

HEROIC JOURNEY OF WADE WATTS IN ERNEST CLINE'S *READY PLAYER ONE*

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ABSTRACT

Myth and Heroes have been a part of humanity's culture since long time ago. Campbell argues that all myth comes from a single source and dub it as the Monomyth. In these days and age, heroes still exist within the various media that we consume every day and one such work is Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*. The purpose of this study is to prove that monomyth and the characteristics of myth can be found within *Ready Player One* by examining its main character, Wade Watts. This study used the descriptive qualitative method to explain the story. The study employs two theories to describe Wade's journey. First, it used the Monomyth by Joseph Campbell as the primary theory to analyze the hero's journey from the beginning till the end. Second, Northrop Frye's Theory of Myth is used to analyze the characteristic of myth and determine the work's genre of myth. The result of the study showed that the monomyth is applicable in this work, all stages of monomyth can be found within the work, except for the *refusal to the call*. Furthermore, by employing Frye's theory, the research showed that the most common characteristics of myth that appears in this research belongs to the Summer: Romance. These two analyses were able to successfully describe Wade's journey and myth.

Keywords: Hero's Journey, Monomyth, Genre of Myth, *Ready Player One*

A. INTRODUCTION

Myths have been a part of humanity since the age past until today. Humans have known myth as tales of wonders and magic. Etymologically myth comes from the Greek word "mythos" that have several meanings, including "story" "speech" or "myth". Walter Burkert said that "myths" are a tale with a secondary partial reference to the collective importance (Burkert, 23). The many myths that exist contain various stories about figure who are called heroes. Heroes can be defined as people who transform their compassion into heroic actions throughout their journey. In this case heroes put themselves for the humanity or to achieve something of their desire. It means that hero often described as a person in a group who acts in behalf of other's needs, in order to defend integrity or a moral cause. Hero might be a person who is willing to give his or her life to something bigger

than oneself. Joseph Campbell argued that all stories about heroes and myths follow a narrative template which he dubs as the Monomyth or often more known as the Hero's Journey. Heroes come in many different aspects; gender, color, explorers, missionaries, politicians, scientists, preachers, founders of politics, or theologians (Popa, 13). In the modern world, a human who able to contribute to humanity and change the world can be considered as a hero. Therefore, even today we can find heroes still exist and have embodied themselves into other forms.

To find the perfect figure of a modern hero and their myth. The researcher chose to analyze a heroic figure that is different from the common stereotypes of heroes who possess great powers. The subject of this research does not possess some super-natural powers to act heroic and exist within a fictional world. Therefore, the subject of this research is the heroic journey of Wade Watts. Wade is a fictional character written by Ernest Cline in his book *Ready Player One*. *Ready Player One* is a debut novel written by Ernest Cline and released on August 16, 2011. *Ready Player One* tells about the story of Wade Watts and how he tries to win a virtual-reality game designed by a billionaire named Halliday to obtain virtual immortality and an incredible sum of fortunes. Wade is just an ordinary young man who lives in a slum, and by using his wits and knowledge of the 80s pop-culture, it allowed him to solve various problems that he faces in his journey. Winning the contest is not his sole reason for competing. In his journey, Wade meets various allies and enemies. The antagonist of the story Sorrento is planning to control the virtual world of OASIS so he can monopolize the global market and take over the world. To stop Sorrento from claiming the OASIS, Wade must win the contest and claim the prize for himself. The works is chosen because Wade is a perfect character to describe as he is initially an ordinary man without power unlike the heroes of old and myths. Another reason that the novel was chosen is because it is also an exciting story to read and the setting in *Ready player One* happened in the virtual world, a world that is different from our known reality. These unique traits are what led the researcher to conduct the research on this work.

The objective of this research is to describe the relation of the novel with myth and to describe the kind of hero Wade Watts by looking through his myth's genre. This study enriches the reader's knowledge about heroism and myth. This research also aims to help the readers understand the qualities of a hero. This research is expected to give insight for other researchers who wish to discuss similar topics and may find the content provided to be useful.

