

# Exploring The Hero's Journey

Kaylee Herrera  
M.Ed. Instructional Design  
(408) 666-1590  
[kayleeherrera312@gmail.com](mailto:kayleeherrera312@gmail.com)  
[www.kayleeherrera.com](http://www.kayleeherrera.com)

## Targeted Age Range

Exploring the Hero's Journey was developed for the Middle School age range and grades 6-8.

## Project Overview

This 6-week unit was designed for middle school students in grades 6-8 and centered around keeping students' understanding of the Hero's Journey structure. The primary goal was for students to identify and analyze the key stages of the Hero's Journey and apply that framework to a novel of their choice. Students selected from a curated list of age-appropriate novels and worked through guided analysis, discussions, and creative reflections to compare their chosen protagonist's path to the traditional Hero's Journey arc. This unit emphasized voice, autonomy, and critical thinking, moving away from a one-size-fits-all model to a more personalized, inquiry based approach.

## Demographics

- Targeted for the age range of 11-14 and written to meet the California Common Core Standards.
- Reading levels may include both on-grade and below grade readers.
- Students will need to have a high tech proficiency as the unit will utilize web based tools such as Google Slides, Docs, and digital media platforms.

---

## ADDIE Design

### A - Analysis

This unit was created in response to a common challenge: students often struggled with literary analysis because they were disengaged with traditional, assigned texts. When given choice, they spent too much time trying to find the "easiest" book or movie that clearly followed the Hero's Journey, rather than critically engaging with the material. The learners in this classroom were tech-savvy, highly immersed in pop culture, and included many reluctant readers who preferred multimedia content to dense literature. Designing a unit that honored their interests while still meeting academic rigor was essential. The unit needed to scaffold

analysis skills, guide meaningful book selection, and leverage digital tools to support engagement.

## **D - Design**

### ***Learning Objectives***

- Students will be able to identify the different stages of the Hero's Journey across various narratives.
- Students will compare those stages in different texts and settings, drawing connections between structure and theme.
- Students will apply their understandings of the Hero's Journey to their own lives and reflections, making personal and literary connections.

### ***Instructional Activities***

Students engaged in Socratic seminars, analyzed texts, used graphic organizers, and created slide presentations. Writing was scaffolded through journaling, peer feedback sessions, and rough draft workshops.

### ***Final Performance Task***

An analytical Essay and slide presentation comparing their selected story to the Hero's Journey.

## **D - Development**

Instructional materials included a Hero's Journey slide deck, rubrics for the final essay and presentation, Socratic Discussion handouts, and peer feedback checklists. These resources were designed to support clarity, engagement, and autonomy.

## **I - Implementation**

This unit was delivered in person. Students did most reading and writing independently, while in-class time focused on peer discussions, planning, and feedback. Google Slides and Docs were used to structure and share work.

## **E - Evaluation**

Student understanding was assessed via rubrics, peer reviews, and Socratic seminar exit tickets. The final products were evaluated for clear identification of Hero's Journey steps and thoughtful comparisons. Peer feedback and formative checkpoints ensured ongoing learning.

## **Reflection**

Peer collaboration significantly elevated the quality of student work. While student choice boosted engagement, the unit would benefit from adding structure in-class work sessions to support time management and guided writing.

# Curriculum Map - Exploring the Hero's Journey

Grade Level: 6-8 | Unit Length: 6 weeks

| Week      | Focus                                                                        | Learning Objectives                                                                                                                                                        | Key Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Assessments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>W1</b> | Introduce the Hero's Journey stages and set project expectations.            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify stages of the Hero's Journey.</li> <li>Understand unit expectations and assessment criteria.</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slide deck introduction to all stages.</li> <li>Class brainstorm on "What makes a hero?"</li> <li>Review and discuss final project rubric.</li> </ul>                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit ticket summarizing one stage learned.</li> <li>Pair/share reflection.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                  |
| <b>W2</b> | Students select their texts and begin analysis of the first three stages.    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose a text for analysis that works with the Hero's Journey.</li> <li>Identify the beginning stages in story examples.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Browse and select book or approved choice.</li> <li>Teacher-guided exploration of Stages 1–3.</li> <li>Group Socratic discussion on early stages.</li> <li>Begin graphic organizer mapping.</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Browse and select book or approved choice.</li> <li>Teacher-guided exploration of Stages 1–3.</li> <li>Group Socratic discussion on early stages.</li> <li>Begin graphic organizer mapping.</li> </ul> |
| <b>W3</b> | Finish reading and map the remaining stages of the Hero's Journey.           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete full journey analysis of chosen text.</li> <li>Discuss turning points and character change.</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher-led overview of Stages 4–12.</li> <li>Students complete chosen texts.</li> <li>Socratic seminars to analyze full arc.</li> <li>Update and finalize graphic organizers.</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit tickets from discussions.</li> <li>Completed Hero's Journey graphic organizer.</li> </ul>                                                                                                         |
| <b>W4</b> | Apply Hero's Journey framework to The Hunger Games and begin essay planning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply framework to a shared class text.</li> <li>Begin organizing ideas for the analytical essay.</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>View The Hunger Games film.</li> <li>Socratic seminar comparing Katniss's journey to Hero's Journey model.</li> <li>Compare shared text to chosen independent text.</li> <li>Begin essay outlines using templates.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit completed essay outline.</li> <li>Reflection on shared vs. chosen text.</li> </ul>                                                                                                              |

