

WHO ARE HEROES?

An Analysis of the Literary Hero and an Interpretation of the Modern Hero

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ABSTRACT

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Heroes appear in literature and reality in various forms. Given the changing times, the definition of heroism has evolved to incorporate modern societal values, but remains built on a structural foundation of moral righteousness prevalent in philosophy. Utilizing Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill's philosophical evaluations of moral righteousness and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, this thesis seeks to understand the structural components to heroism both in theoretical and practical application. Analysis of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series will provide distinctions between traditional and modern heroism as well as highlight developments of hero archetypes. Through understanding these idealized hero archetypes in literature, this thesis will further examine heroism and its manifestation in the modern world through case studies of activists, whistleblowers, doctors, teachers, mentors, and good Samaritans – ultimately bringing light to the compassionate, empathic, and inspirational qualities prevalent across heroic figures.

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Introduction

Batman is a hero. Captain America is a hero. Even Tony Stark, the most self-absorbed of the Avengers is a hero because of his conscious self-sacrifice of his life and his large ego to improve innocent lives. At first glance, our world is devoid of such superheroes. But what about the everyday hero? Who are the people children admire and remark, “that’s who I want to be when I grow up?” In literature, the traditional epic hero is often one who is equipped with extraordinary strength or courage, one who takes risks in wars in order to achieve glory and safety for the society he protects. However, throughout the years, the portrayal of heroes has evolved to incorporate ideals of the particular society or time period. Heroes are now prevalent in our modern world – activists, doctors, soldiers, teachers, and mentors – those who are equipped with more than just mental strength and physical stamina. They are equipped with moral virtue, compassionate empathy, and the power to impact others.

In order to truly identify these heroes, one must first understand the word itself. *Hero* – in such a simple word lies numerous interpretations that are dependent upon the layout of the story, the context of the situation, and the audience’s cultural background. How does one define a word that continues to evolve with the changing dynamics of society and varies from person to person? How does one truly understand a hero if heroic impact lies in the eye of the beholder? When people are surveyed, why isn’t there a consensus about what a hero looks like? Is a Marvel superhero like Spiderman just as heroic as a literary hero like Beowulf? Is their impact more or less significant than that of a doctor or teacher? This begs the question -- who are heroes? How does one evaluate heroism, and how are they defined in modern society?

This thesis analyzes the theoretical definition of heroism, using moral righteousness as a core component of theoretical heroism. The first section will compare works of philosophers,

such as John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and David Hume, who analyze different pieces of the structural framework for evaluating heroes and offer different interpretations of moral righteousness. This research will then reveal that this underlying framework of intentions, actions, and consequences can be used to evaluate a hero's past, present, and future. By dissecting each segment independently, this section will reveal that a true hero will inevitably exhibit all three components in their path of heroism.

The following section will utilize Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* to examine the practical definition of heroism, introducing a hero's journey as a lens to frame the intentions, actions, and consequences, as well as outline key differences between the traditional and modern hero's journeys. This provides a more internal evaluation of a hero's thoughts and behaviors. The practical definition will also address the societal significance of heroes – why society needs heroes and what is expected from heroes, as well as clarify evaluation metrics – heroic legacy versus heroic impact, magnitude of impact, and the agency issue of heroism from an external perspective.

The third section will take this practical definition and apply it to J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. This section will not only compare the traditional hero and the modern hero, but also segment the modern hero into three archetypes – the Anti-Hero, the Catalyst Hero, and the Everyman Hero. This thesis will focus specifically on the characters that exemplify these hero archetypes: Harry Potter as the traditional hero, Severus Snape as the anti-hero, Albus Dumbledore as the catalyst hero, and Neville Longbottom as the everyman hero, and this analysis will highlight attributes that factor into the formulation of these heroes and detail the lasting impact they have on both their surroundings and the reader.

The final section will focus on the modern hero – how the definition has adapted to changing societal needs and how modern heroes are manifested in everyday life. Applying the practical definition of heroism, this section will examine cases of doctors, teachers, activists, mentors, and good Samaritans, and how their heroic impacts and legacies are created and perceived. This section seeks to answer – how have these silent heroes influenced society? How have they changed our perspective on heroism? Drawing conclusions from the entirety of analysis, this thesis will make the claim that perhaps heroes are those who not only serve others in their times of greatest need at a personal sacrifice, but also inspire recipients to do the same for others, igniting an exponential chain of the “pay-it-forward” mentality that perpetuates across generations.

Chapter 1: The Theoretical Definition of a Hero

The most basic definition of a hero as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is 1) “a person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.” 2) “a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability. According to Merriam-Webster, a hero is a person “who shows great courage, the principal male character in a literary or dramatic work, or the central figure in an event, period, or movement.” Just in these two definitions alone, there are different interpretations of what it means to be a hero. However, these dictionary definitions present surface-level, and arguably outdated interpretations of the word, because beyond one’s color, sex, achievements, background, etc., heroism can be traced to a common underlying foundation.

This project will define moral righteousness as a core component of heroism. From the day humans are born, individuals attempt to make sense of the world around them. With practice and experimentation, one develops a foundational knowledge of good and bad – do not break the law, do not use fists instead of words, do not cheat or steal. This development progresses with age, as one acknowledges societal values whilst making sense of one’s own. An individual will continue defining core values, refining personal ethics, ultimately constructing the type of person he aspires to be and the kind of impact he will leave behind. Moral judgements include, but are not limited to, evaluations of intentions, actions or inactions, or character traits of a person based on a standard of moral “Good” and “Bad.” Because heroism incorporates the concept of admiration of an individual, it should be acknowledged that admiration standalone is insufficient, as one can admire someone in both morally righteous and morally questionable circumstances. For this project, true heroism will only exist in morally righteous contexts, defined by one’s adherence to the moral code and actions taken for society’s benefit.

In order to better understand this foundation of moral righteousness, one must understand the philosophical interpretations of morality. Consider the hypothetical example of Superman, a fictional hero, placed in a situation where he is faced with an unstoppable train heading for one of two groups of innocent civilians – one track leading toward Superman’s family member, and the other leading toward a group of five strangers. Assume he has the power to pull a lever, dictating the train’s course on one of two tracks. This presents an ethical dilemma where one’s actions are evaluated differently based on different philosophical focuses. The ordinary individual is similarly presented with ethical dilemmas on an everyday basis. What does one do if a barista returns one change of a twenty-dollar bill instead of a ten? What does one do when faced with a friend who confides in one about interfering in a mutual friend’s marriage? What does one’s actions reveal about one’s principles, and are actions sufficient in determining moral righteousness? Various philosophers construct theories that allow for structured approaches in evaluating morality. At the core of philosophies presented by Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill, lie the key elements of intention, action, and consequence.

Delving into the first component of intention, Immanuel Kant presents virtue-based moral theories, explaining the insufficiency in justification of one’s moral righteousness through consequences only. A consequence standalone cannot be unconditionally good. The possession or achievement of wealth, courage, and even joy, in excess is susceptible to greater harm than benefit to others. When these seemingly “good” concepts are not fueled with good will, they lack moral worth. Actions and consequences may not be accurate determinants of moral righteousness because the evaluation is devoid of one’s underlying intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. Thus, Kant poses intention as a better evaluation criteria, because in any given

situation, most external considerations are beyond one's control. One can only truly control one's intentions.

Kant further explains that inherent good is found in one's good will, the rational moral decision, and the act of duty rather than inclination. Good will is morally righteous, even when the following action and consequence fail to fulfill the purpose. Acting with inclination describes performing an action with an ulterior motive, such as reaping benefits or self-satisfaction, instead of duty to the moral code. While inclination-fueled actions – self-interested or not – may not be morally dubious, Kant's argument poses that only duty-driven actions possess moral worth. These inclination-driven actions encompass sympathy-driven actions of aiding the hungry man steal apples from a fruit stand – a compassionate act on the surface, but an act devoid of moral worth at its core – or the act of adhering to price discrimination laws based on the fear of retribution. Kant argues a rational approach to facing moral dilemmas – one that filters out intrinsic motivations of inclination and even, emotion. Taking the aforementioned example of Superman and the train, the application of Kant's theory claims that the act of stopping the train is only deemed morally righteous if driven by his moral obligation – not driven by instinct, sympathy, or fear, but rather his duty. However, in the real world, this philosophy may be inapplicable given the emotional nature of the human species. Thus, the forgoing of human emotion to pursue a purely rational approach in moral decision-making may not be probable in execution.

Posing a contrasting argument in evaluating intention is David Hume, whose position argues for a basis of passion rather than rationality. His theory is founded on four points: “(1) Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is the ‘slave of the passions’ (2) Moral distinctions are not derived from reason. (3) Moral distinctions are derived from the moral

sentiments: feelings of approval (esteem, praise) and disapproval (blame) felt by spectators who contemplate a character trait or action. (4) While some virtues and vices are natural, others, including justice, are artificial.”¹ Similar to Kant, Hume argues that actions are immediate byproducts of intentions, which are driven directly by passions, defined as motivating feelings of physical or psychological pleasure or pain, such as “desire and aversion, hope and fear, joy and grief.”² Hume’s claim is not that reason is insignificant in propelling one to action, but that reason alone is insufficient. Passion guides rational reasoning, hence rational reasoning seen as “enslaved” to passion.

This perspective assumes that a hero may be one who, with a heart of service, intends to save the world, only to have poor execution and minimal impact. Superman may have failed to stop the train, but he had every intention of jumping in front of the trolley itself, seeking help from others onboard, or using his superhuman strength to stop that train. Irrespective of the number of lives saved or not, his moral righteousness is evaluated on the basis of sympathy, empathy, fear, emotion-driven intention. While theoretically sound, the evaluation of one’s intention standalone, without follow-through of morally righteous actions, may be insufficient to objective observers.

Action is the following byproduct of intention. Whilst many philosophers focus on the framing of one’s actions or the evaluation of produced consequences, few address action alone, and for good reason. Action standalone is futile in determining moral righteousness. Looking at the Superman example taking a new assumption of the train heading toward two tracks, one with

¹ Rachel Cohon, "Hume's Moral Philosophy," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, October 29, 2004, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/>.

² Rachel Cohon, "Hume's Moral Philosophy," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, October 29, 2004, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/>.

people and one without, it may be effective to analyze the three components separately.

Superman's intention is to save people. His action is to pull a lever. His desired consequence is to proactively prevent innocent deaths. Now, if we eliminate the altruistic intention and consequence and focus only on the action of pulling a lever, the action is inherently neutral. Just as holding a pencil or sitting on a chair or walking across a street is done without the intent of helping others and without the benefit to society, an action alone is cannot be morally good or bad. Only when coupled with intention and/or consequence can there be a resulting moral goodness or lack thereof. Heroic intention coupled with action is a person who wants to save the civilians and pulls a lever – only to realize he pulled the wrong lever, resulting in deaths of civilians anyway. Heroic action paired with consequence is a happy accident – a conductor who accidentally fell into the lever, preventing the deaths of many.

That being said, some actions are more nuanced or require additional detail in evaluation. Take for example the action of donating a hundred dollars to charity. The intention of benefiting a greater cause, when paired with the act of giving to others is morally good. However, throw in the consideration of the philanthropist's character – does the magnitude of the heroic act change if performed by a wealthy individual versus a poor individual? One could argue that they share identical intentions of helping a good cause and consequences of allowing that money to benefit society. However, human intuition would suggest that these two situations are different. Because the poor person is poor, the act of donating money requires substantially more effort than it would for the rich person. In romanticized terms, one's financial capacity does not necessarily define ones' character, however one's effort can be interpreted as a direct reflection of ones' character. A hundred dollars out of a hundred and one dollars in one's pocket is different from a hundred dollars out of a million in the bank. The greater extent of generosity and self-sacrifice as

demonstrated by the poor individual compared to that of the rich individual is thus a reflection of the poor man's character. Therefore, this nuance of one's character can serve in conjunction with intention in the process of propelling action.