B. RELATED LITERATURE

1. The Monomyth

The Monomyth or more commonly known as the hero's journey is a theoretical framework popularized by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell created a model to understand the common structure of most myth today which are drawn from various myths and literature in the past. Campbell intended to not tell that that heroic figures are the same but to enhance

the knowledge about what a hero is. Campbell divided the Monomyth into three main phases and seventeen sub phases which are explained in the following;

a. Departure

Departure is the first phase where the hero begins his journey. The hero will be presented with a problem or goal and embarks on his journey. The phase has five sub-stages namely; *The Call to Adventure*, *Refusal to the Call*, *Supernatural Aid*, *The First Threshold*, and *The Belly of the Whale*.

b. Initiation

Initiation is the second phase of the Monomyth in this phase the hero is presented with various trials that he much completes, the stage consists of; The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as the Temptress, Atonement with the father, Apotheosis, and the Ultimate Boon.

c. Return

The last phase of the heroic journey where the hero is reaching the end of his goal or journey. This stage consists of; Refusal to Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the return Threshold, Master of the Two World, and The Freedom to Live.

2. Frye's Theory of Myth

In the *Theory of Myth* Frye tried to come up with a broader term to categorize literature. Frye states that literature is comparable to life or that it can be said as the representation of life. In terms of narrative, myth imitates the actions and limits of conceivable human's desire (Frye, 134). Frye described that there are four literary categories; the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the satire. Frye states that if we are told that what we are about to read is either a tragic or comic surely affect our mood and that is the same case with both romantic and the satire and this is employed as the elements of literature of experience, which Frye called as mythoi or generic plots. (Frye, 162). In his quest Frye discovered four characteristics of mythoi of myth in a story and each of the mythoi have six different phases to them.

a. Spring: Comedy

This genre is heavily influenced by Greek New Comedy which is the basis for most comedy. The first phase of this genre which is also the most ironic is signaled by a humorous society which remains undefeated. In this case undefeated means that the society disintegrates without anything taking its place (Frye, 178).

b. Summer: Romance

Romance can be found within all forms of literary works; in romance the ideals are represented as the heroes and heroines whereas the villains are the threats to their ascendancy. (Frye, 186). The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means that romance is a progressive form, which is why we know it better through fictions and drama. The complete form of romance is a successful quest and that completed form has three stages; the perilous journey, the crucial struggle, and the exaltation of the hero.

c. Autumn: Tragedy

The theory of tragedy is considerably better in shape as opposed to the other three mythoi, because the ground for it is more familiar and thus can be explained briefly. Frye states that without tragedy, all literary fictions plausibly be explained as the expressions of emotional attachments (Frye, 2006). Like comedy, tragedy can be easily studied through drama, but it is not solely limited to drama and as opposed to comedy which deals with characters in a social group, tragedy is more focused on a single individual (Frye, 2007). Tragedy usually involves imagery of torture and gore.

d. Winter: Irony and Satire

This type of myth is ambiguous and filled with complexities of idealized existence. As a structure of myth, it is best to approach irony as the parody of romance. To identify which is satire and which is irony we can look at how the moral norms portrayed. If it is relatively clear and against the grotesque and absurdity can be measured, then it is satire in which only minimal amount of irony incorporated. On the other hand, irony can be identified when the author has no clear attitude or what his own is supposed to be

3. Previous Studies

First, Heroes of Middle-Earth: J. Campbell's Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* which was conducted by Kesti (2007) is a study of Monomyth in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, in which the study focuses on the five main characters of the novel (Aragorn, Eowyn, Frodo, Gandalf and Sam). She used Joseph Campbell's Monomyth theory to analyze the structure of the novel. The stages of Departure, Initiation, and Return are thoroughly explained in the five characters. The characters may have different storyline, but the Monomyth was proven to be able to depict each of the characters' journeys.

