



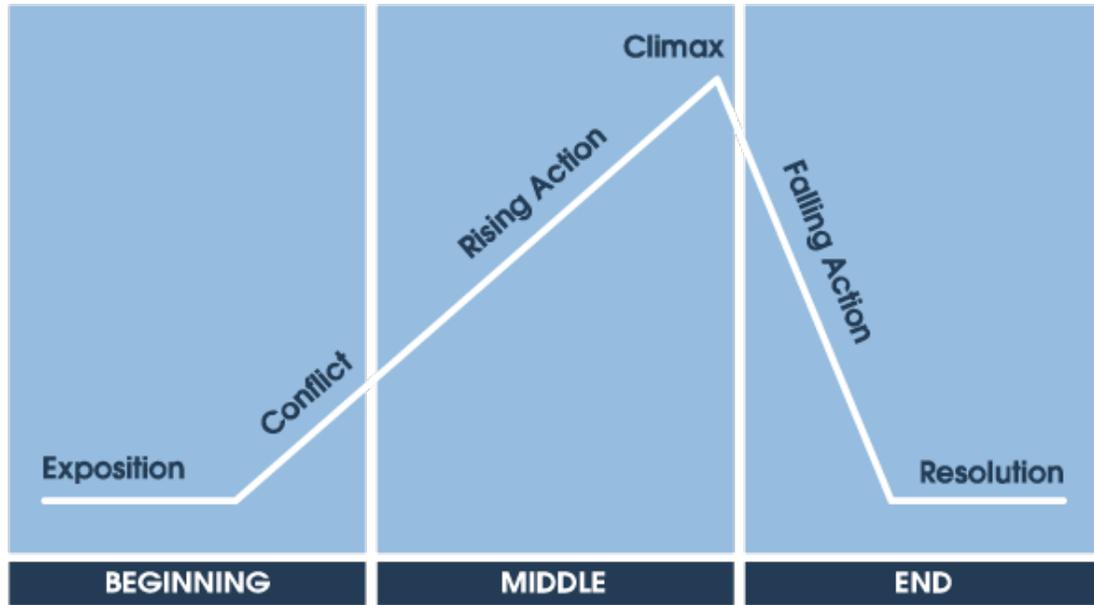
The Mystery Writer's Hero's Journey *Cheat Sheet*

Below is an overview of how I see the cozy mystery novel in terms of the hero's journey. I hope that you ponder this structure and think about how it applies to the cozy mysteries you read, as well as your own, if you are writing one.

First, here is the overview of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. There are many layers within the different elements, but this is the core structure:

1. Hero lives in the **ORDINARY WORLD**
2. **CALL TO ADVENTURE**
3. **REFUSAL OF THE CALL**
4. **CROSSING THE THRESHOLD**--to some magical or new world, which is entering...
5. ...the **BELLY OF THE WHALE**). At this point, there is no return.
6. **TESTS AND ALLIES**
7. **ROAD OF TRIALS**
8. **CENTRAL ORDEAL** (which is the achievement of the goal)
9. **REFUSAL OF THE RETURN** (not necessarily by choice)
10. **RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR**
11. **MASTER OF TWO WORLDS**

When you plot out a story on a "story plot diagram" (middle school teacher here!), you can plot the hero's journey onto it to align with the plot elements:



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Exposition

ORDINARY WORLD
 CALL TO ADVENTURE
 REFUSAL OF THE CALL
 CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Conflict/Rising Action

BELLY OF THE BEAST
 TESTS AND ALLIES
 ROAD OF TRIALS
 APPROACH to the INNERMOST CAVE
 CENTRAL OREAL
 THE ROAD BACK

Climax

RESURRECTION

Falling Action

RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR

Resolution

MASTER OF TWO WORLDS

I think it is quite interesting to look at your plot using both tools/methods because it makes you think carefully about the pacing and the emotional satisfaction elements.

Now, here is the Hero's Journey, which I adapted for the cozy mystery novel. For simplicity in explaining the structure, I'll use the term 'heroine' rather than hero/heroine.

1. Using the amateur sleuth or detective as our heroine, she lives in her **ORDINARY WORLD** before the murder happens. She's not involved in it at all.
 - a. If this is the first novel in a series, the **ORDINARY WORLD** also means that the heroine is not yet an amateur sleuth.
 - b. FYI, the poor victim's **ORDINARY WORLD** is also disrupted when he/she dies!
2. **CALL TO ADVENTURE** occurs when the murder is discovered.
3. **REFUSAL OF THE CALL** occurs when the amateur sleuth feels pulled to investigate, but doesn't feel qualified or want to dive into the investigation. If the novel in question is a detective novel and the hero is a detective, the **REFUSAL OF THE CALL** occurs when he/she doesn't want the case
4. **CROSSING THE THRESHOLD** in a mystery means the heroine, aka sleuth, takes the case and/or becomes an active investigator.
5. **BELLY OF THE BEAST** At this point, there is no turning back because the sleuth (or loved ones) may well be in danger.
6. **TESTS AND TRIALS...**
7. ...and **THE ROAD OF TRIALS** = LIES, DECEPTION, CLUES, RED HERRINGS, all laid out by the villain (the murderer)
8. **Central Ordeal** is a major turning point. It leads to **The Reward**, which is when the sleuth thinks the mystery is solved. It's a false victory.
9. **The Road Back** is celebration. Except the truth is revealed and the final climactic scene is imminent. A new clue reveals the actual truth, or the sleuth is cornered or confronted by the villain, or is in some other danger.
10. Finally, during the **Resurrection**, the sleuth manages to corner or defeat the killer. She may have managed to contact the authorities or used her wits to trap him/her. **RETURNING WITH THE ELIXIR**, in a mystery, is justice.
11. Finally, the sleuth can return to her Ordinary World, but now she is the **MASTER OF TWO WORLDS**. She has solved a murder and will never be quite the same.

And there you have it!

Now, we can also look at the Hero's Journey—up to a point—in terms of the villain (remember, every character is the hero of his/her own journey!).

1. The villain's **ORDINARY WORLD** is where he/she lives before the murder happens.

2. **CALL TO ADVENTURE** He/she is facing the moment of truth. To kill or not to kill (or commit whatever crime is being considered)?
3. **REFUSAL OF THE CALL** Of course he/she shouldn't kill! It's a bad idea.
4. **CROSSING THE THRESHOLD** But of course he/she does commit the murder (or crime).
5. **BELLY OF THE BEAST** At this point, there is no turning back because the deed is done and the villain must protect his/her secret at all costs.
6. **TESTS AND TRIALS...**
7. ...and **THE ROAD OF TRIALS** = the villain actively working to lead the sleuth astray and/or evading detection.
8. **CENTRAL ORDEAL and the ROAD BACK** is when the villain thinks he/she has escaped detection and he/she is safe from discovery.

Now, this is the moment when the hero's journey falls apart for the villain. He/she can't actually complete the journey and also be brought to justice. In a cozy mystery, **RETURNING WITH THE ELIXIR** and becoming the **MASTER OF TWO WORLDS** can't actually happen for the villain, but that's okay. We want the sleuth to win!

Thank you for attending my class!

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