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INTRODUCTION

“SO IN *THE HERO’S JOURNEY*, THERE’S THE *ORDINARY WORLD*, which is your personal or your character’s everyday life, then there’s the *Special World*, which is the world of the story.” I sat back to look around the room at the group of men, satisfied with my explanation so far of this complicated storytelling system that is both our real lives and the lives of our fictional characters.

Gabriel looked at me, a surprised, quizzical and appalled look on his face. “So prison is the ‘*Special World*?’” *How could this be?* his expression said. *I’m supposed to see prison as my “special” world? What are you smoking, anyway?*

Okay, so it’s not like we’re always delighted with the *Hero’s Journey* we’ve been given. We don’t even always choose it. Sometimes we just find ourselves there, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. She gets hit on the head during a storm and wakes up in Oz.

In some way you may have been tossed into a storm and hit on the head, too, metaphorically speaking, and awakened in prison, now on a journey not of your choosing. Or at least you didn’t consciously choose it. Your soul may have chosen it for you.

You’ve committed a crime (or possibly innocent but have been accused of a crime) and now you live in a 6 x 8 foot cell. You’re watched 24 hours per day. You seldom get one moment to yourself to think a thought, take a leak, make a private phone call. You have little control over anything at all in your life, and it may be this way for a while. You’ve hurt someone and

because you're paying the consequences, you're reminded of what you did every single day. Much of society has written you off, and depending on the kind of crime you've committed, does not want to see you out on the streets again any time soon, if ever. This is because, in society's perception, you're a drug dealer, a bank robber, a murderer, a burglar—in short, an outlaw. You've taken a path that is literally outside of the law, and society has a way of dealing with those who do that.

And yet, even though you're only too aware of all of the above, something else is also true. You're a hero. There is indeed someone in charge of your life and that someone is you. You're the hero of your life, hereafter called your journey. Oh, society wouldn't call you a hero. They think of a hero as the dictionary defines it: Somebody who commits an act of great courage, strength of character, or another admirable quality, somebody who is admired and looked up to for outstanding qualities or achievements. If your life were a story, and it is, society might look at you and stamp you with one label. Villain. Criminal. Outlaw. Certainly not hero.

But society doesn't get the last say. Your life is a story, and you're the main character. And it does take a lot of courage and strength of character to live the life you've chosen, one that sent you to prison. So, for the sake of our purposes in this writing course, the definition of a hero is simply how Wikipedia (the most used online resource for quickly defining a word) would define it: *a character, who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, displays courage and the will for self-sacrifice—that is, heroism—for some greater good of all humanity. This definition originally referred to martial courage or excellence but extended to more general moral excellence.* (See Lesson Three for an expanded definition of the hero archetype.)

Now, it's up to you to see yourself that way, or if writing a fictional story, to portray your character in that light, as displaying courage from a position of weakness. As a prisoner, you're in an *external* position of weakness (repeat—*external*—wouldn't want you to see it any other way as I'm fully aware of what happens to *weak* men in prison), whether you see it that way or not. At the same time, you have to believe that, on some level, you have the kind of moral excellence of a true hero who is, though not necessarily on a conscious level, in exile.

This is what *The Hero's Journey* is all about—you on an external journey to prison—not your conscious choice—for a period of self-imposed exile in order to explore the inner landscape of your human journey.

You may wonder if *The Hero's Journey* is about religion; it's not, though you can be a religious person and explore the inner landscape of your personal journey with the Bible or any other religious book by your side. The hero in *The Hero's Journey* is an explorer. While your external world is closed off to you at the moment, maybe for many years, this is your opportunity to explore the inner landscape of yourself as a human being. Just because you're in prison, your journey isn't over. It may be just beginning. It all depends on how much exploring of your inner landscape you've done before becoming incarcerated.