The second research is Heroic Journey in Modern Mythical Exploration in Dan Brown's *Inferno* by Ade Sutra Prayogi. Ade's research focus on the character of Langdon and his mythical journey. Ade uses Campbell's monomythic journey to describe the character of Langdon. In his research he found that almost all the stages of Monomyth appear in Langdon's journey, except for, The Magic Flight and The Crossing of the return Threshold. Furthermore, Ade also analyze Langdon's myth by using Northrop Frye's Genre of Myth to describe and determined the myth that exist in *Inferno*. In his finding, the character of Langdon has gone through the stages or the characteristics of Tragedy the most. This work closely resembles the type of research that this one is going to conduct. Both researches are trying to describe a hero's journey within their respective work and try to determine its genre of myth.

The last research, *I Am Iron Man: Tony Stark as a Mythical and Modern Hero in Marvel Cinematic Universe Pro* conducted by Eleonoora (2013) is a study of the popular culture character of Ironman. In this research Eleonora finds that the character of Ironman as he appeared in; *Ironman*, *Ironman 2*, and *Marvel's The Avengers* corresponds to the framework of Monomyth presented by Joseph Campbell. Furthermore, while Tony Stark as Ironman appears to be not so heroic

during the earlier part of his quest, his character develops overtime and then at the end of the phase 1 of the Marvel's Cinematic Universe, he has become a full-fledged hero. Eleonora argues that this makes it clear that the old formulaic stories of warrior and kings does not compatible with modern view of a heroic figure and a few aspects of traditional hero still appeals for the audience nowadays.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design

The research used Campbell's Monomyth theory and Frye's *Theory of Myth* as the main theory of the research. The researcher used the Descriptive Qualitative method to describe the findings. There are several reasons why this method is chosen. The descriptive research attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present. Descriptive studies have a purpose to examine a specific event that is occurring at a specific place(s) and time (Lans, 1). Descriptive method is used in this study to explain and analyze the hero's journey from the first phase until the end. Descriptive data analysis involves the method of collecting, classifying the data, analyzing, and interpreting them, then drawing a conclusion. Descriptive qualitative method focused on words and meaning in analyzing. This analysis included to descriptive qualitative method because the data collected were in form of words, clauses, phrases and sentences that descriptively analyzed through words not numbers.

2. Data and Data Source

The data of the study is in the form of narrations, passages, sentences and dialogues that show the heroic journey of Wade and his myth in *Ready Player One*. The source of the data from this research is *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline.

3. Data Collection

The data for the research is obtained through reading and then taking notes regarding the character of Wade Watts in *Ready Player One*. Then the researcher analyze the heroic journey of Wade Watts and explain it through the framework of the monomyth. Finally, the researcher sort the data by applying Frye's Theory of Myth to find out which genre that *Ready Player One* belongs to.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis of *Ready Player One* is separated into two parts. The first one is the analysis of the monomyth which was conducted by separating the data from *Ready Player One* that indicates the various phases of hero's journey which is; Departure, Initiation, and Return. After the data are collected, the data are be matched, sorted and then organized according to the specific phases of hero's journey which they belong to. Data that are not matched with the phases and sub-phases of hero's journey was not be included.

Data analysis for Genre of Myth was conducted by separating data that indicate the characteristics of the four seasons Comedy, Tragedy, Romance, or Irony and Satire. After the data are categorized to their respective genre, the researcher found the result which myth Ready Player One belongs to, based on how many characteristics are fulfilled within the specific genre. Finally, the researcher gave his conclusions based on the analysis and findings of both theories. The data that are collected are in the form of narration, monologues, dialogues, passages, sentences, words and paragraphs.

5. Research Instrument

The instrument of this research is the researcher herself. As Lincoln and Guba stated that the researcher himself or herself is the key instrument of qualitative method. The researcher does the data collection, analysis, identification, and classification of the data personally.

6. Triangulation

Triangulation is used by the researcher to validate the research. According to Denzin and Patton, there are four types of triangulation used in research. The first one is Methods Triangulation; method triangulation is used to check the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. The second is, Triangulation of Sources, this triangulation is used to examine the consistency of different data sources from within the same method. The third is Analyst Triangulation, this method of triangulation use multiple analysts or observers to review the research's findings. This method can override blind spots that may exist in an interpretive analysis. The last one is Theory Triangulation; this method use multiple theories to examine and interpret the data.