The final piece of the linear progression is consequence. Philosophers like John Stuart Mill explore consequentialism, a theory placing greatest moral worth on actions that produce results maximizing total utility. As indicated by the name, consequentialism is a "the ends justify the means" type of theory, focusing on the aftermath, the overall consequences and precipitating effects of actions. Mill's exposition of utilitarianism centers around maximizing good, such as pleasure, and minimizing bad, such as pain. In other words, in the original Superman scenario, the consequentialist view assumes that the most morally righteous Superman would prefer the train to cause one innocent death instead of the five. However, standalone, results do not always justify the means, for consequentialism may be controversial in practice. In practice, labeling one a "hero" for saving the five instead of the one, with the understanding that one's actions were driven by monetary bribes or sheer luck, may seem undeserving. In practice, heroic intention, action, and consequence each cannot standalone, for an incomplete progression through the three elements leaves room for doubt.

This project poses the argument that a true hero will not only exhibit all essential factors of intention, action, and consequence, but also inspire others in their respective journeys to heroism. One must have the concern for other's wellbeing, the altruistic intention. One must act in accordance of the moral code, abiding by societal laws and ethics. One must produce beneficial impact, even if the resulting impact is different from what was intended – which is seen through examples in scientific and technological advancement. For example, efforts to explore the moon resulted in multiple failures of the mission, but established the research and

development to ignite a technological revolution worldwide, which ultimately led to new discoveries, global productivity, etc., thus solving a need the world never knew it had. One must also inspire others in this process of heroism, since the external perception created by the recipient of the heroic act is significant in evaluating the heroic impact and legacy. While there are silent heroes that go unrecognized, the process of inspiring others to achieve a certain level of self-actualization is crucial in creating the cycle of leading one's heroic life and catalyzing another's heroic journey.

Religious Virtues

As mentioned, philosophy provides a foundation by which one can evaluate heroism. However, as Hume discussed, the ordinary person does not live life solely by rational philosophy. Humans are naturally attracted to heroic figures because they are a source of inspiration, and thus, many people turn to religion. Most religions have an idealized role model, that, when paired with religious teachings, provides a way to look at heroism in totality. Instead of constant rational evaluation of the world, the ordinary person may turn to religion as a guide to moral righteousness, striving to achieve higher levels of enlightenment as demonstrated by the ideal figures. Each religious text lays out the ideal figure's journeys, detailing everything from a call to action to trials and challenges faced in the process. Each figure proceeds through his unique intentions, actions, and consequences, as they impart the religion's respective moral virtues.

For Christianity, there is Jesus. The son of God, Jesus was a revolutionary hero, one who walked the earth to cure disease and suffering, one who imparted messages about love, generosity, forgiveness, and morality. In his crucifixion, Jesus sacrificed himself to allow the human race to cleanse their sins through faith in Him. The Bible is the standard by which

Christians derive a sense of what is right and wrong, and the behavioral ethics are then interpreted from the religious texts. Within Christianity, “teachings of behaviors by the masters of a religion are not intended to imply rules and laws that a person must obey – as if following external laws were somehow able to force a man to inwardly become what he is not – but rather the teachings are the directions of how a person might attain the desired goals of the religion...”³ Christianity preaches morality comprised of “compassion, sympathy, patience, gentleness,” living by seven human and theological virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice, faith, hope, and love. Christians value living a virtuous and moral life, as it represents all that Jesus, their hero and savior, once preached.

For Islam, there is Muhammad. A prophet who was known for his trustworthiness, honesty, generosity, and sincerity, Muhammad received his revelation from God and preached a message of liberation and love, bringing equality to those under the eyes of God. He empowered individuals to stand for their beliefs and to extend empathy and compassion to all beings, including one’s enemies. It is this empathy and compassion that resonated with others to follow in his footsteps to become heroes of their own. The Quran guides Muslims in their everyday journeys toward moral enlightenment, as the book details means of achieving virtues of charity, courtesy, courage, forgiveness, generosity, gratitude, honesty, hope, justice, mercy, and more. Muhammad symbolizes these Islamic virtues that help shape individuals into moral human beings, bringing more peace, harmony, and equality to the world.

For Buddhism, there is Buddha. Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Enlightened One, became the Buddha in his journey to enlightenment. His teachings promoted enlightenment and

³ Larry Neal Gowdy, Christian Ethics, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.ethicsmorals.com/ethicschristian.html>.

freeing others from suffering, which served as the foundation of moral right and wrong. “In the Five Precepts Buddha advises abstinence from: (1) harming living beings, (2) taking things not freely given, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) false speech, and (5) intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.” In addition, “The Noble Eightfold path to enlightenment consists of cultivating the follow: (1) Right View, (2) Right Intention, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Action, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort, (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration.”⁴ An enlightened mind is ultimately one that follows such dictated ethics, and thus, devout Buddhists seek to achieve higher levels of enlightenment by following in Siddhartha’s teachings.

For Confucianism, there is Confucius. Confucianism is based on core values or *xi, zhi, li, yi, wen*, and *ren*. *Xi* refers to Confucius’s belief that because humans are not inherently good, they must learn to act virtuously. *Zhi* refers to the basic education that serves as the foundation of building moral character. *Li* refers to the development of etiquette and effective social skills, a well as the individual’s responsibility to the community. *Li* also impacts a sense of justice and equality that aids in moral judgement. *Yi* refers to the perfection of morality in action, duty, etc. *Wen* is the pursuit of leisure activities such as music or poetry. And lastly, *ren* refers to the “highest virtue in Confucianism...the most difficult of attainment, and the highest development of the individual’s distinctive nature.” “*Ren* is also associated with benevolence, love, humaneness, and the summation of all the other virtues.”⁵ Individuals who have achieved this superhuman level of *ren* include “Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, Krishna, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, and

⁴ "Buddhist Ethics," Sevenpillarsinstitute.org, August 26, 2017, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/glossary/buddhist-ethics/>.

⁵ Robert Waxman, "Ethics of Confucius," Ethics of Confucius, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.robwaxman.com/>.

Confucius.” They serve as role-models symbolizing morality, love, and compassion in a way that inspires the average person to strive for higher levels of *ren*.

This demonstrates the difference between philosophy and religion. Both philosophy and religion are tools by which to evaluate heroism, and religion provides an example of an ideal figure that represents the highest degrees of moral righteousness that followers should strive for. Those who devote themselves to the faith understand the religious teachings through the practices by the ideal individual, as they evaluate the figure’s heroic acts and derive inspiration to live out virtuous lives themselves. The following section will continue to delve into the everyday person’s lens by which to evaluate heroism practically, rather than theoretically.

Chapter 2: The Practical Definition of a Hero

Journey

The practical definition of heroism builds on this original theoretical definition by introducing a lens to more to understand heroism in perspective. An alternative to applying a religious context to heroism is building upon the intention, action, and consequence by introducing a hero's journey as the lens to view these three elements. In essence, journey frames one's heroism: Journey [Intention → Action → Consequence]. The journey addresses the formation of one's intention and provides insight into the type of hero one will become. Once one determines the archetype of hero, one can determine what type of intention, action, and consequence he will experience. In a modern society that increasingly seeks relatability in its role models, one cannot humanize a hero until one understands his journey. The journey serves as a lens that helps us evaluate the hero moving through the three elements. Without this understanding, a hero is merely a symbol.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell analyzes the development and transformation of the hero and the various facets of hero archetypes. Because the journey has become such an invaluable piece of the puzzle, this project seeks to identify the essential steps in becoming a hero defined both in a traditional and modern context. It is important to note that the following steps need not occur in chronological order and that intentions, actions, and consequences are present throughout the journey. The journey merely provides context to the formation of the hero.

1) A call to adventure and the potential refusal of the call – Protagonists are presented with various opportunities to embark on new adventures or conquests. They are given the option to take a situation into their own hands or opt to leave the responsibility to others.

2) Supernatural aid/protective figures – Oftentimes, protagonists are vulnerable on their own. Some may begin the journey lacking self-confidence, moral judgement, etc. Many begin the journey without ever knowing they would emerge a hero, so they are lost and unprepared for what they will encounter. Thus, these individuals seek mentorship, guidance, and protection. Think of the aged, bearded man who provides wisdom or the fairy godmother that grants wishes to make one's dreams come true.

3) Trials/Challenges – The bulk of a protagonist's heroic actions are expressed through the challenges he faces both internally and externally. A trial could be facing his mortal enemy, but it could also be grappling with his own emotions. How the individual chooses to act in these scenarios is both shaped by his past experiences and indicative of the type of hero he will become.

4) Goal of self-discovery or knowledge – Throughout his journey, a hero discovers who he was, who he is, and who he wants to be. Through introspection, he overcomes his weaknesses, grows his strengths, and develops a concrete sense of purpose.

5) Return to the regular world – After the hero embarks on this transformational journey, he returns to a sense of familiarity, his home. His return could imply the shedding of his mask to normalcy or coexistence with ordinary people in society.

6) Elixir to improve the world – One is not deemed a hero without producing beneficial results to society. Addressing problems whether proactively or retroactively, heroes prevent and protect against evil and moral wrongdoings, as they improve quality of life for others.

Traditional Heroes

Think of the knight in shining armor, the prince that saves every damsel in distress, the soldier that defends his people from supernatural attack. Traditional heroes in literature are

typically those who courageously conquer some enemy force through their mental or physical prowess. Exuding confidence, strength, bravery, and charisma, these individuals uphold societal values, peace, and justice. Examples of traditional heroes include Hercules, Achilles, Odysseus, etc. Traditional heroes embody all six defining characteristics of a traditional hero's journey from those listed above.

Modern Heroes

For modern heroes, this journey is further complicated by the introduction of other journey characteristics and the omission of supernatural aids and returns to the regular world. Certain archetypes of everyday heroes differ from traditional heroes in that they have fewer crucial steps in their journeys, allowing more leeway in determining whether or not one is a hero. The most notable difference is that modern heroes are more imperfect than traditional heroes. Society no longer idolizes all-perfect god-like figures, representing ideals one can never achieve. Society prefers the hero that has lost certain battles – someone that struggles, fails, but emerges stronger and more resilient. The introduction of failure as a core part of the transformation process is significant because modern heroes live in an ordinary world, with both resource and human limitations to what they can conquer. A modern hero is humanized and oftentimes embodies glaringly imperfect character traits that evoke empathy from an audience, yet they exhibit superhuman understanding and execution of acts to better other's lives. This aspect of relatability is precisely what convinces the audience that he, too, is one day capable of doing the same.

Another difference between the modern hero and the traditional hero is a newfound emphasis on understanding a hero's underlying journey and intention. Traditional heroes are largely defined by their actions and results – if one defeats the enemy, he is a hero; if one saves

his kingdom, he is a hero. However, in today's day and age, if one saves a victimized city with the intention of seeking glory, one is met with more differing opinions regarding whether or not one is a hero. Thus, modern heroism pulls the focus to the underlying motivations behind a hero's actions.