As a young writer, story structure was a mystery to me for many years. Then, upon the recommendation of a writer friend I trusted, I picked up Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* and started reading. I may have gotten as far as the second stage, *The Call to Adventure*, and felt completely lost. I didn't pick the book up again until about eight years later. That time I was ready, and the archetypes, the stages of the journey—I could see it all in my own life. I recognized *The Hero's Journey* because it was my life story.

It's also your life story. This is what *The Hero's Journey* is—a system, a way of thinking about our lives, a way to shape and revise and rewrite our personal life stories. Whether we use the form of memoir or novel, personal experience story or short story.

If you want to get the most out of this course, I would recommend that you have someone send you a copy of Christopher Vogler's book, *The Writer's Journey*. You could also dig into Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, but because Campbell is more challenging to “get” than Vogler, *The Writer's Journey* is a better choice for this course.

WHAT IS *THE HERO'S JOURNEY*?

I HAVE A PIECE OF ART ON MY BEDROOM WALL. Underneath the painting, the caption reads: “*Anyone can slay a dragon. Try waking up in the morning and loving the world all over again; that’s what takes a real hero.*”

The Hero’s Journey is ultimately the path of love. It is a powerful metaphor for the agony and the ecstasy of our human lives on this planet. Chris Vogler writes in *The Writer’s Journey: The Hero’s Journey is not an invention, but an observation. It is a recognition of a beautiful design, a set of principles that govern the conduct of life and the world of storytelling the way physics and chemistry govern the physical world...The Hero’s Journey is a pattern that seems to extend in many dimensions, describing more than one reality. It accurately describes, among other things, the process of making a journey, the necessary working parts of a story, the joys and despairs of being a writer, and the passage of a soul through life.*

- *The process of making a journey*

According to *The Hero’s Journey*, we move through certain stages in our lives as we pursue our goals and dreams. We confront our demons, slay dragons, emerge as heroes. Or not. (We will explore the not—the tragic hero—in our third lecture.)

- *The necessary working parts of a story*

A story is the development of one specific conflict in a person’s or character’s life. *The Hero’s Journey* is a way of ordering that conflict, shaping it so as to make meaning out of it.

- *The joys and despairs of being a writer*

Our stories are not easily shaped as it takes deep, and often painful, exploration and inquiry in which only a select few writers are willing to engage. Fortunately, the process of this kind of deep storytelling also has its own rewards.

- *The passage of a soul through life*

The Hero's Journey captures and holds the external movement of a life and discovers and interprets the internal themes in an intimate relationship between writer and reader.

HOW DOES THE HERO'S JOURNEY INFORM OUR LIVES AND OUR WRITING?

AT FIRST GLANCE, *THE HERO'S JOURNEY* might seem like a formula for plotting our stories and/or interpreting our lives, but it's far from it. For one thing, a life isn't so neatly ordered in 12 stages, although if you know *The Hero's Journey*, and you look closely, you will find them all there as the person navigates the situation, whatever it is. They may not occur in the exact order as *The Hero's Journey* dictates, but if it's a true *Hero's Journey*, they're there. The archetypes are there, too, the players in the story sometimes shifting from one to another, but again, if you know the archetypes, and you look closely, you can identify each one of them. Because this is what a *Hero's Journey* is. It's an adventure, and what makes it an adventure is that we didn't plan it, and it's bigger than we are. An adventure, according to the dictionary, is an undertaking involving uncertainty and risk—definitely a *Hero's Journey*.

Why *The Hero's Journey*, though? Why not just grab a how-to-plot or how-to-write-a-memoir book or take a writing class, if your prison offers one? Many writers do just that. They learn by trial and error. As I mentioned above, I did that myself for many years. I bumbled along writing my little stories that ended up conveying even littler themes, if I could find the theme at all. Most of the time, I just tacked one on. As a writing coach, I see many of the writers I work with do this. But *The Hero's Journey* is a powerful tool for helping us dig out the deeper and more important themes of our stories. Once we know how to use it, we can begin to explore the deeper

meanings in our stories, the universal truths that are there inherent in our stories if we know what to look for and where to look for it.