This study implement theory triangulation. This method is chosen as there are more than one theoretical perspective in which the researcher can use to analyze and interpret the data of this research.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Monomyth of Wade Watts

The purpose of this part is to conclude that the journey in *Ready Player One* is a typical heroic journey as practiced over the generations. There are some stages that may not occur in the work the flexibility of the theory. The researcher may change the order of some of the phases and it was based on the character's order of events.

a. Departure

Departure is the stage where the hero begins his journey. Wade's journey begins when he received his *Call to Adventure* in the form of a message by Anorak. This message was addressed to the whole world and broadcasted throughout the OASIS. The message contains a quest that will give the winner the entire fortune of James Halliday. Hearing this, Wade embarks on his journey to change his livelihood, he thought that the contest was his only chance to escape poverty. Thus, the stage *Refusal to the Call* never happened in the story, despite Wade's fear of the unknown, he had nothing to lose and he is willing to give everything it takes to win the contest.

The *Supernatural Aid* is the stage where the hero will meet his magical helper. The figure often appears as an old man, but this is only an encounter. The supernatural figure is not joining the hero's journey yet or may not ever. In Wade's story such figure is Ogden Morrow, the closest friend of James Halliday himself. Ogden as Wade calls him provided him with a piece of advice for his adventure and later he also provides help for the hero when Wade was seeking for sanctuary by flying Wade to his mansion with his private jet.

The hero then undergoes the *Crossing of the Threshold*. In this stage the hero truly begins his journey into the unknown and he meets with the guardian of the threshold. In *Ready Player One* the guardian of the threshold would be King Arcerak, in order to obtain the copper key and reach the first gate, Wade must beat King Arcerak a boss NPC (Non Playable Character) in a game of Joust, a classic video game from the 80s. Wade was having difficulty beating him until he suggested to change side because he was more confident playing that way. After changing side, Wade was able to successfully defeat Arcerak, granting him the copper key and sum of credits, credits are considered as money within the OASIS. After receiving the key Wade now must find Halliday's virtual house to locate the first gate. Shortly after, he found the gate and opened it. After opening it, his name soared into the scoreboard of the hunt and appearing in the scoreboard was a huge deal as no one had ever done it within the five years since the hunt began.

The Belly of the whale is the final phase before the hero he separates himself from the ordinary world to the unknown. By entering the stage, the hero shows his willingness to transform. In this stage the hero might appear to be unaware of the dangers that his newfound power brings, the hero might also encounter setbacks and dangers. Such a literal depiction of the belly of the whale does not exist within *Ready Player One*. However, the fact that Wade goes through a transformation remained and that signaled this stage. Wade after being the top ranker of the hunt immediately became famous. He also gained a sum of fortune that allowed him to do feats that he was not able to do before. Such as; travelling between planets within the OASIS and being able to buy new weapons for his adventure. His whole feat has made him famous and now he would become the target of the Sixers, the Sixers was a group of people that were hired by Sorrento to complete the hunt for himself. Wade was unaware of the fact that his status would soon bring him misfortune, that is Sorrento blew up Wade's trailer and home. Fearing for his life

and having no place to go home to. Wade used the money he earned from his endorsements within the OASIS and moved to a safer place in Columbus, Ohio, He changed his name and went by Bryce Lynch to avoid attention. His willingness to re-born himself under a new alias to continue the journey signaled the belly of the whale.