| Week      | Focus                                                                          | Learning Objectives                                                                                                                                                 | Key Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Assessments                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>W5</b> | Revise essays with peer input and connect Hero's Journey to real-life figures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen writing through revision.</li> <li>Apply Hero's Journey to historical and contemporary figures.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete rough drafts.</li> <li>Peer review using structured checklists.</li> <li>Socratic seminar on real-life heroes (MLK, Steve Jobs, Marco Polo).</li> <li>Brainstorm visuals for presentation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit peer feedback checklist.</li> <li>Turn in revised draft.</li> <li>Exit reflection on real-life hero examples.</li> </ul> |
| <b>W6</b> | Present final analysis in both written and oral formats.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver a clear, evidence-supported analysis.</li> <li>Present findings with engaging visuals and clear delivery.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit final essay.</li> <li>Create and rehearse slide presentation.</li> <li>Present to peers.</li> <li>End-of-unit reflection.</li> </ul>                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rubric-graded final essay.</li> <li>Rubric-graded presentation.</li> <li>Reflection prompt submission.</li> </ul>               |

# Narrative Curriculum Map - Exploring the Hero's Journey

Grade Level: 6-8 | Unit Length: 6 weeks

## Week 1 – Introduction of the Hero's Journey and Project

The unit begins with an engaging introduction to the Hero's Journey framework. Students learn about each stage through a teacher-created slide deck and examine well-known examples from popular culture. They participate in a class brainstorm about the qualities of a hero, review the project rubric, and gain a clear understanding of expectations for both the final essay and presentation. The week concludes with a brief exit ticket to assess early understanding.

## Week 2 – Book Selection and Stages 1–3

Students select a text from a curated list or an approved independent choice to analyze throughout the unit. They begin exploring the first three stages of the Hero's Journey—Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, and Meeting the Mentor—through guided instruction and group Socratic discussions. Students start mapping these stages in their graphic organizers, submitting their text selection and rationale by week's end.

## Week 3 – Stages 4–12 and Reading Completion

The focus shifts to the remaining stages of the Hero's Journey. Through teacher-led mini-lessons and discussions, students identify key events in their chosen text that align with stages such as Crossing the Threshold, Ordeal, and Resurrection. Socratic seminars encourage deeper analysis, and students complete their graphic organizers while finishing their reading. Reflections and exit tickets capture their developing insights.

**Week 4 – The Hunger Games Analysis and Essay Outlining**

As a shared reference point, the class watches *The Hunger Games* and applies the Hero's Journey framework to Katniss Everdeen's story. A Socratic seminar follows, prompting comparisons between Katniss and the protagonists from students' own texts. Students then begin outlining their analytical essays, using teacher-provided templates to structure their ideas.

**Week 5 – Drafting, Peer Feedback, and Real-Life Heroes**

Students complete their essay drafts and participate in peer feedback sessions using structured checklists. Socratic discussions this week extend the Hero's Journey lens to real-life figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Steve Jobs, and Marco Polo, encouraging students to think beyond fictional narratives. Feedback from peers and teacher conferences supports final revisions.

**Week 6 – Final Essays and Presentations**

In the final week, students polish and submit their analytical essays, then create slide presentations highlighting their comparisons. They present to peers, demonstrating both analytical depth and communication skills. The unit concludes with a reflection activity, allowing students to consider how their understanding of storytelling—and their own life's journey—has evolved.