Societal Perception of Heroes

Journey provides an internally facing lens by which the audience evaluates a hero's intentions and actions, and societal perception the external, more recipient-focused evaluation of his actions and consequences. Through understanding the heroic impact and legacy left behind on the recipient, societal perception helps to label one as a hero in retrospect, thus creating a progression of: Journey (Intention → Action → Consequence) Societal Perception. Thus, the following clarifications are necessary before delving in to application of these factors to literary heroes and their perceived influence: Why does society need heroes? What does society expect from heroes? How does one define the magnitude of impact? How does one address the agency issue in heroism?

Why does society need heroes? Society needs heroes because on one hand, people need to trust that there is unconditional good to balance out the bad. On the other, people want to be inspired by that unconditional good to become better people themselves. This improvement process is most tangible when we can attribute this belief to a person – a hero.

Society needs heroes for both the legacy and the impact. While they are not inherently mutually exclusive, there are many instances when one exists when the other does not. In many cases, society needs a hero to take responsibility for actions or inactions that others fail to own up to. Sometimes society needs someone to claim triumph and success because it provides others hope and guidance. Sometimes society need someone to bear the faults that others are unable to

accept. For these times, society needs someone to leave a heroic legacy, someone to publicly idolize.

Heroic legacy is the label. Legacy is the story that is passed on through generations, the reputation constructed through the consolidated public opinion. Heroic legacy is not an absolute positive title. Consider the celebrities who endorse nonprofits without following through with the support of the cause, or consider the nonprofit scammers that solicit money on the claim to raise money for animal abuse when the funds are pocketed for personal gain. These examples demonstrate heroic legacy without impact. The label standalone without execution of heroic impact is simply undeserved recognition.

Heroic impact is the change. Heroes inspire and accelerate change that an original system does not accelerate. While some heroes are defined through public perception of their results, an experience of heroic impact is most accurately understood on an individual basis, explained by the effected individuals, as heroic impact can be just as meaningful in situations free of societal judgement. Because the interpretation of heroic impact differs depending on the audience, heroes inevitably appear in various forms. The friend that cares for someone in times of sickness leaves heroic impact, just like that of the man who runs into a burning building to save a child. The mentor who counsels one through a difficult period in life may be revered with the same magnitude that a famous prosecutor is respected for sentencing criminals to prison. Heroism is defined by the individual, and heroes are the figures one needs most in a given moment, either consciously or subconsciously.

Similar to how heroic legacy can exist without impact, heroic impact can exist without legacy. These silent heroes are the social workers who exceed their occupational expectations to ensure a larger cause is taken care of -- those who work off the clock, those who will ensure

others have food on the table before they return home at night. These silent heroes manifest in the forms of teachers who extend their caring hearts beyond the classroom, taking in children from underprivileged and low-income households into their own homes, washing their clothes, providing them comfort, and filling the gaps where their own parents could not. This is heroic impact without legacy.

What does society expect from heroes? Society expects that heroes address societal needs. However, oftentimes heroes may violate societal expectations in efforts address needs that society may not know it needs. For example, one may research in efforts to solve a specific problem, but yield results that serve as the foundation for further research in another field. In retrospect, society often will deem this person as a hero. In addition, society expects a degree of relatability from its modern hero, and thus the journey of the hero has become increasingly important. The modern person lives in a world full of information, where the question, “Why?” is ever-present, especially in times of difficulty – war, massacres, death. This transparency in the interconnected world also allows access to an individual’s backstory, providing insight into the hero’s character, challenges, and more. This humanizing of a hero in seeing his flaws, failures, fears, etc. is significant in inspiring the ordinary person to believe he is capable of doing the same.

How does one define the magnitude of impact? Is magnitude measured by the number of people affected, or is magnitude measured by the value to the individual? Is a mentor who individually inspires a mentee to overcome personal challenges more or less heroic than a motivational speaker who inspires a handful of people in his audience? This project argues that the number of affected individuals should not be the sole determinant of one’s magnitude of impact, because heroic impact is most accurately explained by the impact to the individual.

Consider the scopes of influence of Bruce Wayne, better known as Batman, who seeks vengeance against evil in Gotham city only, and compare him to Superman, who vows to enforce justice against evil worldwide. To civilians of Gotham city, Batman's impact will always be more meaningful than that of Superman. To the civilians outside of Gotham city, Superman's impact may be more significant than Batman's. Because magnitude of impact will differ depending on the audience's interpretation of a heroic act, heroes are not solely defined by the number of lives he improves.

How does one address the agency issue involved with heroism? Is Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla and Space Exploration Technologies, considered a hero if he is not physically building the rockets to implement this mission? Is a volunteer of Water to Thrive, a nonprofit organization, more heroic because he is physically constructing the wells in rural Africa? This project presents the argument that both are equally heroic, their heroism determined independently of their agency. Elon Musk may not have put in the physical labor of creating the vehicles that orbit earth, but he did create a vision of humans going to space and transform the way the world sees sustainable energy. He enabled that vision to become our reality, and to the world, he is still a hero. Similarly, the volunteer's heroism is not simply the act of building a well. He is there because he wants to create a solution to the global water crisis, a problem affecting billions of people who risk disease due to the lack of clean water. To the locals who can now live without fear of sickness, to the children who can now attend school instead of spending their days collecting water, this volunteer is also a hero. Both individuals are able to address a known need and create heroic impact respectively. The resolution of given problems is simply most acknowledged by the individuals who prioritize such given needs.

Chapter 3: Heroism in *Harry Potter*

Iconic for its complex character development through trials and challenges faced between good and evil, the *Harry Potter* series, by J. K. Rowling, outlines the journey of the wizard, Harry Potter, and his adventures at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as he and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, face off against Lord Voldemort, a rising evil dictator. The series provides an ideal selection of characters who grapple with personal insecurities such as fear and anger, as well as external temptations of power, influence, and evil. In addition, both traditional and modern heroes are present throughout the series. Using the practical framework for evaluating heroism, this section will analyze Harry Potter as the Traditional Hero, Severus Snape as the Anti-Hero, Dumbledore as the Catalyst Hero, and Neville Longbottom as the Everyman Hero.

Traditional Hero - *Harry Potter*

Serving as the main protagonist, Harry Potter fulfills the traditional hero archetype in this series. In order to understand how he embodies what it means to be a hero requires a more in-depth understanding of his path throughout the story. Harry's journey begins on the doorstep of his relatives, the Dursleys. As the orphaned son of wizards, James and Lily Potter, Harry endures a miserable childhood with his non-magical relatives, as he is constantly berated for his worthlessness and forced to live under the stairs in a cupboard. Growing up, he had little reason to ever believe that he was special. If anything, this is what sparked his desire to simply be ordinary. This is significant because it reveals his intention from the beginning – he did not become a hero just for fame or glory. Having been accepted into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry experiences mistakes, trials, achievements, mentorship, friendship, etc. over

the next seven years, which all contribute to his journey of eventually becoming someone who rises above to defeat evil in the magical world.

As Joseph Campbell explains, a hero's journey starts off with a call to adventure – a “blunder – apparently the merest chance – reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood.”⁶ Harry's introduction to the magical world, *his call to action*, comes in the form of an acceptance letter to Hogwarts. Campbell writes that “not all who hesitate are lost”⁷ and while many heroes face the potential to refuse the call, Harry nearly jumps at the opportunity to seek adventure, to escape his traumatic and sheltered childhood at home. In fact, it is his relatives who continuously deter him from his call to action.

Throughout his time at Hogwarts, Harry faces evil in the form of peers, professors, and Voldemort (the Dark Lord). However, Harry does not do so without supernatural aid, the “protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass...”⁸ In Harry's case, Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, is one of many *supernatural aids* he encounters during his journey. Dumbledore gives Harry the Invisibility Cloak, an item that when worn, hides the person or object completely, and this serves as one of Harry's greatest weapons, as he can stealthily collect information on his enemies. Dumbledore also serves as a father figure who mentors Harry throughout this battle against evil.

⁶ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 46.

⁷ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 64.

⁸ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 69.

Harry's faces *various trials and challenges* both voluntarily and involuntarily. On many occasions, he is thrown into the wrong place at the wrong time and faced with difficult life or death decisions. For example, in his second year, the school reports terrifying messages written in blood and students being mysteriously petrified, and Harry and his friends take it upon themselves to resolve the problem. In opening the Chamber of Secrets, a legendary room haunted by a monstrous snake, Harry finds the heir to Slytherin and defeats the source of evil, ending the petrification of his peers. Another significant challenge is the Second Wizarding War against Voldemort. At the time, the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor refused to teach any practical magic, forcing students to learn only textbook theory despite the Dark Lord's rise to power. Realizing his peers were ill-equipped in self-defense mechanisms, Harry formed an organization, Dumbledore's Army, where he taught practical defensive magic to prepare his friends for combat against forces of evil. In the face of danger to himself and others, Harry chose an active role in the preemptive measures taken against Voldemort, and with every new trial, this traditional hero is reborn, leaving Harry wiser, stronger, and more driven to defeat his enemies once and for all.

Campbell writes that *self-discovery* is a realization of underutilized potential, where the hero is reborn with a new or refined sense of purpose through a process of introspection. These moments of self-discovery oftentimes happen following a crucible moment or challenge. For Harry, he learns early in his journey that his mother died at the hands of Voldemort in order to protect Harry. Because Voldemort did not understand the meaning and power of love, Voldemort "didn't realize that love as powerful as [his] mother's...left its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign....to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved [him was] gone, will

give [him] some protection forever.”⁹ From that moment forward, Harry recognizes the power of love and carries that with him on his journey to save his loved ones. Another example that solidified Harry’s purpose occurs when a prophecy is revealed about the weapon to destroy Voldemort. “The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...”¹⁰ This is significant because Harry learns that he is the sole person who can conquer Voldemort, that only one of the two could survive, and that he would have an unrealized advantage in the war. Despite his own fear, Harry now carries the responsibility to the people to rid the magical world of evil, his purpose clearer than ever. The prophecy is further complicated when it is revealed that a part of Voldemort’s soul is embedded in Harry, meaning Harry must die at Voldemort’s hand in order to fully conquer the Dark Lord. With this, *Harry voluntarily sacrifices himself* out of duty to the world, and love and loyalty to his friends. Because he “had accepted, even embraced, the possibility of death, something Lord Voldemort has never been able to do...” he was courageous in the face of death.

His sacrifice removed that part of Voldemort within him, and he magically came back to life, marking his *return to the regular world*. In a one-on-one war between the two, Harry’s heroic feat is complete as he rids the world of the evil dictator. Harry then returns to Hogwarts, where he is welcomed with open arms and returned to the company of his loved ones. Moving forward, Harry is able to live out a peaceful and happy life, the magical world now free from pain and suffering – *the elixir he provides to society*.

⁹ J. K. Rowling and Jim Kay, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2015), 299.

¹⁰ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2003), 841.

As an individual thrown into tough situations where he has the duty to help others, Harry is always given the choice of whether to save himself or face his fears. It is this constant choice of the latter that defines who he is. Throughout his journey, he experiences moments of self-doubt, frustration, and guilt, but he consistently overcomes these internal struggles to maintain a bigger picture perspective. Harry embarks on his journey, deriving strength from the power of love, friendship, loyalty, etc., and his resilience inspires his peers to lead their lives similarly. He is protective, equipping his friends with means to protect themselves in times of crisis, and he is merciful, sparing his peers who once followed the Dark Lord. Through his conscious decisions, he teaches others the meaning of responsibility and moral duty, and that when dealt these difficult cards of fate, one has the option to flee and fend for oneself or take responsibility for the wellbeing of others.