b. Initiation

"Initiation phase" indicates that the hero fully enters the unique/unknown world to finish his quest and facing bigger threats. After passing the first threshold, the hero will face the *Road of Trials*. The road of trials is a series of trials that the hero must complete in order to achieve his goal. Wade's first trial is finding the Copper Key and unlock the copper gate which is also a part of this *crossing of the threshold*. For the second trial, Wade must find the hidden meaning hidden in the quatrain to locate the Jade Key Wade was getting more depressed after being unable to decipher the meaning for so long until he got a little tip from his best friend Aech. After the little tip from Aech, Wade was able to decipher the quatrain and found out that the location of the Jade Key is in the planet Frobozz. In Frobozz. Wade had to collect nineteen treasures in a game called Zork and place them in a case near the living room. After clearing the game, Wade received the Jade Key and it was wrapped with silver foil that contained the clue for the Jade Gate. The foil turned into a silver origami unicorn and seeing that Wade knew what he had to do. Wade rushed to the planet Axrenox and found the Jade gate, He inserted his key to a machine called Voight-Kampf, and the gate appeared before him. The last task requires Wade to find The Crystal key, Wade needed The Crystal key to unlock the Third Gate and win the hunt. During his conversation with the high five, Wade asked for their help in completing the final challenge. During the road of trials the hero may find his meeting with the *Goddess*.

The "goddess figure" is a mystical being or simply an ordinary girl who gives affection to the hero to boost the hero's morale. In *Ready Player One* the one who is giving Wade moral support was Art3mis, whom Wade also had a huge crush on. Art3mis was also another player of OASIS who was quite famous among the players. Wade has a crush on her ever since the hunt started, Art3mis was a smart, and brave girl. Similar with Wade. Unfortunately, Wade's *Goddess* is also his own Temptress.

The Woman as Temptress is the stage where the hero will face a figure that may distract him from his quest. The temptress of the story is Art3mis herself. Art3mis may not directly tell Wade to abandon his journey but because of her existence Wade finds himself unwilling to continue the journey and just stay with Art3mis, until Art3mis rejected him and told him that she wants to focus on the hunt, leading Wade into a depression.

In the atonement with the Father the hero may appear to have some sort of complicated problems of his father figure. In this stage the hero able to earn the trust of his father and understand the value of true majesty. The father figure of the story is Max, Wade's personal virtual assistant. After Wade was forgotten and

ignored by Art3mis, Wade went on living healthily and trying to improve his body shape. During this time, Wade had an artificial assistance called Max. Max was designed to help Wade in his training. Max also gave advice to Wade. Max trained Wade's focus by making him exercise daily before he could even login to the OASIS. Max supported Wade and played him his favorite songs to boost his confidence. The help that Max gave, let Wade be able to regain focus and motivated to continue the hunt and signaled his atonement with the father figure, which is Max.

After atoning with the father figure, the hero will undergo his *Apotheosis*. Apotheosis is the stage where the hero faces his hardest challenge. In this stage the hero's ego breaks down, expanding his or her consciousness allowing them to gain a broader point of view that allows them to make sacrifices. After obtaining the third clue, Wade began his investigation to the location of the final gate. During his investigation it turned out that the Sixers had already beat him to it and they barricaded the area of the third gate, in order to prevent other Gunters to enter and contest the last trial. Wade then decided to infiltrate Sorrento's base which would be his greatest challenge so far and it requires his sacrifice, he needed to do this because he needed information on how to disable the barricade that the Sixers had planted.

c. Return

"Return" is the last phase in Campbell's monomyth. "*Magic Flight*" is the moment when a hero escaped with his/her boon, it means to escape from the remaining enemies with the help of friends. During his infiltration of the Sorrento's base. Wade was able to hijack a lot of their data and stole them. He then escaped from the building, but now he must find a safe place to hide. Wade called everyone whom he trusted, which consists of the high five; Aech, Shoto and Art3mis to talk in a private chat room and discussed their next course of action. Fortunately, Ogden Morrow was eavesdropping them, he entered the private chat room with the unique privileges that his avatar possessed. Og promised a safe place to hide in Ohio. Ogden had prepared a private jet for all the remaining high five to use to transport themselves to his mansion. As they accepted Ogden's help, the hero and his allies prepared to take on the final battle against the Sixers. Wade was going to challenge his last trial and his main enemy, Sorrento. The boon that the stage mentioned here would be the data that Wade stolen from Sorrento, and the magic flight that happened can be assumed to be Ogden's help to shelter the hero by literally make them fly using his private jet to his mansion.

