



The American Hero-Quester

Guide for Curriculum Unit 79.01.01
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The purpose of this unit is to provide a structure for students to see connections between literary works. Mythology supplies the unifying elements; specifically, it is the archetypal pattern of the hero-quest myth—the central theme of all literature—that will be the structural framework of the project. A primary objective is to place the hero of American fiction squarely in the tradition of the hero-quester, to view him as yet another journeyman on the standard path taken by all mythological heroes in their search for identity. The focus is the most elaborate experience in the heroic quest pattern—the process of initiation, which, in American literature, characteristically takes place away from society (literally and/or symbolically). The narrative begins with a general section on myth; it then moves through brief studies of archetypes, quest myths, and initiation experiences (for American hero-questers). Suggested activities are derived from the four sections reviewed in the narrative. The student bibliography is divided into a section on mythology and one on general fiction. An annotated bibliography for teachers concludes the project.

(Recommended for High School English II (advanced) and English III (American literature) classes.)

Key Words

Mythology Origins American Literature Hero-Quest

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