



STORY^{FOR} LAWYERS

EVERY CLIENT HAS A STORY. FIND IT AND TELL IT WELL.

The Secret Sauce of Master Storytelling: How “The Hero’s Journey” Can Change the Way You Practice Law.

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I believe a great story has the power to change the world. When it comes to our clients, a great story can save a life.

Lately I have been [immersing myself in the study of all things Joseph Campbell, author of the classic story work, “The Hero With a Thousand Faces.”](#) Campbell’s “Monomyth” story structure (i.e. “The Hero’s Journey”) is my guiding light for the story development work I do in the legal arena – and it should be yours too.

On that note, I recently discovered this incredible fifteen-minute video (below) that breaks down story structure in a way very similar to, but somewhat simpler than, the one Campbell pioneered. Read on while I set the stage a little more, and then check out the video link below.

At the heart of the Monomyth is the idea that every story is essentially the same. It follows a character who sets out on a journey, departs an “ordinary world”, encounters life or death trials and tribulations, and eventually returns home having grown and changed from the journey. Campbell also reveals at least a dozen other components to the Journey – story points that occur along the way.

Campbell discovered that this specific structure appears repeatedly in stories throughout the ages and across all cultures. It taps into deeper universal truths about life and the human psyche that resonate in a much more powerful way with the audience. This is because we have all lived this journey in some way, shape or form.

“Every Story is the Same”, is not only a wonderful primer on Campbell and the Monomyth, but it takes it to the next level and simplifies the journey into an even more basic structure, which will help all of you build your own stories.

Once we master the Monomyth, we lawyers learn how to take our decision-makers on an emotional journey, one based on *empathy*. Instead of viewing our client as “the other”, we become them. We walk their path. We see the world through their eyes. In so doing, we reach true connection and true understanding. Screenwriter Dan Harmon sums it up best when he says:

All life, including the human mind, and the communities we create, marches to the same specific beat. If the story marches to this beat, it will resonate. It will send an audience’s ego on a brief trip to the unconscious and back. The audience has an instinctive taste for that and they’re going to say, ‘yum.’

So, bon appétit, and thank you to Will Schoder for this impeccably crafted story lesson, and to Dan Harmon for creating and sharing this simplified take on the Hero’s Journey! For more free resources, videos, and goodies about the Hero’s Journey, visit www.dmajorfilms.com/hero.



<https://youtu.be/LuD2Aa0zFiA>

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About Me

I have been practicing law for over twenty years. I am also an award-winning filmmaker, writer, teacher and musician.

After graduating from Washington University School of Law (in St. Louis) in 1996, I immediately packed my bags and headed West. I began my career as a Maricopa County Public Defender in Phoenix. I then moved into private practice at a large firm's white collar crime and "special matters" unit. I then spent twelve years as an Assistant Federal Public Defender, where I defended just about every kind of federal crime imaginable.

Along the way, my love of storytelling and filmmaking never left me. I quickly learned that storytelling is one of, if not the, most important part of a lawyer's job. It wasn't about weaving a fictional yarn. Instead, it was about finding the emotional truth of the case and telling the client's story in a way that creates true connection and understanding.

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