Refusal to Return is a stage where the hero who has achieved his boon is required to return to his people, nation, or world. This is the most self-conflicting stage of the hero's journey where the hero must decide for themselves whether they save their people and return to home or stay with the power that they currently possess. During his trials for the final gate and his confrontation with Sorrento. Wade finally defeat Sorrento, defeating Sorrento marked as the final trial for Wade. Wade then managed to open the third gate with the help of his allies. However, Sorrento was not done yet. In his final attempt, Sorrento managed to detonate a bomb that he

had planted before and killed all the avatars that was fighting in the area. Including Wade and his allies. Fortunately, Wade was revived because he had a coin that he obtained previously during his quest for the Jade Key. The coin then provided him with extra life. Because of this Wade is now the sole contestant that survived the bomb and the only one who could reach the final gate before Sorrento accessed the OASIS with his backup account. However, having died within the OASIS, Wade had lost all his items and weapons and he must start from zero, despite so, he strived to continue the journey before Sorrento could make it to the final gate. Wade's resurrection symbolized his "refusal to return" because Wade decided to continue the quest instead of giving up after losing his items.

The hero may not be able to return, and needs to be assisted from without, *Rescue from Without* means that the hero needed assistance from outside of what he can do, usually in the form of help from the allies to rescue him. In this stage the hero's companions or allies shine the most as they are going to be the people that try to rescue the hero. The hero appears to have exhausted his options and need the power from his allies to complete the task. After being revived by the coin, Wade found himself floating on the air with the Final Gate floating above him. Wade was not able to reach the gate without his items, which he had lost. Luckily Art3mis help from outside (the real world) gave Wade the chance to enter the final gate and could be symbolized as *The Rescue from Without*. As Wade entered the final gate, so is the next stage of journey begins.

The Crossing of the return Threshold, the second threshold is the symbol of rebirth that back into the real world. This stage is the opposite of the Crossing of the Threshold during Departure stage as the hero is required to pass through another threshold to return to his ordinary life. The hero is presented with a final challenge and face another threshold guardian. After entering the Final Gate, Wade was the sole contestant that can compete in the final challenge of the gate. He seemed to have won but there is one last challenge that he must complete. Wade must play and complete a classic game called *The Adventures* and obtain the silver egg to return to the real world. *The Adventures* is the threshold guardian that Wade must face and beat the game to return to his ordinary world and after completing the game, Wade had completed the hunt and be the champion of Halliday's hunt.

After winning the contest Wade becomes the *Master of Two Worlds* as he gains the power in both the real world and the OASIS. The sum of fortune that he gets from the contest makes him wealthy in the real world, while the administrator privileges that he gets in the OASIS allows him to be the master of the virtual world.

In the final stage of a heroic journey, the hero meets his ending and chooses his *Freedom to Live*, Wade chooses to live with Samantha after winning the contest and they live together happily.

2. The Genre of Myth of Wade's journey

As hero that complete his monomyth, Wade is going to be examined by using Frye's *Theory of Myth* to determine its genre and its characteristics of myth. Frye's theory is aimed to describe Wade's myth and to find which myth Wade's belong to, which are; *Comedy, Tragedy, Romance or Irony*.

a. ***Spring: Comedy***

Spring contains six characteristics or elements. Comedy focuses on the hero and their surrounding group, often seen as a critic of society over an issue. The first characteristic of *Comedy* is that the society remains undefeated. Undefeated means that the society disintegrates without anything taking its place. In *Ready Player One*, the human's society has long fallen apart as natural sources becomes scarce, unemployment at sky high and criminal activity has become a common occurrence in Wade's societal life. Therefore, with the society defeated before, the first element of the *Comedy* does not fit with Wade's myth.