Because societal perception of a hero translates into defining heroic impact and legacy, it is important to identify Harry's impact on his immediate community. Harry served as a role model to his peers and the rest of the wizarding world. To the wizarding world, he is no longer seen as the boy who escaped Voldemort, but rather as the leader and symbol of good conquering evil. To those who did not know him, he was icon of hope. To those who witnessed or took part in his journey, he inspired resilience, loyalty, and bravery. His best friend, Hermione Granger, was once a brilliant, but rule-abiding teacher's pet. The once risk-averse student eventually took part in all of Harry's escapades, as Harry ignited her passion for adventure. Throughout her own journey, the audience witnesses her development sparked by Harry's influence. She learns to stand by her principles and remain fiercely loyal to her friends even if it required her to speak against authority or break rules. She was not fated to be a hero, yet because of Harry, she was inspired to become one.

Beyond Harry's magical society, the other societal participant is the reader. To the audience, Harry is not the most relatable hero. An ordinary person does not win the lottery, just as one is not suddenly dealt the responsibility to vanquish evil. However, Harry does inspire the audience to seek adventure in real life, to take more chances, and to stand by one's beliefs. Witnessing Harry's heroic journey from his perspective, the reader is inspired to similarly seek justice for those who are wronged and fiercely protect one's loved ones. Harry further demonstrates that even legendary heroes experience moments of indecision and failure and that other individuals help to propel traditional heroes to achieve his goals. This inspires the audience to see past momentary failures and to recognize the influences of one's own support network in one's journey.

Modern Hero

The contrasting characters to Harry Potter are some of his classmates and professors who exemplify modern heroes, which are further segmented into three archetypes – the anti-hero, the catalyst hero, and the everyman hero – each embarking on different journeys resembling that of the traditional hero with the addition and omission of certain components to better align with current societal values.

The Anti-Hero – *Severus Snape*

The anti-hero is a complicated human protagonist who is not necessarily excessively kind, bold, or morally righteous. In fact, on a first impression, the anti-hero may exhibit qualities resembling that of an antagonist. He may engage in morally questionable actions that make the audience question his credibility, and he may sit on the border of good and evil until his true intentions are revealed in retrospect. The anti-hero is also oftentimes resented by the people he strives to help. Only through analyzing his or her journey can the audience fully appreciate the

heroic attributes of this character. A noteworthy difference in this hero's journey is the addition of an element of self-sacrifice, whether acknowledged by the recipient or not, and an unintentional process of self-discovery. Through this journey, the audience begins to humanize the anti-hero because of his flawed character. Perhaps he overcompensates his deep-rooted insecurities by feigning arrogance or egocentrism, or perhaps he fulfills the role of a societal villain to accomplish a greater good. This misunderstood hero becomes someone that inspires the audience in the most unexpected way.

Severus Snape's Journey

In the *Harry Potter* series, Professor Severus Snape is the prime example of the anti-hero. Through various challenges and self-sacrificial moments, he realizes that his purpose is not only to protect Harry Potter, but also to save Hogwarts as whole. Depicted as a ruthless and cold-hearted individual, Snape serves as the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor – ironic given his former association with the Dark Lord himself. Throughout Harry Potter's journey, Snape is assumed to play on the side of evil, never once demonstrating redeeming qualities until his journey is revealed at the end.

Snape's *call to action* occurs years before Harry Potter arrives at Hogwarts. J. K. Rowling reveals that Snape was once a socially challenged boy who faced *trials/challenges* both internally and externally. He fell in love with Harry's mother, Lily Potter, but was ostracized from her social circle because he grew an affinity for dark magic, and when Snape eventually followed in Voldemort's teachings, he was further pushed away from his peers.

Snape learned that the Dark Lord intended to kill his beloved Lily and her son in order to fulfill a prophecy, which marked a turning point and significant *trial/challenge* for Snape, as he was forced to divide his loyalty between Lily and Voldemort. In desperation, he sought help

from Albus Dumbledore, begging him to “hide them all...keep her – them – safe,”¹¹ offering to do anything in return for their safety, including *sacrificing his allegiance* to Voldemort and *putting his life on the line* to do so. With this agreement, it is implied that Dumbledore requested Snape to serve as a double-agent to relay information to Dumbledore about the Dark Lord’s activities moving forward.

When the Dark Lord attempted to kill Harry, Lily sacrificed herself to protect her child. In the face of her death, Dumbledore asked Snape to watch over her son so that her death would not be in vain. Despite initial hesitation, Snape *made the decision to protect Harry Potter* on the condition that Dumbledore would “never reveal the best of [him],”¹² and thus, began Snape’s journey to becoming the anti-hero. Despite his history involved with the dark arts, Snape carried this responsibility moving forward – *the elixir he provided to improve the world*. Snape demonstrates that one’s mistakes do not define one’s character, but rather “it is [one’s] choices...that show what [one] truly [is]...”¹³

With this heroic intention of protecting the boy, Snape finds himself ensuring Harry’s safety, *even at the cost of his own life*. Snape carries enormous risk in playing a double-agent with Voldemort, who shows no mercy for disloyalty. Along his journey, Snape finds himself truly caring for the boy and unexpectedly shifts his allegiance over to Dumbledore entirely, marking Snape’s *unintentional process of self-discovery*. Throughout the series, the audience is blinded to Snape’s good intentions, as his bad behavior consistently reinforces the audience’s

¹¹ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 678.

¹² J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 679.

¹³ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic Press, 1999), 333.

perception of him. Only after retrospective understanding of Snape's entire journey are his actions seen for what they are, driven by a heroic underlying intention that was misunderstood all along.

Severus Snape's Heroic Action

There are two significant examples that showcase how Snape's actions were purposed to benefit others, even if he was not recognized for his heroism. First is a situation when Snape protects Harry against dark magic in a Quidditch game. Second is Snape's obligatory murder of Albus Dumbledore.

Snape's first heroic act occurs when he saves Harry from dark magic interfering with a Quidditch game, a sport played on flying broomsticks. As the spectators search for the source of the dark magic, Ron notices that "Snape was in the middle of the stands opposite them. He had his eyes fixed on Harry and was muttering nonstop under his breath."¹⁴ In the moment, Snape appeared to be the only reasonable person to blame for this dark magic, and the public's misperception forces Snape to deal with the consequences. Only at the end of the book is it revealed that Snape was trying to save Harry by casting a spell to counter the black magic. In the final face-off between Professor Quirrell, a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, and Harry, Quirrell explains that "I tried to kill you...I'd have managed it before then if Snape hadn't been muttering a countercurse, trying to save you."¹⁵ Not only did Snape try to reverse the dark magic during the game, but later on, he also offered to referee the following Quidditch games to ensure Quirrell did not try anything again. "All the other teachers thought Snape was trying to stop

¹⁴ J. K. Rowling and Jim Kay, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2015), 190.

¹⁵ J. K. Rowling and Jim Kay, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2015), 288-289.

Gryffindor from winning, he did make himself unpopular...¹⁶ Shouldering the blame, Snape continued to protect Harry despite being misunderstood by everyone around him, Harry included.

Snape's second and most prominent heroic act occurs at the end of the series in his obligatory murder of Albus Dumbledore. To Harry, Hogwarts, and the audience, he appears as a traitor. However, unbeknownst to everyone, Dumbledore had in fact requested that Snape kill him so that Dumbledore's death would serve a greater purpose. Dumbledore knew that Voldemort had forced a Hogwarts student, Draco Malfoy, to kill the headmaster and retrieve an all-powerful wand. If Draco had succeeded, Voldemort would have then killed the innocent student to gain ownership of that wand, which would have allowed him to rule the world. Thus, Dumbledore asked Snape to take Draco's place. Death by Snape's hands would not only save the student's life but also further prove Snape's allegiance to the Dark Lord, which would allow Snape to continue spying on the Dark Lord's plans and protect Harry until the end. Furthermore, Snape commits this act to "help [the] old man avoid pain and humiliation"¹⁷ that would come had his death been at the hands of the Dark Lord and his followers. In order to fulfill Dumbledore's request, Snape fulfills the role of a villain in efforts to save the lives of students and uphold his duty in protecting Harry.

To Harry and his friends, Snape was always perceived to be an enigma – seemingly evil, yet present behind-the-scenes when they needed him most. When his true motives are revealed, Snape evokes sympathy from both the protagonist and the audience as one realizes the unfair

¹⁶ J. K. Rowling and Jim Kay, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2015), 288-289.

¹⁷ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 683.

judgement he endured in his heroic journey. Snape teaches Hogwarts students the meaning of self-sacrifice and responsibility, especially in times of need. His role as the anti-hero showcases the concept of a hero who takes on the role that society needs at a given time – even if that leaves him alienated by the people he seeks to help.

To the audience, Snape imparts the idea that one is never beyond redemption. While he once chose an evil path, his admittance of mistakes and his change of heart demonstrate that one is not defined by his past. He inspires the audience to recognize that things are not how they appear, that one should not judge a book by its cover, as the audience is misled to believe his intentions were impure. Ultimately, Snape demonstrates that heroism can exist without a label. Not all heroes look or behave similarly, not all heroes are idolized and respected similarly, and societal perception is not always reality. Lastly, Snape's unwavering love and loyalty for Lily Potter illustrates how pure love manifests, as he cares for her son even beyond her death. This unconditional love is something one may empathize with, as one may also carry that love for another being, object, or purpose, that propels one's self-sacrifice beyond that of basic human expectations.

The Catalyst Hero – *Albus Dumbledore*

Oftentimes appearing in the form of a mentor or teacher, the catalyst hero is unique in that he is a hero for another hero. Whether this hero be a motivational speaker or friend, he will serve as a catalyst for change, his actions propelling another individual to achieve and believe more. His heroic actions are shown primarily through his imparting of wisdom and guidance. He exhibits the act of self-sacrifice in the intangible forms of time, energy, or resources to improve the recipient's quality of life. Furthermore, the catalyst hero takes a personal stake in the individual's development, as he seeks to understand and cater his mentorship to one's needs.

Sometimes portrayed as a secondary or tertiary hero, the catalyst hero's impact proves to be invaluable in the journey of the primary hero. Whether through offering encouragement, comfort, or direction, the catalyst hero ultimately empowers one in his time of need. Thus, the journey of the catalyst hero differs from that of traditional hero in that the catalyst hero may take form as the supernatural figure, whose elixir to the world is his mentorship and guidance of the primary hero. The catalyst hero is able to effectively advise the primary hero because the catalyst hero must have first experienced the process of self-discovery before he is able to impart his wisdom.

Albus Dumbledore's Journey

Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, is a catalyst hero and supernatural aid to the protagonist. Dumbledore's character serves as a protector, mentor, and supporter, as he imparts advice and offers resources to Harry on his journey to defeat Voldemort, all the while, supporting Harry through his crucible moments. Dumbledore's journey begins far before Harry is introduced to the magical world. As a young man, Dumbledore's *call to action* was driven by an ambition to dominate the world. Dumbledore once met another powerful wizard, Grindelwald, and accompanied him on a path toward wizarding domination. However, Dumbledore's siblings disapproved of this hunger for power, causing a dispute between Dumbledore, his brother, and Grindelwald. A violent dispute erupted where Dumbledore's sister became collateral damage, and this ultimately left a strained relationship between the remaining two siblings. From then on, Dumbledore shouldered immense guilt for his part in his sister's death and spent the remainder of his life in repentance. This *trial* led him to eventually fear the effects of power on himself. Though he "was offered the post of Minister of Magic, not once, but

several times,”¹⁸ he declined every time. Dumbledore “had proven, as a very young man, that power was [his] weakness and [his] temptation.”¹⁹ Ironically, he carried the most powerful wand in the magical world, which would have easily allowed him to assert world domination. However, it is revealed that he achieves *self-discovery* through wielding such a powerful tool, as he “was fit only to possess the meanest of them...fit to own the Elder Wand, and not to boast of it, and not to kill with it. [He] was permitted to tame and to use it, because [he] took it, not for gain, but to save others from it.”²⁰ An imperfect character, Dumbledore grapples with selfish human desires that humanize him to the audience. Despite these character flaws, it is his ability to understand and overcome such desires that allows him to effectively *support and guide* Harry on his journey.