The Hero's Journey does other things, too, all of which we'll discuss in the lessons that follow. It begins to show us our attitude toward our lives and stories, our resistance to some of the lessons we could be learning, and our shadow that is hiding the story truths we're not quite ready to look at. *The Hero's Journey* is a giant flashlight that can be used to illuminate the stories that burn passionately in our hearts, and when we're ready to write them, it's there, waiting to help us make meaning out of those stories.

WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR A *HERO'S JOURNEY* STORY?

NOT EVERY STORY IS A *HERO'S JOURNEY*. The writer's recognition of the lessons and meaning inherent in a personal experience or in a character's dramatic conflict in a novel is what makes the story a journey. A personal essay is not a *Hero's Journey*, though it can have some of the elements, as you discover that, say, another person in your life is wearing the mask of the "threshold guardian" and trying to prevent you from accomplishing a dream. Or that you received a "call to adventure," when your boss wore the mask of the "herald," and told you he was laying you off. To write a personal essay is to explore a topic, but the form doesn't allow you to order your exploration so neatly as to put it into stages as a story does (whether real or fictional). Many plot-driven genre stories are not hero's journeys in that they stay on the surface of the protagonist's experience. A genre story *can* be a *Hero's Journey* if the writer chooses to take the protagonist deeper than the surface. In short, what makes a story a *Hero's Journey* is the writer's ability to perceive the meaning in the hero's experience, not always something that's immediately evident, especially if the hero is the writer himself.

A *Hero's Journey* includes at least the following five elements: 1) a main character who is about something bigger than just saving his own skin,

2) an external and internal dramatic conflict, 3) the recognition of the archetypes that play specific roles in the story, 4) a theme that is universal, and 5) a writer who is willing to mine the story for the depths of the stages of the journey, the archetypes, and his or her own life. We will be discussing all of the criteria in more depth in the following lessons, so we hope you'll hang on for the ride and learn how to recognize your own life's *Hero's Journey* and those of your characters'.

Who came up with this idea of *The Hero's Journey*, anyway? A man named Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist, who wanted to explore the theory that important myths from around the world which have survived for thousands of years all share a fundamental structure, which Campbell called the monomyth. In a well-known quote from the introduction to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell summarized the monomyth:

A hero ventures forth from the world of 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. (Wikipedia: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*)

The only criteria that's required of you as the hero of your journey is that you have a sincere desire to authenticate, explore, and reflect on your human journey thus far and be open to whatever you discover is up ahead for you as you outline your story during the next few weeks or months.

THE STAGES

THE HERO'S JOURNEY HAS 12 STAGES AND 8 ARCHETYPES. These are what we'll be studying during the next few weeks and months, with an added ninth archetype—the outlaw. Following is a short summary for your reference.

The protagonist/hero goes through various stages on his journey, beginning in his *Ordinary World* and then finally arriving “home” on his *Return with the Elixir*. These stages can be external and/or internal, and the most effective stories incorporate both the external and the internal. These stages are meant to test the hero, to severely challenge him so that, whether you're writing a short story, novel, or literary memoir, by the end of the story, the

protagonist is a different person than when he started out. Following is a brief description of each stage of the journey:

The Ordinary World – The context, home base and background of the hero, the home turf, the hood; something, someone, some event rocks the hero's perception of himself, his world, and those populating this world; hero is poised to break free from this world, ready to enter the world of adventure.

Call to Adventure – Herald announces the journey, the stakes of the game; makes clear the hero's goal--to achieve the dream, survive the journey, confront the challenge, transcend the ego, transform a life; often a moment where the hero simply runs out of options.

Refusal of the Call – Fear, terror of the unknown; not yet fully committed to the journey, still thinking of turning back; makes effort to dodge the adventure; forced to examine the quest carefully and redefine its objectives; makes excuses; persistent refusal creates a tragic hero; conflicting calls; *Ordinary World* calls to hero to turn back; appearance of threshold guardians.

