

Video Transcript

Nickolas :

Welcome to our group project, we did an analysis of Dr. Horrible's sing-along blog to see if the hero's journey can be applied to villainous characters.

We know that villains have a story arc, very similarly to heroes, usually we aren't given very much background information on the villain, but in this case, he is the main character. The questions are; do they fit into the story structure that is set around heroes and positive main characters? If they do, is it because this film is a special circumstance, which allows them to act in the ways of heroes, and if they don't, why don't they?

Campbell's theory is the most straightforward outline of the heroic narrative template, so we will examine our plot through his theory first.

Amy:

Part 1, the separation and departure. The call to adventure.

In Campbell's theory, the call to adventure may be refused because the hero feels that he is acting in his own best interests. However, for the purposes of our analysis, we are viewing the hero's journey from the perspective of the villain.

Supernatural aid. Throughout the film Dr. Horrible makes use of several different supernatural aids, and his adventure and goal cannot be completed without these tools. Dr. Horrible mentions the trans-matter ray, but most important to him are the freeze ray and the death ray. The latter two aids are what Dr. Horrible utilizes in the tasks which he is told will gain him entrance into the evil league of evil.

Crossing the first threshold. Dr. Horrible crosses the first threshold when he receives the letter from the league granting him admission into the league on the condition that he completes an assigned task. Up to that point, Dr. Horrible sent his application to enter the league and had been waiting for a response. The arrival of that response kicks his adventure into gear.

Part 2. The road of trials.

Throughout the running of the film, Dr. Horrible not only engages in tasks assigned by the league, but also takes on other personal tasks. First, the league requests that he commit a crime, and when he fails to complete that task, they assign the task of a murder. In the meantime, Dr. Horrible is undertaking other personal tasks, such as vying for the

attention of the girl, and rising above his arch nemesis.

The meeting with the goddess. For the purpose of this analysis, being that it is from the villain's perspective, we decided to call this a 'fatal motivation'. Captain Hammer, the arch nemesis of our villain, taunts Dr. Horrible incessantly about things he knows upset him. If not for this taunting, Dr. Horrible may not have engaged in the task of murder, and he would have passed by his opportunity to achieve his goal of entering the league.

Woman as temptress. While Dr. Horrible is about to engage in his task of committing a crime, Penny comes along and unwittingly proceeds to distract him. She begins to strike up a conversation with him and, because he longed for her attention, Dr. Horrible neglects his criminal activity, allowing Captain Hammer to foil it.

Atonement with the father. Dr. Horrible succeeds in injuring Captain Hammer, who runs away crying about being injured, and needing a maternal woman to help him. This defeat represents atonement with the father figure in that Dr. Horrible is finally able to have some form of victory over the dominant male figure with taunts and belittles him.

Apotheosis. After Dr. Horrible discovers that Penny has died, he is immediately sad and regretful of the events leading up to her death. Once he enters back into daily life, he is no longer happy, and committing crimes seems to be void of any meaning because she is not there. At the moment of her death Dr. Horrible has the epiphany that while he achieved his ultimate goal by getting into the league, it just doesn't seem to matter as much any more.

The ultimate boon. Dr. Horrible achieves his goal and is able to prove to himself that he is capable and worthy of entering into the evil league of evil, when he receives word of his admission from Bad Horse.

Part 3. The return and reintegration into society. The film ends abruptly with Dr. Horrible entering a conference room with whom we presume to be the other members of the league, and he closes the doors, and it's the end. We do not get to witness what happens once his adventure and task have both been accomplished, nor do we get to see how he adjusts to his new life.

Turner's theory, the forest of symbols. Part 1, the separation. Dr. Horrible's self-assigned task of getting into the evil league of evil symbolizes a rite of passage. His plans involve changes to life as he knows it. The first stage to his transition is the separation. When Dr. Horrible receives his letter of conditional offer to enter the league, his companion, Moist, offers to be available, should any assistance be required to complete

the task. This moment clearly represents a separation. Dr. Horrible realizes that in order to be successful in getting into the league, he needs to commit the evil deeds on his own. His success with the task must represent the evil within himself, no one else, and he is aware that the granters of his admission will be watching him as he carries out the crime.

Part 2, the limnal period. The limnal period, that which represents the transition zone between the designation of a task and the consummation of the passage, is never representative of the individual's life before or after the event. In Dr. Horrible's sing-along blog the limnal period begins when the character receives his conditional offer of admission into the evil league of evil, and ends when the task is complete. During this period, there is a lot of struggle for Dr. Horrible, as he is trying to carry out his criminal task and his arch nemesis, Captain Hammer, is also taunting and playing the part of a hero. This period is not representative of his life in the beginning, and although we do not get to witness how his life was following, we can assume that it was not as tense as the limnal period of his passage.

Part 3, aggregation. This period, representing the time when life returns back to stable, and the subject must now follow a defined structure in his or her life, begins when Penny dies and Dr. Horrible is granted admission into the evil league of evil. He continues to carry out crime, however, it does not appear to arouse excitement for him. This could be a combination of returning to life having completed his biggest task and the death of the girl he was in love with. In either case, Dr. Horrible's life returns to a more normal state that is different from prior to his adventure and from the limnal period. The aggregation is also difficult to comment on for this film because the end is abrupt, and occurs before we actually get to witness the ceremonial transition or life after his mission.

Nickolas:

Proppian analysis examines the structure of the plot of a work, and determines what qualities the storyline has in common with the folktale structure. We performed this analysis to examine whether a story that features the villain as the main character follows the folktale structure. As we have discovered, the villain in this case does fit into the outlines which have been typified by heroes, but we wanted to make sure the story itself was not somehow different from the stories that have heroic leads and traditional character archetypes. The moves that are present in Dr. Horrible are as follows.

The preparatory part is not included in the film, and neither is much of the introduction. We are presented with an established villain, who already has a goal. The lack Dr. Horrible faces is a lack of membership into the evil league of evil. To join the

league, he sent in an application for membership. The compound Dr. Horrible needs is being transported via van. Dr. Horrible hijacks the van. He acquires the wonderflonium. Dr. Horrible engages Captain hammer in combat. Captain hammer is defeated. As a result of Dr. Horrible's success in defeating Captain hammer, he is welcomed into the evil league of evil. Recognition of Dr. Horrible is shown in the newspaper headline 'worst villian ever', after his defeat of Captain hammer. There is a transformation from a freelance villain, in a white lab coat, to a member of the evil league of evil, in a red lab coat. This Proppian analysis shows that Dr. Horrible's sing-along blog does indeed fit the folktale structure, which validates the findings of our other two analysis.

Villains can follow the same path as any heroic character, though motivations and driving forces are flipped to apply the sinister attitudes of the villain. Further analysis could yeild even more insight into villainy, for example, when villains are not main characters, do they still exhibit the heroic journey? How much information is neccessary to make the destinction between a character that follows the heroic journey and one that does not? If a character, such as Captain hammer, does not seem to follow the heroic journey, does that mean taht he is not a hero? Is the heroic journey unique to main characters? All these questions can be answered through further investigation into modern applications of the heroic journey and the alignment of the character that is analysed.

Thanks for listening!