

Learn from Prior Heroes

Learn from prior heroes, fictitious or historical. Use their lessons to find your mythological path in life.

In *The Lion King*, a young hero falls his path due to shame and self-loathing. Simba pushes into carefree hedonism through the influence of Timon and Pumba, before his origins, in the form of Nala, remind him of his greatness. Simba's courageous return inspires his hedonistic companions to take heroic action. He defeats Scar with confrontation of his new truth.

Characters without major action could never have been important to the story. The interplay of hero and villain shaped the landscape of Pride Rock. The narrative ends with Simba in his rightful place as king, though now through taking ownership of his identity, not the accident of his birth.

In George Lucas' *Star Wars* trilogies, two hero arcs turn in opposite directions in their most pivotal moments. The arcs unite at their mutual completion. Anakin Skywalker's journey is one of forsaken greatness. A hero is drawn into villainy by the temptations of the dark side: his uncontrollable fear, anger, and hatred. His potential for heroism is what makes his downfall so impactful.

A generation later, his son Luke, who has spent his whole life inactive, falls onto a similar path once his restrictions are removed. Though Luke is tempted, he has the perspective of what has become of his father, and that a similar failure awaits him if he does not alter his course.

Every villain is only a failed hero. Luke's success, made possible by Vader's prior failure, is enough to remind Anakin who he is and how far he has strayed from the hero path. Father saves son. Son saves father. Father's final sacrifice frees son of the darkness he carries within.

Superman, in all its iterations, is the story of a reluctant hero coming into his supremely powerful identity. His only weakness is not knowing how to act. His hesitation is perpetually at odds with his desire to help. Everything he ever does has the power to be important, and so require great scrutiny.

Alter ego Clark Kent must choose: remain hidden and in denial of his identity, or embrace who he is for all to see. Overcoming the internal crisis is what raises him out of the obscurity and onto his throne as Superman, champion of the world. It is the inner struggle to do good in a world that will always require more of him, to save those who cannot save themselves.

In every enduring mythological structure, the hero learns his path in response to his challenges. Black mirrors summon growth to new heights and a shift of identity. The impetus for action propels him to the next level of meaning. He feels most heroic when he can see the effects of his actions.