Meeting with the Mentor – Greek word, *menos*, meaning intention, force or purpose--mind, spirit or remembrance; mentor's role is to prepare the hero to meet the unknown; may offer advice, guidance, magical equipment; appears at the hero's moments of doubt; energy of mentor may show up embodied as a person, tradition, or code of ethics; mentors are enthused about learning, pass that enthusiasm on to hero.

Crossing the First Threshold – Overcoming fear; decision to commit to the journey/adventure; a zone of crossing that may be desolate and lonely or crowded with life; feeling the loss of the familiar; encounters more threshold guardians.

Tests, Allies, Enemies – Enters the new unexplored and emotional territory of the special world; test to prepare for the rest of the journey; appearance of allies and enemies; begins to sort friends and enemies--who can be trusted and who can't; may encounter the shadow and face threatening events; often teams are formed.

Approach to the Inmost Cave – Prepares for the ordeal to come; possesses a degree of confidence because of already-passed tests; faces down enemies; becomes aware of the ticking clock; faces higher stakes if refusing to proceed; takes inventory; gets into opponent's mind, breakthrough.

The Ordeal – Life or death moment—can be external, internal, or both; directly confronts greatest fear; crisis of the heart, death of the ego; comes away forever changed; moves from focus on self to focus on group; wins right to be called “hero.”

Reward – Seizes the sword--tangible or internal, takes possession; new perceptions; sees through deception (moment of clarity); self-realization, epiphany.

The Road Back – Decision to return to the *Ordinary World* and implement lessons learned; faces skeptics and doubters; lure of the past rises up; former demons appear once again; time for hero to watch his back; elation after enduring ordeal; back in reality, hero's resolve called into question.

The Resurrection – Showdown; final exam to see if lessons are really learned; not a time to relax; faces choice—to follow violent code of the *Ordinary World* or the peaceful way learned in the special world; purification before return to community, cleansing; hero

acts rather than lets himself be rescued; sacrifice—something must be surrendered (old habit or belief); climax and catharsis in mind, body, and emotion; point where greatest awareness is reached; incorporation of lessons; proof of inner change and lessons learned; transformation.

Return with the Elixir – Magic potion with the power to heal, sometimes so powerful that it brings about change in everyone around the hero; might be love, wisdom, responsibility; sometimes sadder but wiser; punctuation at the end of the sentence (period, exclamation point, question mark, ellipses).

(Adapted from *The Writer's Journey* by Chris Vogler)

THE ARCHETYPES

AN ARCHETYPE, IN PSYCHOLOGY, IS A MODEL (a type) of a person, personality, or behavior. Carl G. Jung is the one who first coined the word to suggest “the existence of universal contentless forms that channel experiences and emotions, resulting in recognizable and typical patterns of behavior with certain probable outcomes.” (Wikipedia) For storytellers using *The Hero's Journey*, an archetype is a certain type of character. The storyteller isn't inventing characters at random just to populate the story--each character has a role to play. Each character in your cast of characters has an archetype and so, a purpose. Following is the list of archetypes in *The Hero's Journey*:

Hero – (from the Greek roots, heros and servos, meaning “to protect and serve”) is willing to sacrifice his own needs on behalf of others, like a shepherd who will sacrifice to protect and serve his flock, is on a quest in pursuit of the internal grail which is one's self, essence, true nature.

Mentor – a wise voice, aids or trains the hero, teaches and protects heroes and gives them gifts, often speaks in the voice of a god, or is inspired by divine wisdom.

Threshold Guardian – an obstacle on the road to adventure, presents a menacing face to the hero, but if understood, can be overcome, bypassed, or turned into an ally, role is to test the hero.

Herald – a messenger, issues challenge to the hero, announces the coming of significant change--the *Call to Adventure*.

Shapeshifter – both sides of a mask, throws the hero off center, misleads, shifts in appearance and/or mood, loyalty and sincerity in question, unstable, surfaces doubt in the hero but has the ability to see the potential in everything and everyone.