Albus Dumbledore’s Heroic Action

Dumbledore does not exhibit one prominent heroic act. Rather, his role as a catalyst for Harry is carried out through small, but consistent acts that guide him in his times of need. Throughout the traditional hero’s journey, Dumbledore reminds him to stay optimistic, strive for greatness by leading with love and integrity, and believe in his own capabilities. The following quotes from Dumbledore display the wisdom he imparts to both Harry and other students of Hogwarts.

¹⁸ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 717.

¹⁹ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 717.

²⁰ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 720.

“It is important to fight and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then can evil be kept at bay though never quite eradicated.”²¹

Following a conversation regarding the war between Harry and Voldemort, Harry carries Dumbledore’s advice moving forward, and later reflects on the truth in this statement.

Dumbledore teaches Harry that it is impossible to eliminate all evil. However, one must continue to fight in times of hopelessness because progress does not happen overnight, and every battle won against evil is significant regardless of scale. This also reminds the audience that there is true danger and evil in the real world – crime, terrorism, etc., that one must resiliently conquer, little by little. Dumbledore teaches the audience that while there may not be an ultimate elixir to rid the entire world of evil, each individual is capable of bettering the world and transforming other’s lives.

“I say to you all, once again – in the light of Lord Voldemort’s return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort’s gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open.”²²

Facing a student’s death by Voldemort, Dumbledore quells the fear and mistrust amongst his students by relaying the importance of staying unified, so that students serve as a cohesive support network rather than create additional reasons for paranoia. He mends the relations between students by reminding them that they share common values and goals, despite their

²¹ J. K. Rowling and Jim Kay, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2015).

²² J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, an Imprint of Scholastic, 2000).

different backgrounds. The audience simultaneously realizes that these divisions amongst people are similarly prevalent in the real world and acknowledges that one must see beyond differences in color, ideals, political affiliations, etc. to see that many ordinary humans strive toward the common goal of bettering the world. Taking Dumbledore's advice, the audience is encouraged to be more open-minded and work together to create a better tomorrow.

*“Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all, those who live without love.” “It is a curious thing, Harry, but perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it. Those who, like you, have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well.”*²³

This advice is given when Harry willingly sacrifices himself in the battle against Voldemort. After he is killed, he finds himself in an “afterlife” where Dumbledore imparts these words. In this moment, Harry is forced to decide between life and death. Returning to the living entails dealing with the difficulty in facing Voldemort and bearing the burden of saving the world. The alternative would be to die and be free of all responsibilities. However, Harry comes to his decision upon hearing Dumbledore's quote because he, unlike Voldemort, still seeks to protect his loved ones in the world. In the face of Harry's self-doubt, Dumbledore empowers Harry to believe that Harry is indeed the leader in this battle against evil. He shows Harry that it is entirely Harry's choice regarding whether or not to embrace this role and that the greatest leaders arise through seeking morally righteous actions rather than power. For the audience, one can apply this quote in examples found in history and everyday life, as influential leaders originate from unexpected backgrounds in various shapes and forms. Leaders are not necessarily

²³ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007).

the ones who are the most powerful, yet their heroic impact speaks volumes even following their deaths. This quote also serves as catalyst for the audience in understanding that taking the path of heroism lies entirely within one's control.

Portrayed as the wise, altruistic role model for the school, Dumbledore teaches Harry how to be the bigger person, how to think on behalf of entities greater than himself, and how to overcome his own obstacles. He has always served as the figurehead for all things good, thus surprising the audience when he reveals his past selfish motives, yet it is this understanding of these flaws that precisely make Dumbledore's mentorship so effective for Harry. To Hogwarts, he is a revered symbol of love, loyalty, and moral righteousness. Dumbledore was a crucial resource for his mentees and a source of comfort in times of need. To Harry, he was a dedicated mentor, who did not fight Harry's battles for him, but rather taught Harry the means to do so for himself. He imparted wisdom regarding the differences between Harry and Voldemort and life lessons regarding pitying those without love. He taught Harry to live his heroic journey carrying this love in his heart and relying on the support of loved ones, such as Dumbledore himself. Ultimately, from Dumbledore's influence in Harry's life, the audience learns that behind every hero is a catalyst hero.

The other significant piece is Dumbledore's impact on the audience. Dumbledore teaches the audience that not all heroes must go to battle. He not only inspires people to be defined by their choices, but also demonstrates that being a catalyst hero entails resilience in striving for a mentee's long-term goals rather than focusing on yielding immediate results. He highlights how everyday teachers and parents impart wisdom, patience, and kindness, refusing to give up on their students and children even if their efforts are detested in the process. Dumbledore showcases how mentors recognize their personal stakes and risks with each mentee. For

example, Dumbledore takes a risk in mentoring Harry. Harry was not nearly as skilled or talented as Voldemort, yet Dumbledore's decision to guide Harry shows the audience that the best of mentors can empower an underdog to be more than they are. In addition, Dumbledore demonstrates the difference between doing what is right compared to what is easy. Had Dumbledore chosen to mentor someone as skilled as Voldemort, Dumbledore's heroic journey could have been much simpler, however it is Dumbledore's choice to mentor the underdog that is inspirational to the reader. Through Dumbledore's dedication, mentees in the audience recognize mentors' efforts made for their development, inspiring mentees to pay-it-forward when they can. And because Dumbledore inspires the reader to be that support system for others, Dumbledore is in essence, the audience's catalyst hero.

The Everyman Hero – *Neville Longbottom*

Lastly is the everyman hero. The ordinary person, neither possessing extraordinary mental or physical capabilities nor embodying perfection in his character, this is the hero that goes unnoticed in his progression, yet fills a crucial role in the story. Oftentimes, this character's greatest accomplishment is overcoming an internal battle, such as ignoring consequences to stand up for his beliefs or overcoming deep-rooted fears. While his impact may not be glaringly important in the moment, he surprises the audience by surpassing our expectations. The everyman hero shares a journey similar to other modern heroes, devoid of supernatural aids and the return to the regular world. However, the everyman hero's journey incorporates an element of self-sacrifice in the process of providing an elixir to the world.

In the *Harry Potter* series, Neville Longbottom is that awkward and underperforming wizard, who, eventually arises as an everyman hero. Understanding his growth requires context to his initial upbringing. In his adolescence, Neville witnessed the hospitalization of his parents,

who were tortured to insanity. This led him to grow up under his grandmother's supervision, where he suffered endless criticism for failing to live up to his parents' legacies. At school, Neville was the soft-spoken, shy, and unconfident individual that became a prime target for bullies. However, interestingly enough, he is sorted into Gryffindor House for his underlying courage and bravery – marking his *call to action*. Throughout his time at Hogwarts, Neville constantly experiences the short end of the stick, his bad luck bringing him to detention and causing him to wind up at the hospital. However, the audience gradually becomes aware of his hidden potential through his decisions during crucial moments.

Neville Longbottom's Journey

Neville's greatest *challenges* occur internally. Watching his own parents suffer post-torture, Neville harbors an immense amount of pain, yet opts to deal with it alone. Living with the pressure of his parents' legacy while being perceived as the good-for-nothing wizard, Neville faces feelings of inadequacy, failure, and disappointment at home and at school. However, one night, he makes a small, but powerful gesture that changes the course of his life. Watching as Harry and his friends attempt to sneak out of the dormitory, Neville musters the courage to stand up to his friends, prepared to fight them to stop them. Despite his inadequate knowledge in magic and his insecurities, he upholds the Gryffindor name through his courage to stand for what is right. This seemingly insignificant act ignites a flame within Neville that is then perpetuated to his fifth year, evident in the Battle of the Department of Mysteries, the fight for a prophecy between Harry's friends and Voldemort's followers. Despite being held hostage by the enemy, Neville warns Harry against trading the prophecy for Neville's freedom. Neville's willingness to serve the greater good despite *risking his own life* is unexpected and admirable to both his peers and the audience. Lastly, in the final Battle of Hogwarts between Harry and Voldemort, it

becomes clear to the audience that Neville is no longer the shy and underperforming wizard he once was. In the face of Harry's self-sacrifice, Voldemort offers to spare Neville's life if he joins the dark side, however, Neville boldly defies him, exclaiming "I'll join [Voldemort] when hell freezes over..."²⁴

Neville Longbottom's Heroic Action

Neville's heroic action takes place when he kills Voldemort's snake, destroying the final piece of Voldemort's soul. This action is significant because it not only created a distraction to give Harry an advantage against Voldemort, but also pinpointed a moment where the traditional hero relied heavily on the everyman hero in order to succeed.

The boy who was always perceived as a liability, who once struggled to execute basic spells, grew to become one who demonstrated courage and self-sacrifice in direct opposition of the Dark Lord. To both his peers and the audience, he became someone deserving of respect, instead of sympathy. He was the antithesis to the traditional hero, as he struggled through tasks that came naturally to the traditional hero. However, it is his resilience in overcoming failures time and time again that propelled him to become a hero himself. Neville was able to channel his pain into bettering himself – throwing himself into studies in hopes of protecting the school and avenging his parents. The small acts of bravery throughout his seven years shaped Neville Longbottom into the hero is today, his development inspirational to many. Beyond motivating people to simply stand for one's own beliefs, Neville also showed others the power of staying

²⁴ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 731.

unified, as he led a rebellion within Hogwarts by putting “graffiti on the walls: Dumbledore’s Army, Still Recruiting.”²⁵

Neville is an inspiration to the audience because he was the unpopular underdog, who, through hard work and determination, emerged a hero. He is the most relatable of the modern hero archetypes, as he inspires ordinary people to perform small acts of bravery in everyday life. He shows the audience that a single individual has the influence to draw people towards a common cause, just as he inspired his peers to take on risk and serve a greater purpose. The charisma of the everyman hero is that he is not a superhuman being, yet he is capable of acts that push human limitations. In the face of difficulty, he is one who remains fiercely loyal to his people and his principles, defying many societal expectations and motivating others to overcome challenges of their own – providing hope that even the most ordinary individuals have the potential to stand amongst the heroes.

²⁵ J. K. Rowling and Mary GrandPré, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 575.

Chapter 4: How Heroes are Manifested in the Modern World

While the *Harry Potter* series is useful in analyzing the unique character development of different hero archetypes, literature often paints ideals in a way one cannot achieve in reality. Humans create stories that embody the ideals we hope to achieve, but one must also recognize that heroes do not only exist on movie screens and books – they exist everywhere, walking and talking like the average human, yet capable of doing the superhuman. In modern society, these heroes are the ones that may not necessarily embody some supernatural physical prowess, but undoubtedly have the altruistic heart and compassionate empathy that contradict selfish aspects of human nature. Modern day heroes are often the unwritten heroes, each with his own unique heroic journey that may never be revealed to the public. However, this does not stop them from being extraordinary in their own right.

The Modern Anti-Hero

Activists

Injustice and inequality exists on various levels and has historically manifested in the form of discrimination and segregation. In many circumstances, activists are those that bring justice to people who are mistreated, as they courageously represent greater causes and bring about political and social change in the face of adversity. While guided by strict and oftentimes controversial principles, activists such as Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King are examples of individuals who carry the responsibility of speaking for those who do not have a voice in the world. Facing opposition for going against the grain, these activists are able to pave the way for future generations to live in greater equality, broadening the perspective of others whilst inspiring the masses to stand for their beliefs and fight for equal rights for their peers.

