



Characteristics of Heroes

Discussion

The Classical Hero

The epic classical hero of Greek and Roman literature:

- He is of royal birth or half mortal, half god.
- He must perform extraordinary feats.
- His is a noble character, but for a fatal flaw.
- The suffering of the character is physical.
- Death must occur in an unusual way.

The Medieval Knight

- A hero can be of common birth.
- The battle is an ongoing test of manhood and loyalty to the liege lord.
- He has to be perceived as having a good moral character.
- He must demonstrate obedience to a hierarchy.
- He must follow elaborate rules of chivalry, dress, courtesy, and codes of conduct.
- He wages war on behalf of liege lord's principles, and not for land grab or to avenge honour.

The Romantic Hero

- As a rebel, he is an invention of romanticism.
- Birth and class are unimportant: the individual transcends society.
- The battle is internal: the "courage to be me".
- Heroes make their own rules.
- Passions are outside of the individual's control.
- Self-knowledge is valued more than physical strength or endurance.
- The hero is moody, isolated, and introspective.

The Modern Hero

- He seeks merely to survive.
- His battle is to create meaning and value.
- He has a code of behaviour rather than a code of ethics.
- The world is seen as having no internal order.
- The internal struggle is with addiction to drugs, liquor, sex, money.
- The external struggle is with corruption in formal organizations.
- There is no sense of community: a select circle such as one woman or a few trusted friends.

<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com/archives/4heroes.htm>