Shadow – the dark, unconscious side, often unexpressed, unrealized or rejected aspects of one's self, often dedicated to the death, destruction, or defeat of the hero, sometimes an ally but is after the same goal as the hero and uses different tactics, challenges the hero and is a worthy opponent in the struggle, forces the hero to rise to the challenge.

Trickster – a comical sidekick, embodies the energies of mischief and desire for change, provides comic relief for the hero on the journey, points out folly and hypocrisy, draws attention to the imbalance or absurdity of a stagnant psychological situation, brings needed perspective to a situation that is just too serious.

Ally – An ally is a friend and helper of the hero, helping him to achieve his story goal. A special ally is the sidekick.

(Adapted from *The Writer's Journey* by Chris Vogler)

One more archetype is included in the particular *Hero's Journey* that is your path through prison:

Outlaw—rebel, revolutionary, wild man; wants to overturn what isn't working in a situation; strategy is revenge or revolution; challenges conventional wisdom that hero has bought into; is comfortable with conflict and struggle, prefers it over the status quo.

We invite you on this rich and so rewarding human journey of—yourself and your story.

LESSON ONE



THE ORDINARY WORLD, YOUR STORY'S GENRE, & YOUR WRITING LIFE

THE ELDERLY COUPLE SAT ON THE BACK PORCH of their ranch house--eating applesauce and chatting. For three pages. Three long pages. What could I tell the writer about how to fix her opening? Throw it out, that's what.

A character wakes up in the morning, stretches, and sees the bright sun streaming through the window—if he has a window. Otherwise, it's the ringing of the alarm clock. Do you have any idea how many times I've read this same opening or one like it in, maybe, a thousand different manuscripts?

Is there a more crucial scene than the opening scene when it comes to engaging the reader in the drama that is your story? *The Hero's Journey* calls your opening scene *The Ordinary World*, and it must fulfill several different functions. In this lesson we'll look at each of those functions.

STAGE ONE: THE ORDINARY WORLD

THE ORDINARY WORLD IS THE HERO'S HOME TURF, containing his background, all that he is up until the point of entering the special world. He may or may not have the resources and support he needs to slay the dragons he'll meet in the special world, but if he doesn't, he'll acquire them once he gets there. The hero's ordinary world and the special world of the story should be very different although the hero will recognize similarities,

because while he is learning new lessons in the special world, he may have been presented with them in *The Ordinary World* and been too weak or unwilling to respond. These similarities foreshadow the special world and its challenges.

A story opening must accomplish six things: 1) introduce the hero and his major goal and conflict, 2) hook the reader, 3) introduce the story's major setting, 4) introduce the story's overall tone/emotion and create a mood, 5) point with suspense to where the story is going, and 6) at least hint at the story's theme/dramatic question.

One way to hook the reader and begin to engage him in the story is to introduce the high stakes for the hero at the beginning of his adventure. Consider what your hero has to gain or lose and find a way to present this, either in the dialogue, action, or narrative. Another way is to create a mood that emotionally engages the reader. Your hero's adventure should provoke some kind of emotion for him which should then transfer to the reader. If he's betrayed by a friend, he will be angry. If he's abandoned by a lover, sad (and angry). If he's stalked by a killer, afraid. There are a gamut of emotions you can use to begin to create the mood in your *Ordinary World* that will then carry over into the hero's adventure.

Some writers think that the way to engage a reader is to create an exotic setting for the hero, but if the setting is too exotic, the reader won't resonate with it. You want to create a balance between the unfamiliar, in order to keep things interesting, and the familiar so as to get the reader to connect with the hero. This is a balance you'll want to maintain throughout the story.

