**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 10

**Task source**: Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE); Inquiry By Design; Ohio Department of Education

**The Hero’s Journey**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context**:

During this classroom performance assessment, you will have an opportunity to think carefully about the idea of a “hero’s journey.” Specifically, you will be asked to think and write about the possibility and the nature of heroism in the contemporary world as you focus on a selection of short fiction you have encountered in high school. Your work begins with an analysis of two perspectives on the nature of the hero’s journey—the first, Joseph Campbell’s famous theory of the “monomyth,” the second, by psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, author of the book *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. These two perspectives are intended to function as “lenses” for the analysis portion of your work; that is, as tools that help you see and say things about the arguments and representations of heroism in those stories.

*The parts of this performance assessment are sequenced in a certain order. Be sure to complete them in order because the work you do in the first parts will help you with the later portions of the assessment. The specific prompts for each of the tasks are found in the pages that follow.*

**Part 1: Getting Oriented to Joseph Campbell’s “Monomyth”**

Joseph Campbell’s theory of “monomyth” is perhaps the most famous description of the hero’s journey. It is given its most exhaustive treatment in his book *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Please review the following summary of the “monomyth”: <http://changingminds.org/disciplines/storytelling/plots/hero_journey/hero_journey.htm>.

Your teacher will lead you through a study and analysis of Campbell’s monomyth. Following this instructional activity, complete the following task:

1. Identify 3 stories (books, comic books, movies, fairy tales, biographies, etc.) you know that reflect or align, at least in part, with Campbell’s monomyth.
2. Create a set of notes for each of these stories that you will submit to your teacher at the end of the assessment. Your notes should refer to specific places in each story that map to Campbell’s monomyth structure. In your notes, analyze how well each story fits the monomyth structure.

**Part 2: Complicating Monomyth: Jonathon Shay on the Dark Side of the Hero’s Journey**

Campbell’s notion of monomyth, while popular and compelling, has critics. In this part of the task you will have an opportunity to explore another aspect of the hero’s journey that some think is obscured in Campbell’s theory.

1. Read the selection on page 5 of this task from *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* by Jonathon Shay. Be sure to also read the introduction to Jonathon Shay at the top of the page.
2. Write a 1-2 page response to the following questions, to be submitted to your teacher at the end of the assessment:
   * In this selection, what are Shay’s arguments about the idea of heroes?
   * How do Shay’s arguments complicate or “talk back to” Campbell’s monomyth account of the hero’s journey? Be sure to use examples from Shay and Campbell to explain what you mean.

**Part 3: Studying the Hero’s Stories**

Joseph Campbell argued that the monomyth structure was found in myths and stories across many times and cultures—that there was something seemingly universal in it. But as Shay suggests, the hero’s journey in different times and cultures may be more complicated than the monomyth suggests. In this part of the task, you will select and read **three to five** additional stories about heroes to develop your own perspective on heroes. Each of the stories you select can be read as an argument about the possibility and nature of heroism in particular moments and places in the world.

1. Select, with your teacher’s approval, three to five stories about heroes. Your teacher may require up to two texts studied in class. Texts can include fiction or non-fiction books, poems, songs, shorts stories, biographies/memoirs, articles, graphic novels, comic books, films, television shows, or multimedia/digital texts.

**The collection of stories must represent either: A) Heroes across time (e.g., ancient to contemporary heroes); OR B) Heroes from across cultures (e.g., at least two regions of the world or at least two different ethnic/language groups within the United States).** All selected texts must include a narrative (a story) about a hero that is conveyed through words.

1. For EACH of the stories you chose, make notes in response to the following two questions:
   * Is the protagonist a hero?
   * What does this story suggest (or, what arguments does it make) about the concept of the hero in the specific time and/or culture it represents?
2. In your notes, please refer to specific lines in the story and in the Campbell and Shay texts. You may also find it useful to refer to one or more of the other stories you explored during this study. In any case, be sure to cite specific lines/moments to support your ideas. These notes will be submitted to your teacher to be scored as part of this performance task.

**Part 4: Synthesizing: The Hero Anthology Project**

Imagine that you are producing a collection of hero stories. Prepare the editor’s introduction to the section titled either “Heroes Across the Ages” OR “Heroes Across Cultures.” You will write a 1000–1500 word typed introduction synthesizing your perspectives on the texts. In this introduction:

1. Decide which texts you want to include and in which order (between 3 and 5 texts).
2. Discuss varied views of the hero’s journey (Campbell, Shay) as you develop and argue for including these stories in your anthology.
3. Provide an analysis of each of the stories that explains why you have included it, and what kind of hero it presents. In what sense is the protagonist in the story a “hero”?
4. Propose a set of questions about the concept of the “hero” for readers to consider as they read the anthology.

As editor, you have the opportunity to put forth your own perspective on heroes in the introduction as well as to introduce the perspectives on heroism represented within and across the texts you select. Your introduction should be clear, to the point, and engaging. This work should be typed and submitted to your teacher with all of your notes and your reflection below.

**Part 5: Reflection Task**

In a 250-500 word typed essay, reflect on what you have learned from completing this performance assessment. In your response, consider the following questions:

* What did you learn from reading stories through the perspectives of Campbell and then Shay about the different things a reader/viewer sees when looking through multiple lenses, and about the value of looking from different vantage points?
* What specific activities, processes, or strategies helped you develop and refine your ideas or your writing? Explain how these strategies helped.
* What did you learn about yourself, and/or ways of learning that worked or did not work well for you? Do you see ways to apply your learning to your future work or other contexts?
* In what ways could you improve on your work on the culminating task (the Anthology Project), OR if you could do it over, what would you have done differently?

1. **Final product**:

You will submit deliverables for each part of the task as you go. The deliverables are:

* **Part 1:** Identify and make notes on three stories that fit Campbell’s monomyth. You will submit one page of notes on each of three stories.
* **Part 2**: Write a 1–2 page response in which you compare and contrast Shay and Campbell’s ideas about the hero’s journey. You will explain Shay’s argument and explore its relationship to Campbell’s monomyth.
* **Part 3:** Submit one page of notes on each of the five selected hero stories in which you use the Campbell or Shay lens to analyze the representations of heroism.
* **Part 4:** Write a 1000–1500 word typed analytical essay synthesizing your perspectives on the texts. The essay will be about a collection of text on either A) “Heroes Across Ages,” or B) “Heroes Across Cultures.”
* **Part 5:** Write a 250–500 word typed reflection essay on what you learned from completing the performance assessment.

**Additional Information**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**

* Reading/viewing comprehension
* Compare/contrast abilities
* Textual analysis
* Evidence-based writing (both explanatory and narrative)

1. **Materials needed:**

* Excerpt from Jonathon Shay’s *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (see page 5)
* Word processing software
* Access to the library and/or Internet to obtain 3–5 texts to include in your anthology (Texts can include fiction or non-fiction books, poems, songs, shorts stories, biographies/memoirs, articles, graphic novels, comic books, films, television shoes, or multi-media/digital texts)

1. **Time requirements:**

This task will require approximately four weeks.

1. **Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the SCALE Textual Analysis Rubric (Gr 10). You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.

***Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming***

**Jonathan Shay**, M.D., Ph.D. has been a staff psychiatrist at the Department of Veteran Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Boston since 1987. In his work at the clinic, Dr. Shay cares exclusively for combat veterans with severe psychological injuries. He is the author of *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994) and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2002), two books in which he uses Homer’s epic poems as lenses to better understand and treat the trauma suffered by modern war veterans. He was awarded a MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” in 2007.