The first heroic activist is Malcolm X, a minister, black nationalist leader, and human rights activist, who sought to release blacks from the grasps of racism “by any means necessary,”²⁶ including violence. His journey began during his incarceration, when he was introduced to the Nation of Islam, black Muslims that advocated for black Americans’ freedom from white Americans. Moved by this purpose, Malcom X took on this heroic intention and joined forces with Elijah Muhammad, the leader of this movement in 1952. From that point on, Malcolm X sought to expand the revolution, garnering support of nearly 40,000 members in 1960 by using his natural talent of public speaking to motivate the masses. He embraced a violent revolution, preaching for the extreme segregation of blacks and whites. To his followers and black youths, he symbolized hope for a better quality of life. However, his adamant rejection of integration in favor of segregation was eventually met with opposition both by the white-dominant society and within the organization. Thus, he left the more passive Nation of Islam in 1964 to establish the Organization of Afro-American Unity to continue a more aggressive push for segregation of black people in America.

Malcolm X’s heroic consequence and legacy lies in his “[demonstration of] the great lengths to which human beings will go to secure their freedom. ‘Power in defense of freedom is greater than power in behalf of tyranny and oppression... because power, real power, comes from [one’s] conviction which produces action, uncompromising action.’”²⁷ The heroism in this activism is multifaceted – Malcolm X simultaneously took an active role in advocating against discrimination and prejudice while motivating the masses to secure their own freedoms and

²⁶ Malcolm X, "By Any Means Necessary," Genius, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://genius.com/1837066>.

²⁷ "Malcolm X," Biography.com, January 18, 2018, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/malcolm-x-9396195>.

equality. In a white-dominant society, Malcolm X risked his personal safety to bring justice to black Americans and faced legal repercussions for his actions. He may have been perceived as an extremist by society at the time, but in challenging the norms, he highlighted major differences between black and white Americans' quality of life and sparked the discussion of inequality and prejudice in years to come.

On the other end of the spectrum is the modern anti-hero, Mahatma Gandhi, who took nonviolent approaches to address similar cases of inequality in the world. Once a timid, struggling lawyer, Gandhi eventually became known as the father of the nation for his powerful stance for equality. For Gandhi, June 7, 1893 marked a turning point in his career, when a white man had him forcibly removed from a first-class railway compartment. This ignited a passion within Gandhi to fight the “deep disease of color prejudice” and to “try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.”²⁸ In the face of South Africa's 1906 restriction of Hindu marriages, Gandhi spearheaded “Satyagraha”—meaning truth and firmness—his first mass civil-disobedience campaign. The result was his imprisonment alongside hundreds of other Indian supporters in 1913, however, Gandhi's movement created substantial pressure on the South African government to eventually compromise by acknowledging Hindu marriages and abolishing the Indian poll tax. However, when the Rowlatt Act was passed by the Imperial Legislative Council of British India, individuals who were suspected of sedition were imprisoned without trial—one of which being Gandhi himself. Prior to his incarceration, Gandhi's heroic actions manifested through the organization of boycotts against British goods, the push for

²⁸ "Mahatma Gandhi," Biography.com, March 09, 2018, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/mahatma-gandhi-9305898>.

students to stop attending government schools, and the creation of his own cloth to boycott British-manufactured clothing in efforts to promote Indian independence.

Gandhi's heroic legacy is still prominent years after his death. In his support of passive resistance and non-cooperation, Gandhi highlighted the difference between violence (both passive and physical violence) and nonviolence, involving the acceptance of violence on oneself and self-suffering without inflicting pain on others. Gandhi believed that violence as a means to resolve problems was fueled by hatred and cowardice, which could only produce temporary good, whereas his philosophy of Satyagraha and nonviolence was built on a foundation of truth, self-sacrifice, and refusal to inflict pain on others, which could bring about long-term good. His principles of peaceful protest continue to live on through both women suffrage and African-American civil rights movements in America, inspiring others to lead nonviolent resistances to better the world.

Martin Luther King (MLK) is another iconic modern anti-hero, as he was one of the nonviolent activists who followed as a student of Mahatma Gandhi to create social change and fight political and economic noncooperation without violence. MLK fundamentally believed in the following six principles of nonviolence: 1) "Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people." 2) "Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding." 3) "Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people." 4) "Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform." 5) "Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate." 6) Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice."²⁹ With these fundamentals as a basis for heroic action, he sought to educate

²⁹ "The King Philosophy," The King Philosophy | The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy>.

others on the different perspectives of controversial issues, establishing a personal commitment to bring about justice. He led by creating action plans to resolve injustices rather than humiliating the opposition, to call for direct action and confrontation with the opponent, and lastly, to reconcile differences through friendship, understanding, and compromise instead of the defeat of one side.

MLK became more prominent in the civil rights movement through his involvement with a city bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which was initiated by the bus company's prejudice against African Americans and their permitted seating on the bus. This sparked one of MLK's most notable contributions to the movement – his "I Have a Dream" speech, detailing a vision of a world where race did not dictate one's quality of life or treatment by others. These peaceful movements toward racial equality led to the "passing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act for African Americans, both in the mid 1960s. Both of these acts literally changed American law so that African Americans could not be treated separately from whites."³⁰ MLK ultimately advanced the civil rights movement in the face of controversy at the time, and his influence is seen through the continued push for nonviolent resistance today.

These three examples of modern anti-heroes highlight how a hero's actions can be misinterpreted by society. Because these activists spoke controversial opinions on behalf of oppressed groups, they were condemned by society at the time. However, in retrospect, the current society recognizes their heroic impacts that lay the foundation for greater equality in the modern world.

³⁰ "How Did Martin Luther King's Vision Change the World?" YourDictionary, May 08, 2017, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://biography.yourdictionary.com/articles/martin-luther-kings-vision-change-world.html>.

Whistleblowers

Similar to activists are whistleblowers, individuals who inform others regarding illegal activities of other people or organizations. Edward Snowden is a prime example of a modern anti-hero, as he is responsible for revealing the National Security Agency's (NSA) "bulk collection of phone and internet metadata from U.S. users, spying on the personal communications of foreign leaders including U.S. allies, and the NSA's ability to tap undersea fiber optic cables and siphon off data."³¹ As a former employee of the CIA, the 29-year old risked legal repercussions and negative public perception in exposing material from the NSA that revealed the government's invasion of civilians' internet privacy. During his contracting work with the CIA, Snowden downloaded private documents that detailed the extent of information collected on citizens' phone and internet activities and leaked documents to the press. This heroic action was performed with the understanding that "[he would] be made to suffer for [his] actions, but [he] would be satisfied if the federation of secret law, unequal pardon and irresistible executive powers that rule the world that [he loves] are revealed even for an instant."³² Aware that the "government [would] demonize [him]," his "sole motive [was] to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them."³³ On June 21, 2013, Snowden was charged with "theft, 'unauthorized communication of national defense

³¹ "Who Is Edward Snowden, the Man Who Spilled the NSA's Secrets?" NBCNews.com, May 26, 2014, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/edward-snowden-interview/who-edward-snowden-man-who-spilled-nsas-secrets-n114861>.

³² Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill, and Laura Poitras, "Edward Snowden: The Whistleblower behind the NSA Surveillance Revelations," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2013, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance>.

³³ Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill, and Laura Poitras, "Edward Snowden: The Whistleblower behind the NSA Surveillance Revelations," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2013, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance>.

information’ and ‘willful communication of classified communications intelligence information to an unauthorized person... each of the three charges [carrying] a maximum prison sentence of 10 years, for a total of 30 years.’³⁴ While his actions were seen as destructive to the government’s credibility – some believing that his revelations of the NSA’s secret doings “harmed national security by enabling foreign spies” – Snowden remained heroic to many civilians, who believed this was a “bold and necessary step that forced the federal courts, the Congress, and the Obama administration to re-examine the previously secret programs and, in some cases to reform them.”³⁵ His personal sacrifice of stability and security to protect the civilians’ basic liberties is proven worthwhile in the years following the incident, his impact deemed helpful in “[realigning] a broken relationship between the intelligence community and the public,” and igniting the public discussion regarding “dangers of near-omniscient surveillance of our digital communications.”³⁶

The Modern Catalyst Hero

Teachers

As we have seen in the *Harry Potter* series, sometimes the greatest heroes are those who bear wisdom rather than arms. Similar to Dumbledore, there are many noteworthy catalyst heroes that provide guidance to developing other heroes along their journeys. Teachers such as

³⁴ "Who Is Edward Snowden, the Man Who Spilled the NSA's Secrets?" NBCNews.com, May 26, 2014, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/edward-snowden-interview/who-edward-snowden-man-who-spilled-nsas-secrets-n114861>.

³⁵ "Who Is Edward Snowden, the Man Who Spilled the NSA's Secrets?" NBCNews.com, May 26, 2014, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/edward-snowden-interview/who-edward-snowden-man-who-spilled-nsas-secrets-n114861>.

³⁶ Rainey Reitman, "3 Years Later, the Snowden Leaks Have Changed How the World Sees NSA Surveillance," Electronic Frontier Foundation, June 05, 2016, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2016/06/3-years-later-snowden-leaks-have-changed-how-world-sees-nsa-surveillance>.

Kate Biberdorf, Ed Boland, and Randy Pausch exemplify this hero archetype, as they empower students to achieve their aspirations in life.

The first modern catalyst hero is someone who was inspired to perform heroic actions because of her experience with her own catalyst hero. Kate Biberdorf is an undergraduate chemistry professor and head of the science outreach program at the University of Texas at Austin. The outreach initiative, Fun with Chemistry, was launched in December of 2014, purposed to make science exciting for nearly 20,000 elementary through high school students. Through creating liquid nitrogen ice cream, instant snow, and other interesting chemistry demonstrations, Biberdorf hopes to engage students through an “excite, then teach” method. By emotionally connecting with her students at the beginning of class and finding ways to hold their attention, she is able to use demonstrations to break stereotypes associated with not only the science field, but also gender. By intentionally wearing heels both on television and in class, Biberdorf ensures “[she’s] girly and seen as a female scientist”³⁷ because she seeks to empower female scientists by crushing the “frumpy and antisocial”³⁸ stereotype portrayed in media. She explains that “[she] really started to feel the benefit of getting someone excited about chemistry, but more importantly, just empowering the students... There’s just something so beautiful about a human who is convinced that they can’t do science or chemistry or a specific problem, and then they do it, and then they do a harder one.”³⁹ Her ultimate goal at the end of every semester is for her students to go out and achieve bigger and better things and to apply the learned skills to

³⁷ Rachel Rascoe, "The Next Bill Nye," Austin Woman Magazine, August 23, 2017, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://atxwoman.com/the-next-bill-nye/>.

³⁸ Rachel Rascoe, "The Next Bill Nye," Austin Woman Magazine, August 23, 2017, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://atxwoman.com/the-next-bill-nye/>.

³⁹ Rachel Rascoe, "The Next Bill Nye," Austin Woman Magazine, August 23, 2017, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://atxwoman.com/the-next-bill-nye/>.

change the world. Biberdorf acknowledges that she may not “get a Nobel Prize, but maybe [she] can inspire the person who will.”⁴⁰ Biberdorf seeks to even the playing field by helping her students utilize their unrecognized potentials, whilst changing their perspectives on gender stereotypes and empowering them to make a difference in the world. Her significant role in her students’ lives can ultimately be traced back to Biberdorf’s own experience with an amazing chemistry teacher in her teenage years. Because of her own chemistry teacher’s contagious enthusiasm for education, Biberdorf sought to bring the same charisma to the university, which will inevitably foster the same passion in other individuals.