The tricky part of creating the hero's *Ordinary World* is that it's sometimes rather mundane; at home with his family eating dinner or playing board games, in the classroom at school, in his office. Not very exciting stuff. It's your job as the writer to create tension around something happening in *The Ordinary World* while simultaneously building suspense for what's to come in the special world. This is a great place to foreshadow what your hero may be up against as he moves into his adventure.

The Ordinary World presents a dramatic question that the story then proceeds to provide insight into through the dramatic action. For a genre

story, the question can be as simple as: Will the cops catch up with the bad guys before they blow up one more bank (action-adventure)? Or: Will the detective find the killer (mystery)? For a mainstream or literary story, the question is more complicated: Will the outlaw/hero find reconciliation inside of himself for all of the wrongs done to him? Or: Will the hero choose to confront his internal demons now that he's in prison and is faced with them every single day as his fellow inmates mirror them for him?

Theme. This word seems to create a degree of anxiety in the hearts of the bravest writers. Why is that? Is it because we start our stories, not sure where we're going? Well, so? Isn't that one reason many of us write, to find out where we're going and what we think about where we're going? To discover the underlying purpose of what we're doing and who we are in our life's journey? A story's theme is simply its universal truth--an internal struggle and subsequent insight the reader can recognize and identify with as his own.

How is the hero's Ordinary World and the special world different? How are they the same?

What is your story's mood and how will you introduce it into The Ordinary World?

What are the high stakes for the hero?

What is your story's overall setting?

How will you create tension in The Ordinary World while building suspense for what's to come in the special world?

What is your story's dramatic question?

What is your story's theme, at least what you know of it?

CHOOSING YOUR GENRE

THERE ARE AS MANY GENRES AND COMBINATION OF GENRES for writing your *Hero's Journey* story as there are stories in your head. Any of the following can be written as a fictional short story, a novel, a personal experience short story, or a memoir. It's up to you. How much do you have to say? How deeply do you want to explore yourself, your outlaw archetype, and the external pivotal events of your life?

These are your choices:

1. *Mainstream ~ twentieth-century stories intended for the general public rather than a specific audience; challenges belief systems, suggests a new vision, asks questions, provokes introspection, shakes up rules*
2. *Literary ~ avant-garde, experimental, and exploratory stories, often incorporating unconventional and non-traditional writing style and techniques*
3. *Romance ~ stories focused on the development of the love relationship between the hero and heroine, the tension that pulls them together and/or drives them apart*
4. *Science Fiction / Fantasy ~ stories showing the effects of science, technology, and social and psychological theories on characters in the future/ stories about magical or alternate worlds and kingdoms, using witches, warlocks, dragons and other myth-like creatures*
5. *Action / Adventure ~ fast-paced stories that put the characters at risk or in physical danger; includes thrilling near-misses and courageous and daring feats*

6. *Horror* ~ stories designed to terrify the reader with pursuit and escape type plots, often using supernatural or demonic beings or characters with occult powers
7. *Mystery* ~ plot-driven stories with the emphasis on solving a crime of some kind; involves a series of clues leading to answers, rising tension and often increasing danger as the resolution is approached
8. *Suspense Thrillers* ~ stories that develop a physical and/or psychological threat to the main character, includes a dark character that the protagonist must escape or overcome
9. *Historical* ~ stories taking place in a factual historical time; characters are dropped into real historical events and interact with real historical people as kings and queens; westerns are centered in the old American West with characters from that time; i.e. cowboys, Indians, settlers, miners, etc.
10. *Religious / Spiritual Novels* ~ spiritual and message-driven stories using characters in conflict with good and evil, externally and internally; new age stories that deal with some aspect of the paranormal and/or psychic world
11. *Comedic* ~ stories with an emphasis on the humorous or satirical aspects of the story
12. *Philosophical* ~ stories that make a point about life's meaning; can be allegories or express political ideas; deal with pressing social concerns of a certain period
13. *War* ~ stories set in the middle of war; emphasis is on the battles won and lost and the heroism involved
14. *Juvenile / Young Adult* ~ stories featuring a young protagonist in any of the above categories

It's up to you. This is not an exhaustive list, by the way, but these are the main categories. You may not know what kind of story you're writing, which genre, and you may not care. That's fine, too. But if you want to be more intentional as to the type of story you're writing, the above will serve as a pretty thorough list.

