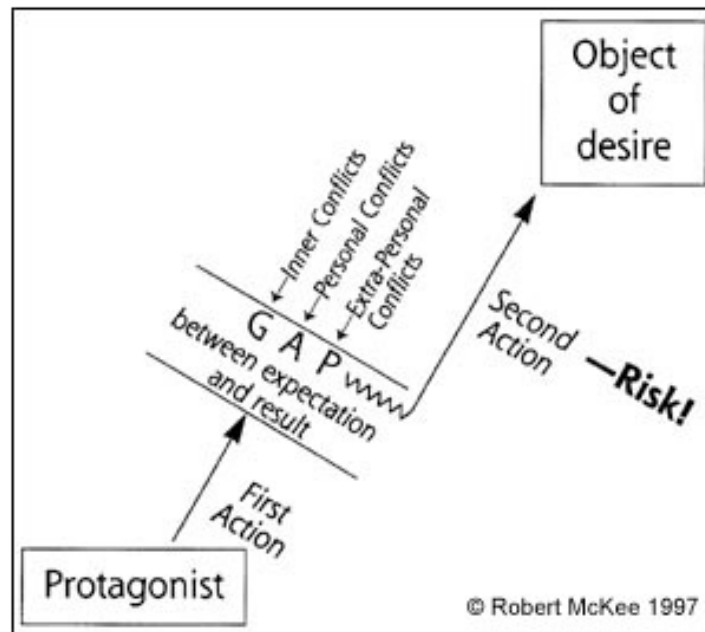
# Story Paradigms

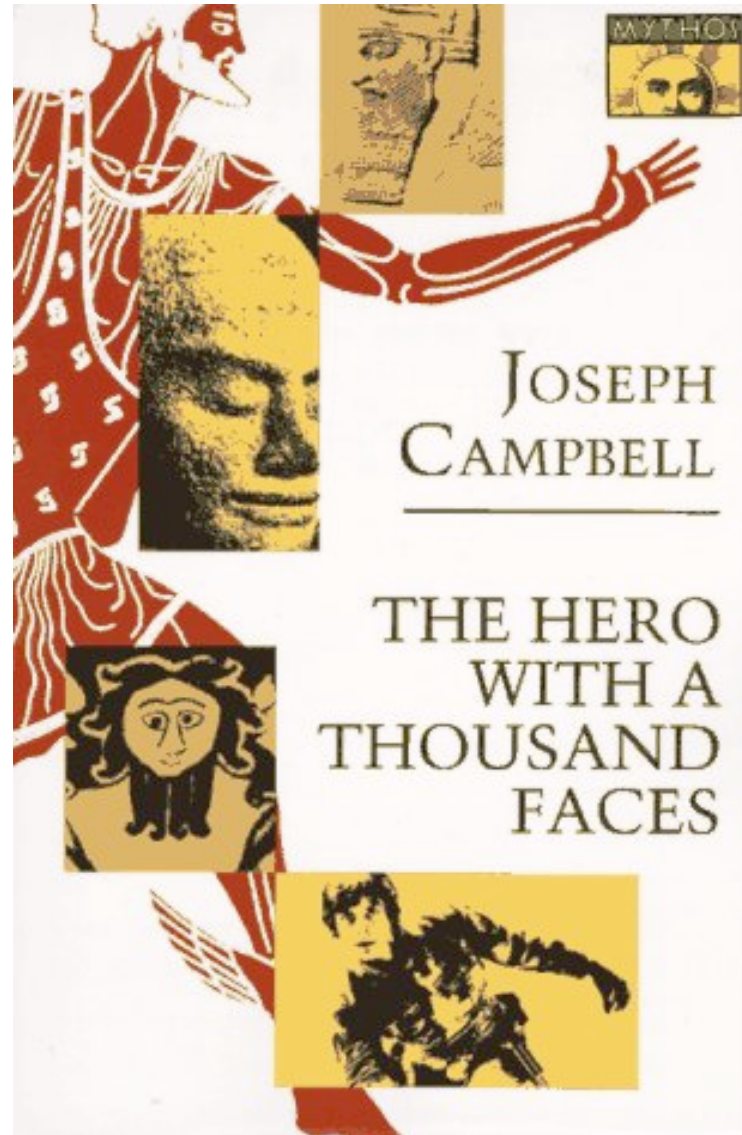


# McKee's Story

“A scene is an action through conflict in more or less continuous time and space that turns the value-charged condition of a character's life on at least one value with a degree of perceptible significance.”