Another example of the modern catalyst hero is Ed Boland, an executive at Prep for Prep, a nonprofit organization that helps minorities gain a better chance of entering private schools. As a ninth-grade teacher on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Boland once sacrificed the stability of his original job to make a difference in the lives of those in underprivileged public schools. When he first started, he was met with strong opposition. Just as substitute teachers are not taken seriously, he faced a room of chaos – flying calculators, bullying, and blatant disregard for authority. In what seemed like an impossible situation, he attributed the issue to the lack of classroom management skills taught to emerging teachers in graduate school rather than to the students themselves. For these underprivileged children who may have been dealt unfavorable financial and educational circumstances, Boland may have been the only person who believed in them enough to stick around. To the rest of the world, this impact on a classroom of students

⁴⁰ Steven E. Franklin, "Fun with Chemistry Inspires Students of All Ages," College of Natural Sciences, University of Texas at Austin, June 09, 2016, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://cns.utexas.edu/news/fun-with-chemistry-inspires-students-of-all-ages>.

may seem insignificant, but to these individuals, his resilience and unconditional support may have changed their lives for the better – labeling him a hero in their eyes.

Mentors

The modern catalyst hero may also appear as a mentor. A mentor guides a mentee to become a more improved version of himself, working through his weaknesses and honing his strengths. A personal mentor provides life guidance and offers a unique, worldly perspective that helps one persevere through personal struggles and inspires one to pay-it-forward for future generations. Mentorship exists on various scales – some work on a more individual basis, taking a personal stake in his mentee’s development, and others guide large audiences, imparting advice that will resonate with only a handful. Randy Pausch is an example of the latter. He was an American computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University and motivational speaker, known for “The Last Lecture: Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams.” Upon being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Pausch was inspired to leave a legacy for both his own children and students. In this lecture, he discussed the importance of pursuing childhood dreams, putting people before material possessions, and recognizing the meaningful things in life. With personal anecdotes sprinkled throughout the lecture, Pausch divided his lecture into topics, one of which included “Enabling the Dreams of Others,” the mission of a modern catalyst hero. Like Dumbledore, many of his heroic moments are embedded in the words he imparts to his audience.

“Follow your passions, believe in karma, and you won’t have to chase your dreams, they will come to you.”⁴¹

⁴¹ "RANDY PAUSCH: HIS LAST LECTURE AND FAMOUS QUOTES," , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.seenamagowitzfoundation.org/randy-pausch-his-last-lecture-and-famous-quotes/>.

“Go out and do for others what somebody did for you.”⁴²

“As you get older, you may find that enabling the dreams of others is even more fun.”⁴³

From lessons about persistence and hard work to treating others with respect and leading lives of integrity, Pausch inspired others to risk more, achieve more, and believe more. Sacrificing time with his wife and kids, he continued to speak to audiences and served as a mentor for many, his impact still evident today.

The Modern Everyman Hero

Doctors

Responsible for relieving pain and saving lives, many doctors represent the modern everyman hero archetype. Through their trial of arduous years in medical school and residency, doctors sacrifice personal time, energy, and normalcy to fulfill a role that most directly serves others by slowing the human process of dying. Doctors bear a duty like no other yet many go unrecognized for surpassing everyday human expectations. Take for example Dr. Zhang Xinzhi, a 55-year-old physician who made the choice to complete his surgery on a patient instead of seeing his dying father in his last moments. Zhang explained that while he felt guilty for not being there with his dying father, saving his patient’s life was just as important, and his duty to his patient and the patient’s family became his priority in that moment. Zhang made the choice to become a doctor – but that is not what made him heroic. Profession aside, it was his decision after he became a doctor that demonstrated a superhuman notion. While his role required a

⁴² "RANDY PAUSCH: HIS LAST LECTURE AND FAMOUS QUOTES," , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.seenamagowitzfoundation.org/randy-pausch-his-last-lecture-and-famous-quotes/>.

⁴³ "RANDY PAUSCH: HIS LAST LECTURE AND FAMOUS QUOTES," , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.seenamagowitzfoundation.org/randy-pausch-his-last-lecture-and-famous-quotes/>.

sacrifice of Zhang's time and energy, others in his profession would not have held it against him for choosing to see his father one last time. It was his choice to do something beyond the expectations of any other human that makes him heroic.

The profession of being a physician is inherently noble. But what makes someone a societal hero lies in one's decision to do something that is beyond the expectations of their work or themselves. This is demonstrated through the example of Sally Clarke, an army medic in Afghanistan. As a 22-year old on patrol in Sangin, Clarke found herself suddenly under fire from Taliban insurgents attacking with rocket-propelled grenades. With a grenade shrapnel lodged in her shoulder and lower back, Clarke continued to single-handedly treat her injured team until evacuation aid arrived. Despite her injuries, she refused medical treatment for herself and remained on the battlefield to treat other injured soldiers. As a physician that had chosen a profession requiring her to be in the line of fire every day, Clarke had already made a noble choice to forgo the guaranteed safety of a hospital job. However, beyond her basic responsibilities, Clarke specifically chose to do something that required a personal sacrifice for someone else. Despite putting her own life at risk on a daily basis, she took on more risk to save her colleagues, and she is a hero because of it.

Another case of someone exceeding basic occupational duties is Bernard Kouchner, the co-founder of Doctors Without Borders, an organization that provides humanitarian-relief during both armed conflicts and natural disasters. Kouchner developed a sense of personal injustice early in his adolescence when his parents died in Nazi German concentration camps. From that moment on, he found his calling in humanitarian work and gastroenterology at Cochin Hospital. Kouchner eventually volunteered in Africa as a doctor for The Red Cross, however, The Red Cross preached a "silent" neutrality position on human-rights issues, which Kouchner could not

support. For example, “Red Cross aid workers were among the few outsiders to witness the horrors of the Nazi extermination camps firsthand during World War II, but the organization did little to alert Germany’s foes at the time.”⁴⁴ This propelled Kouchner to re-evaluate his own position on human justice, which led him to establish Doctors Without Borders in 1971, purposed to not only provide humanitarian aid but also “alert the media to human-rights abuses committed by any of the involved parties.”⁴⁵ His work saved hundreds of thousands of lives whilst inspiring other people to join him in his efforts. Kouchner is an example of someone who may have started his journey as a hospital doctor, but chose to leave the security and safety of his job to provide healthcare services to underdeveloped countries and to protect human rights. During the Sudanese civil war, his organization was able to treat over 40,000 outpatients in Sortoni and 110,000 outpatients in Tawila. To this day, Doctors Without Borders continues to inspire physicians worldwide to join in the cause. Kouchner was able to do more than his role required, inspiring over 36,000 other people to become heroes who will go where no one else will go, to do what no one else will do.

Good Samaritans

It is apparent that many people use their careers as an outlet to perform heroic actions. Whether through seeking justice and challenging social norms, empowering others to achieve their dreams, or saving lives of others, people are able to achieve heroic impact through roles that are inherently demanding. What about the average person who is not already in a position to help – one whose basic responsibilities are really only to himself? Everyman heroes exist and have

⁴⁴ "Bernard Kouchner Biography," Encyclopedia of World Biography, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-Fo-La/Kouchner-Bernard.html>.

⁴⁵ "Bernard Kouchner Biography," Encyclopedia of World Biography, , accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-Fo-La/Kouchner-Bernard.html>.

always existed amongst us, and one can see that through examples such as civilians' final actions on the United 93 during 9/11, volunteers' efforts during natural disasters, or an individual's self-sacrifice to save children from a fire.

The first case of United 93 occurs on September 11, 2001, officially marking the day of a deadly terrorist attack in the United States, but also a day where forty ordinary individuals banded together in a heroic feat against the Islamic extremist group. Todd Beamer, a 32-year-old father and husband, was traveling on United Flight 93 to a business meeting when the plane's course was suddenly changed to head toward the White House in Washington. Upon learning that there was a bomb on board, Beamer used the phone in the back of the plane to inform FBI agents of the plane's hijacking. Through cell phone conversations, FBI agents learned that Beamer, along with others such as Mark Bingham and Tom Burnett, led other passengers in a course of action to take back control of the plane. With Beamer's famous last words, "Are you ready? Okay. Let's roll."⁴⁶ those on board attacked the hijackers, leading the plane to crash into a field in Pennsylvania, killing everyone on board, but saving lives of those in the White House. Months later, the New York Observer writes about the act of pure heroism that took place on the plane. "Until the morning of 11 September, heroism was something that America watched in movies or read about in books. Now the country yearns for heroes, and it has them in abundance. That Bingham, Beamer, Burnett, and the others saved hundreds of lives is the reason that they have become emblems of heroism."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ed Vulliamy, "The Real Story of Flight 93," The Observer, December 02, 2001, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/02/september11.terrorism1>.

⁴⁷ Ed Vulliamy, "The Real Story of Flight 93," The Observer, December 02, 2001, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/02/september11.terrorism1>.

Other examples of everyday heroism include volunteers who provide relief during natural disasters. During Hurricane Harvey in 2017, an organization of over a thousand educators banded together to organize regional shelters, mini-schools, and day cares to help local families handle the extreme flood damage. With all schools shut down, these volunteer teachers organized free classes and day camps for children so that parents could handle the flooding situations at home. With limited budgets and supplies, these volunteers still managed to focus on children's' education and wellbeing, while creating a safe environment where children could continue to laugh and play. Simultaneously, at another school in the Houston area, Staci Childs, a student government president at Thurgood Marshall School of Law, took an active role in helping her classmates through the destructive effects of the hurricane. When Childs woke up to find her car submerged in water, her first instinct was to check up on her classmates who would struggle financially given the flood's wreckage. Rather than crowdsourcing money to fix her own car, she created an alumni network to support her classmates' financially. Even beyond her responsibilities as a student leader, she took steps to put others' needs above her own.

Lastly is the example of a New Hampshire man, Devin Issacs, who rescued children from his neighbor's burning apartment building. Upon realizing there were children involved, Isaacs's instincts kicked in, and he ran to their rescue. While fire marshals that eventually came cautioned bystanders from doing the same, Isaacs explained that "Houses can be replaced. Lives can't"⁴⁸ and that he would do the same if the situation presented itself again. Isaacs had no obligation to risk his own life to save a handful of strangers. Even the fire marshals advised other civilians

⁴⁸ Kristen Pope, "New Hampshire Man Saves Children from House Fire," NECN, March 30, 2018, , accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.necn.com/news/new-england/New-Hampshire-Man-Runs-Into-Burning-Building-Saves-Children-478426923.html>.

against taking the same action in this circumstance. However, it was Isaacs' conscious decision and spur of altruism that ultimately saved two innocent lives and inspired other spectators to want to do the same.

These everyday good Samaritans are ordinary people who, when faced with difficulty, made decisions that altered the course of someone else's life indefinitely. When presented the opportunity to take action, these individuals chose the options that required higher degrees of self-sacrifice than that expected from them. Individuals admire these good Samaritans because people recognize that beyond everyone's surface level differences, everyone is fundamentally the same. All individuals are capable of achieving this level of empathy and compassion. The spectators may feel empathetic toward the surviving family, vicariously experiencing relief, joy, and gratitude. This act may also resonate with certain compassionate individuals who understand the human connection in this situation and seek to relieve others' pain and suffering in the same way.