YOUR WRITING LIFE

SIGNING UP FOR THIS COURSE MEANS AT LEAST FOR RIGHT NOW, you have taken on the role of a writer. You can start calling yourself that. It's one of the first lessons I learned as a new writer from an editor who spoke at a writers conference I attended early on in my writing career. The criteria for being a writer is not getting your work published—that's where you earn the title of *author*. No, a *writer* is simply a person who writes.

To take on the writing life means any number of things. It means to become curious, to start listening more than talking, to set goals for what you want to accomplish as a writer, to write something every day, to begin to nurture your creative self, to start showing your writing to others and to take in as much feedback as you can.

You're in a prison, so I don't know how much you can alter your daily schedule, but as much as possible, make sure at least some of every day revolves around your writing. If you can get any quiet at all (yeah, right!), ponder your story ideas, see how many of them are begging to be developed, sit down and write. Or stand up and write. Do what you have to do. Many works of brilliance have been penned while someone was in prison; e.g. *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, *De Profundis* by Oscar Wilde, *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, and *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela, just to name a few. Mandela wrote to his wife, Winnie, from prison: "The cell is an ideal place to learn to know yourself."

To live the writing life means to begin to think like a writer. It's to become curious. Remember what we talked about in the Intro, how the

outside world is closed off to you right now, and how it's time to explore your internal landscape in the same way an explorer would search out a new world. You may think you know yourself, but I can guarantee that you don't know yourself nearly as well as you could if you were to dive into your inner landscape and start poking around. Do you ever wonder where the outlaw part of yourself comes from? The hero part? The explorer part? These are all parts of who you are as a man and a human being, just waiting for you to become curious enough to ask the kinds of questions that will allow a deeper measure of those archetypes to emerge and begin to develop within you. Writing a hero's journey story is an ideal way to begin to approach the parts of yourself you don't yet know as it's a story that's already written. You have only to be the channel, to give that story a voice. The interesting part is that you don't have just one story in you—you have many. All you have to decide for now is which one you want to explore for the purpose of this course.

What are the tools a writer needs? Hey, if you have paper and a few pencils, you have all of the tools you need to be a writer. Well, access to a typewriter or computer would help, so don't get thrown in the hole during this course and get that privilege taken away.

Maybe more important than tools are the attributes a writer needs in order to sustain a writing career. A writer needs:

- *a degree of integrity, not just with his readers, but with himself. There's no point in making a decision to be a writer if you're a liar—lying to others, lying to yourself. It's not a matter of writing the factual truth about everything in your story for this course, but it is a matter of knowing that you're being honest with yourself about the truth in your story.*
- *some kind of work ethic (I prefer work ethic to the word, discipline, which most writers rebel against). You have to know deep down that becoming diligent as a writer is going to benefit you in some way, achieve for you at least a measure of success of some kind.*

- *passion for the ideas that come up and the insight to know which ones to pursue. There's no such thing as a "bad" idea, really, but if you're not ready to execute it, it's not going to work for you at that particular time. The degree of passion you have for an idea is a good clue whether or not that's one you should pursue.*
- *the confidence to use your authentic voice in your writing, however that voice emerges; no censoring, no judging, no pushing against your unique voice.*

The rest you can learn. You can learn how to structure a story. Whether deciding to write a novel or a memoir, you can learn how to develop fictional characters or how to bring real people to life on the page. You can learn to describe a setting so that it's three-dimensional or to create the kind of tension and suspense that holds the reader in the story. You can do this.

Following is a list of questions designed for you to consider the writing part of yourself and make some decisions on a daily basis. The best time to fill out this sheet is right after you finish your writing for the day, or if you didn't write, before you go to bed at night.