# McKee's Story

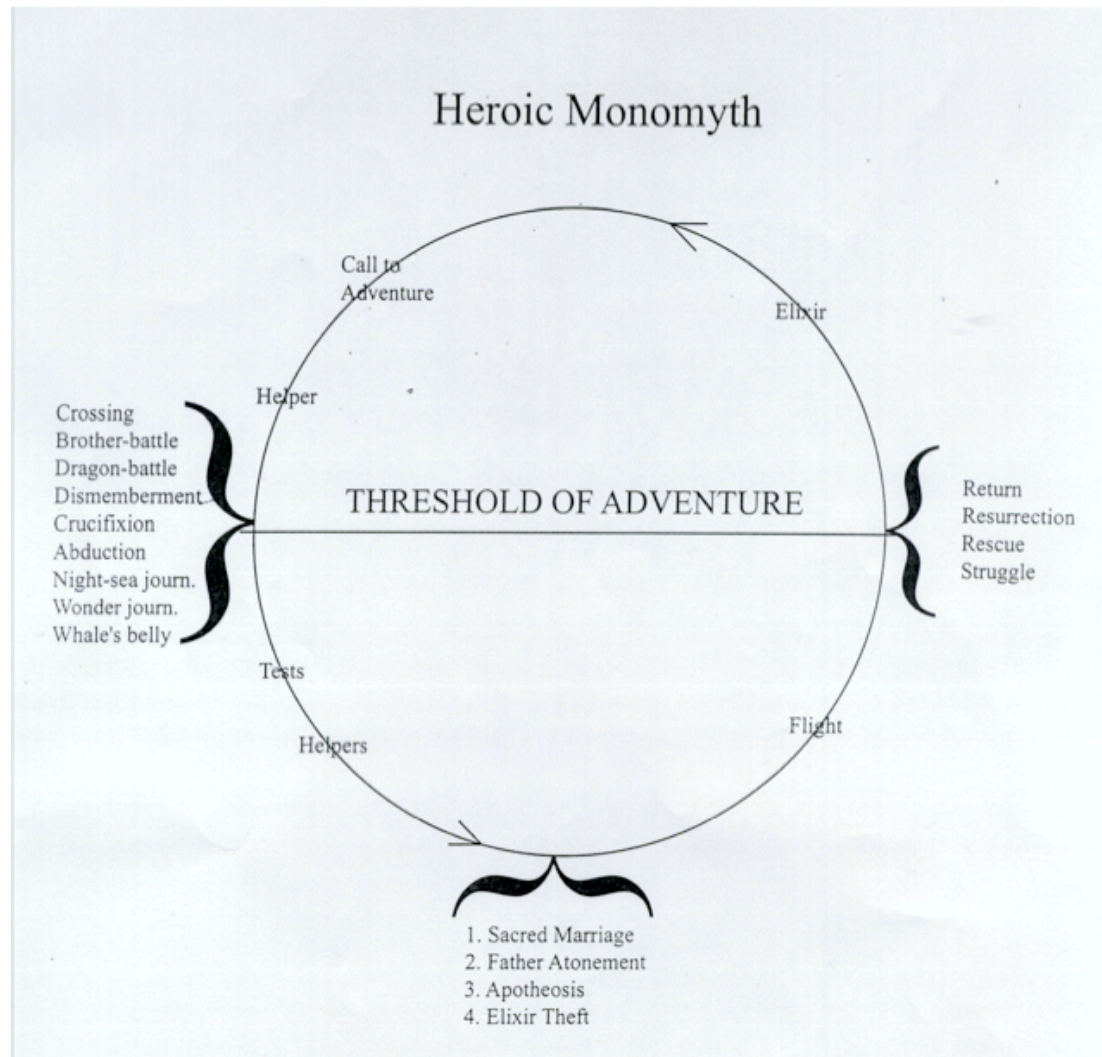




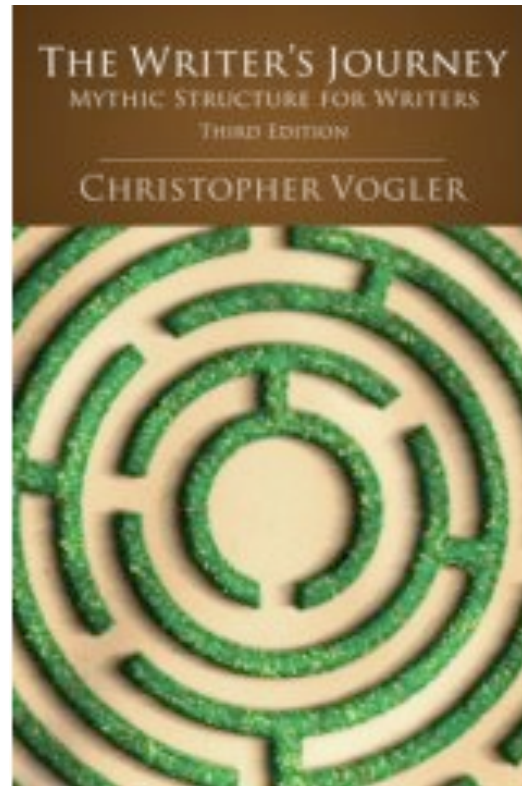
# Campbell's Monomyth

“A hero ventures forth from the world of the common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