In general, these aforementioned individuals are perceived to fall into categories of anti-hero, catalyst hero, or everyman hero, however, it is important to recognize that the specific modern hero archetype they exemplify will vary depending on the audience. A teacher could be perceived as both a catalyst hero and an everyman hero simultaneously – a catalyst hero in empowering students, an everyman hero in helping a friend conquer ordinary problems. Similarly, these heroes are not confined to the bounds of their archetypes, as an individual can transform and fulfill different archetypes throughout his journey. Because societal perspective on an individual's journey, intention, action, and consequence will ultimately dictate the type of hero one becomes, these cases of individuals are placed into specific subsets of the modern hero based solely on my interpretation of their heroism.

Conclusion

Compassionate Empathy

Through analyzing these examples of modern heroes, two themes become apparent; each of these heroes embody characteristics of empathy and compassion. Empathy is a peer-to-peer experience where one shares and understands the other's emotions. Empathy can be defined in three different forms: affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and compassionate empathy. Affective empathy is nearly synonymous to emotional contagion, where one vicariously experiences another's emotions sometimes automatically or unconsciously. In social neuroscience, this is attributed to the mirror neuron system that makes one prone to feeling another's emotions as if they were one's own. This explains why an individual may wince when he sees another person fall or why a baby will smile in response to a mother smiling.

Cognitive empathy is the understanding of another's point of view and way of thinking. This is often referred to as "perspective taking," one's deliberate understanding of another's emotions, but not necessarily in a way that causes one to share the emotions in a literal sense. An example of this is the age-old saying of "taking a walk in someone else's shoes." It should be noted that cognitive empathy is not always used for moral good. While understanding another's perspective generally allows one to become more open-minded and accepting of differing opinions, this empathy can also be used to harm others. Consider examples of villains, who are often depicted as sociopaths and merciless torturers. A torturer must use cognitive empathy to effectively understand and exploit his victim's weaknesses. In this situation, he learns how to best hurt his victim – cognitively empathetic, yet entirely devoid of moral righteousness or sympathy.

Lastly is compassionate empathy, the understanding of another's feelings, such as pain, and seeking of action to relieve another's suffering – which is often understood as simply, compassion. Empathy precedes compassion in that it is the vicarious feeling of another's emotions, but when coupled with the modulation of one's own emotional state, produces compassionate empathy. Compassion is not crippling to the individual, as empathy may be. But rather, compassion attaches self-awareness and wisdom to distinguish oneself from another and to act accordingly. True heroism can only be built on compassionate empathy, because both affective empathy and cognitive empathy are insufficient on their own. Take for example, Devin Isaacs's situation and his act of saving children from a burning building. The bystanders of the situation may have felt affective empathy for the children, as some may have observed the family's tears and in turn, shed tears themselves. But that empathy did not drive them to act. The bystanders who could see the situation from Isaacs's perspective understood why he was inclined to help. They understood the family's fears for their children's safety and may have felt relief that this situation was not theirs to face. While this may have convinced these cognitively empathetic bystanders to take further precautions in their own homes, this was insufficient in inspiring them to act for another's benefit. Had the situation arose again, both affectively empathetic and cognitively empathetic bystanders may have remained as they were – just bystanders. Instead, it is Isaacs's compassionate empathy that allowed him to understand the children's situation and to separate himself from the emotions of fear, panic, etc. long enough to do something about it. His focus was not on himself and the emotions he felt vicariously, but rather on what actions he could take to relieve another's suffering. This is the difference between a spectator and a hero.

Compassionate empathy is the universal component of the heroes discussed in this project. The activist or whistleblower that advocates for justice of an underrepresented or mistreated group must have felt compassionate empathy for those he represents. Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King were all once participants of their respective oppressed groups. These anti-heroes experienced the injustice first-handedly, empathized with the plights of the suffering, and took an active role in leveling their playing fields. The teacher or mentor that dedicates himself to the development of future generations takes a personal stake in the process, oftentimes because he himself had once endured comparable struggles. Kate Biberdorf, Ed Boland, and Randy Pausch all responded to students' needs because they were once young adults themselves seeking direction and educational advancement. In fact, it is their compassionate empathy that precisely makes them such effective mentors. The doctor or good Samaritan that saves lives does so because he must have personally understood pain and suffering. Zhang Xinzhi, Sally Clarke, or Bernard Kouchner all sought to relieve pain and suffering, just as the United 93 crew and Devin Isaacs turned compassionate empathy into heroic action.

Evidently, heroes undergo a journey, intention, action, and consequence sequence that helps them identify more with the people they wish to help. In developing this compassionate empathy, individuals are often inspired, whether consciously or subconsciously, to help others proactively and retroactively. Heroism is a two-way street. Heroes are initially inspired by the people they are trying to help, and their heroic actions in turn inspire others to do the same. A compassionate person will ultimately feel inspired by a compassionate hero, because seeing someone transform empathy into heroic action demonstrates that the average human is capable of doing so. It is this quality coupled with morally righteous intentions, actions, and

consequences that one admires and seeks to emulate. Having experienced their respective journeys, heroes, more often than not, serve significant roles developing another character's journey to heroism – thus perpetuating a cycle of heroism that is triggered the moment an individual is inspired by another.

Inspiration

Because heroes play a crucial role in inspiring this chain of heroism, this begs the question – why do people feel inspired, what makes people feel inspired, and why do people need to feel inspired? Inspiration is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something.” Inspiration is one of the few things that is powerful enough to compel one to do things that contradict one's instinctual needs. From a psychological standpoint, this contradicts one's understanding of addressing basic human needs before other psychological or self-actualization needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranks human needs in stages – the bottom tier being physiological and safety needs such as food warmth, safety, etc. The tier above that includes psychological needs such as the sense of belonging and love, as well self-esteem needs of feeling accomplishment. The top-most tier of self-fulfillment needs include the process of self-actualization – finding one's life purpose or achieving one's full potential. This tier of needs is most directly linked to the desire to grow as a person, directly linked to the inspiration process of heroism. Inspiration when linked to a person or purpose can lead an aspiring artist to forgo a comfortable lifestyle for an expression of self. The prioritization of needs is flexible depending on the circumstance, and heroes demonstrate the ability to reorder this hierarchy to place self-actualization above all else when the time calls for it. Maslow's hierarchy of needs presents a notion that one aspires to be more than one's instinctual needs for survival. Heroes need not

always forgo the fundamental needs entirely to inspire others. The focus is more about realizing that being self-interested in one's own basic needs does not truly satisfy the human condition. Heroes inspire others to achieve this level of self-actualization that would not have been discovered otherwise.

Personal Significance

Heroism has always been an intriguing topic to me. Not only does it supersede and often contradict human tendencies, but it also propels others to do the same. Like a chain reaction of moral duty and goodness, this process shapes individuals to become the best versions of themselves. I am no stranger to the influence of modern heroes, as they have undoubtedly left their impact on me, helping me realize my full potential and inciting the desire to strive for it. One specific hero serves as my inspiration to delve into the topic. My inspiration comes in the form of a student-organization leader, the admiration for this individual manifesting from an understanding of her as a leader, mentor, friend, and person.

Upon initial encounter, I was captivated by her powerful, well-kept, and professional demeanor. Standing before an audience of hundreds with a compelling aura of credibility, she carried herself with unfaltering confidence. She was passionate, charismatic, and outspoken – the antithesis to who I was, but everything that I hoped to be. As a leader, she confronted issues fearlessly and guided the organization with integrity. There was never a day that passed where she did not think for the benefit of the group she led. She exemplified servant leadership, taking on tasks that others met with hesitation. She represented dedication, responsibility, and hard work. However, unbeknownst to many, she was even more than this first impression. Throughout her journey, she created impact beyond that of a figurehead. In many ways,

categorizing her as a certain type of hero would be doing her an injustice. To me, she represented all of the archetypes of modern heroism.

Her journey is comparable to that of the everyman hero. There is a Chinese saying that translates to “three minutes on stage requires ten years of hard work.” Beneath the seemingly perfect exterior, she had endured a journey different from her peers. She was an ordinary student with a less than ordinary circumstance. Working her way to put herself through college to lessen the burden to her parents, she began cultivating a habit of independence early in her life. This grit and perseverance propelled her through various jobs and opportunities, allowing her to develop an unmatched resilience and work ethic that inspired those under her leadership. Her perseverance in conquering all challenges remains one of the qualities I admire most.

Her responsibility is comparable to that of the anti-hero. Put in the position of making executive decisions that would sometimes upset the people she served, she filled the anti-hero role to a tee. She shouldered the burden of playing the bad guy, bringing light to unfavorable opinions in efforts to broaden others’ perspectives. As a mentor, she kept in mind her mentee’s long-term ambitions and took it upon herself to impart honest feedback to guide them on the right path, even if that honesty was negatively received in the moment. Time and time again, she demonstrated unwavering loyalty in the face of mentees’ temporary mistrust or misunderstanding.

Her influence is that of the catalyst hero. I never understood the significance of mentorship until I experienced hers. She sought to understand her mentees before seeking to be understood by others, and she consistently supported others in whatever capacity she could offer. She taught me the importance of introspection and empowered me to believe in myself more. Despite facing the slow progress toward my personal goals, she was never impatient. Despite

grappling with my harsh inner critic, she was always there to hold up a mirror for me. And when all else in life seemed chaotic or uncertain, she was there for me.

Lastly, she lived her life with compassionate empathy. I admired her ability to listen without judgement, share the joys and pains in life, and alleviate others' suffering without fail. She had a seemingly infinite capacity to help others, oftentimes putting their needs above her own. Within the organization, she understood the longing for community within the large university, as she once lacked that sense of belonging herself, and thus she strived to make the organization a home for those who needed it. On an individual basis, she expressed her compassion through the little things. The act of cleaning up another person's mess meant lessening the burden on janitors. The act of bringing someone a meal during a busy day ensured the wellbeing of that individual. But moreover, this became evident in her mentorship. She sought to quell one's fears and simplify one's problems, never belittling a mentee's concerns. And in my experience, she patiently advised and provided necessary resources for me to take control of my own development, ultimately empowering me to overcome personal and professional weaknesses. Above all else, she inspired me to not only treat others compassionately, but also invest in the other's development. She entered my life in a time when I needed the most direction, embodying the qualities I valued most and empowering me to become a better version of myself. For these reasons, she is a hero to me.

As we have seen, heroes are manifested in various shapes and forms. A student leader to me was as powerful as a physician may be to his patient. No longer are heroes those who simply align with a traditional set of characteristics. No longer are they evaluated solely by their results. They are characters who live through unique journeys that shape their altruistic and morally righteous intentions, actions, and consequences. They are those that harbor compassionate

empathy in their hearts and consciously strive for the betterment of others. Heroes are those who embody characteristics that, to some extent, contradict our selfish human tendencies and have the capacity to inspire mankind to do the same. Selflessness, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, etc. are all characteristics that are revered in modern society and attributed to “good” people. By inspiring our future generations to become such individuals, perhaps we are cultivating generations of everyday superheroes, whilst subconsciously living out the superhero dream ourselves.

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BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Shang was born in Houston, Texas on March 4, 1996 and enrolled in the Plan II Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin in 2014. Alongside Plan II, she studied finance at the McCombs School of Business and participated in the Asian Business Students Association, Undergraduate Business Council, Filipino Students Association, and Redefined Dance Company. She graduated in May of 2018 and plans to pursue management consulting at PwC in San Jose, California this fall. In the future, she hopes to own and manage her own chain of cafes to support the many other coffee enthusiasts that may require liquid anxiety as they write their own theses.