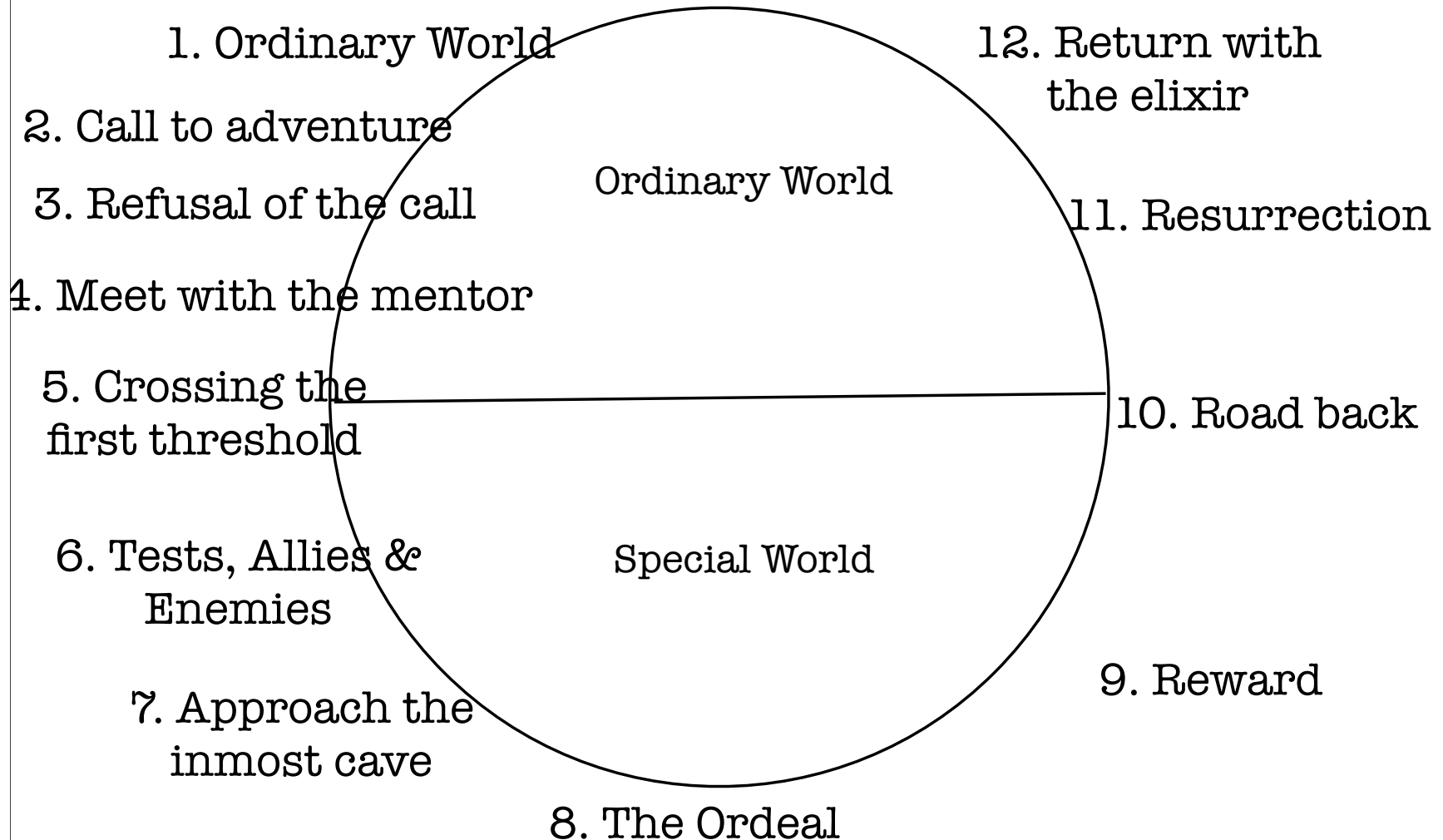
# Heroic Monomyth



# The Writer's Journey



# Vogler's Hero's Journey

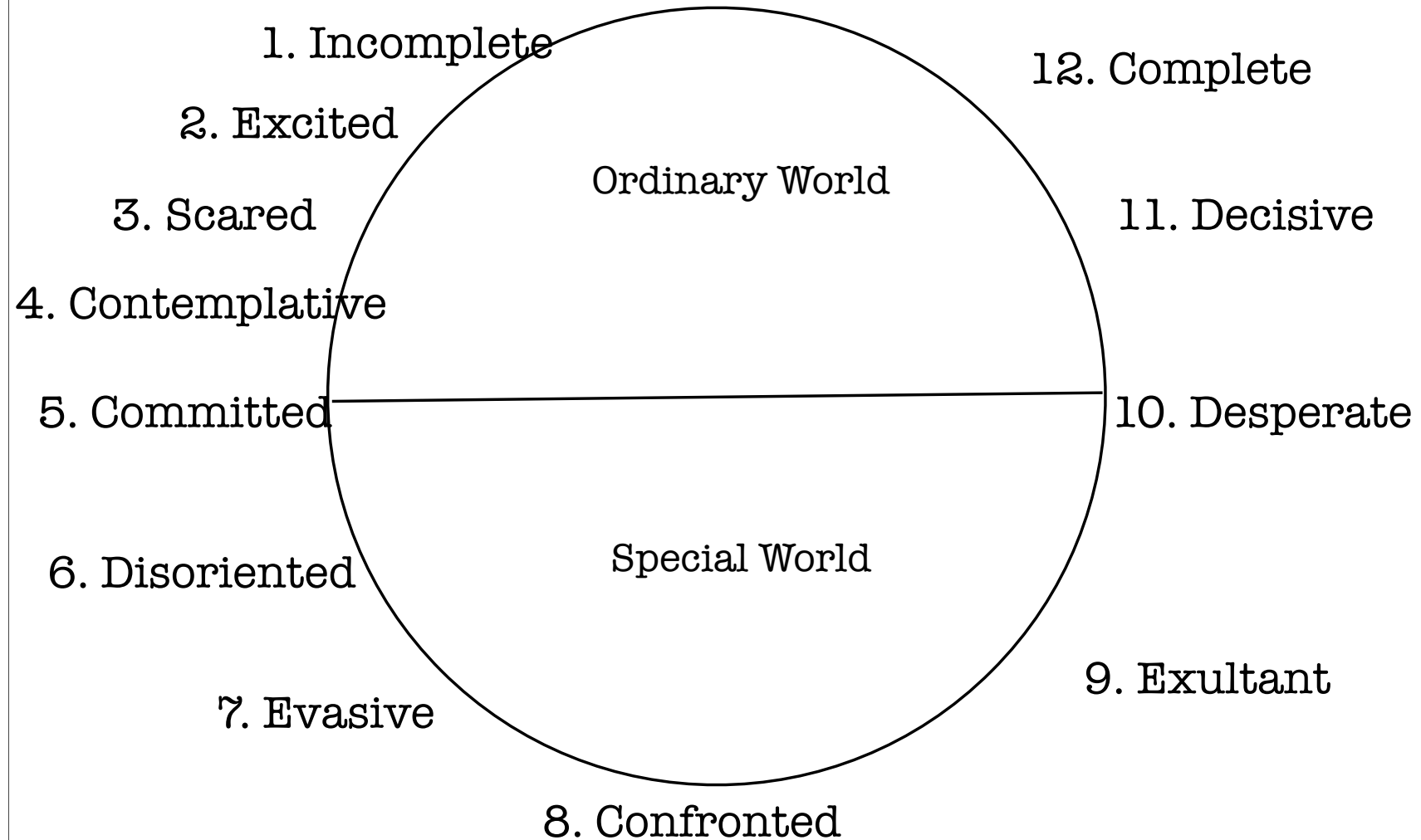




# Story is transformation

- Hero goes in pursuit of a goal
- “Wants something very bad and is having a lot of trouble getting it”
- External journey triggers a more important internal journey
- To complete journey, must transform - catharsis

# Hero's inner journey



# Why Hero's Journey?

- Only a guide. Not a straitjacket.
- Audience wants emotional journey
- Hero's journey delivers
- Not invented. Only identified.
- It works.

# Course Plan - Saturday

1. 9:30-10.35 Introduction
2. 10.45-12.35 Hero's Journey Steps 1-5
3. 1.10 - 2.45 Hero's Journey Steps 6-9
4. 2.55 - 4.30 Hero's Journey Steps  
10-12

# Course Plan - Sunday

1. 9:30-11.00 Concept
2. 11.10-12.40 Character
3. 1.20 - 2.50 Scene writing & Dialogue
4. 3.00 - 4.30 Concept to outline

# Next Session

- Hero's Journey Steps 1 - 5
- Starts at 10.45am sharp