The second characteristic of *Comedy* genre in the simplest form is, a comedy in which the hero does not transform the society but simply escape or runs away from it, leaving its structures intact. Whenever the hero is isolated, he disintegrates and need a companion to pull him back to his senses. This characteristic is rather tricky when Wade's myth is considered. Wade has never really seemed to run away from society but due to the nature of the virtual world that he preferred to live in, it can be considered as form of escapism and thus it fit with the second characteristic of comedy.

The third characteristic of *Comedy* occurs when the current society is replaced by a better society according to what the hero desires for. In this case the hero might even forcibly change the structure and fundamentals of the said society. After completing his journey, Wade gained the wealth and power to change the society that he lived in. He then scheduled a downtime to access OASIS during certain days for all the players and had them enjoy more of the real world. Thus, the third element of *Comedy* exists within *Ready Player One*.

The fourth characteristic of *Comedy* the story moves out from the world of experience to a world of innocence and romance. Frye characterize this phase when the happier society at the end is left undefined. However, the society may refuse to accept the changes made. At the end of Wade's journey, it is unclear whether the society rejected Wade's change and his position as the CEO of OASIS. Thus, the fourth characteristic of *Comedy* exists within the story.

In the fifth phase of comedy, the story moves on to a world which is still more romantic, less utopian but more arcadian, it is also less festive and pensive, where the comic ending turns out not according to the audience's perspective (Frye, 184). The audience feel the rising action as the hero's quest is responded by how the society look at it. Frye did not describe or indicate how the reaction is; whether it is good or bad. During the hunt, after completing the first gate, Wade

became famous and everyone knows him, people are trying to get on his good side so they could get information about the first gate. This reaction can be indicated as the fifth characteristic of *Comedy*.

In the final characteristic, the society the collapse or the disintegrate. In this phase social units become small and esoteric, or even confined to an individual. The story moves from the world of wits and critical intelligence to a world of solemnity (Frye, 185). It can be seen from how the society lose its members due to war, plague, or a catastrophic event. The last characteristics of *Comedy* cannot be found within Wade's journey, as in the end of the story, no society disintegrates to a small unit. Almost all of Wade's allies excluding Daito survived till the end of the hunt.

b. Summer: Romance

A central theme that can be found in Romance is love as a concept. Unlike love that concerns the bodily experience and sexual desires. The form of love that exist in *Romance* is that of a higher form. It concerns the more passionate of the feeling of love and the spiritual ecstasy that come from it. Characters that exist within Romance is a bit complex, the characters tend to be either for or against the quest or journey (Frye, 186)

The first characteristic of Romance is the birth of the hero. This myth is often associated with a flood, a common symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle. The infant heroes are to be placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea. One example is the story of Perseus in which he drifts from the sea to the land to be raised.

Heroes comes from different backgrounds and how they were born are different from each other. Researchers are doubting the essence of being "born" in a hero's journey. One such question that researcher often face with the birth of the hero regards to the old age debate over nature vs nurture; is heroism something that an individual born with, or heroism is something that can be attained and learned?

People are all born with the capacity to be anything, and they get shaped by their circumstances either by the family or the culture and time period that they happen to grow up with. Whether people are born in a war zone or a peaceful world; whether people grow up with prosperity or poverty (Cherry, 1).

Therefore, the nature of how the hero is born does not matter in the context of a hero's journey. A hero can be born with all the qualities of a hero but ultimately what defines them to be a hero are their actions. Wade was not born with unique qualities of a hero nor that he was born as a child of prophecy. Wade was a normal young man living in the slum and gained his heroics thru his deeds. It can be said that the moment he was "born" with his heroics, was the moment that he was determined to complete his first trial in the tomb. Thus, the first characteristic indeed exists in *Ready Player One*.

The second characteristic dealt with the innocence youth of the hero which generally is the most familiar as the story of Adam and Eve before the Fall. This

phase presents the youthful hero as the central character in a world of magic or desirable law. The hero is overshadowed by their parents and surrounded by young companions. (Frye, 200). In *Ready Player One*, the main character of the story Wade was raised by her mother as a single parent, but due to the nature of his mother's job, Wade spent most of his time in the virtual world of OASIS. The OASIS serves as both his playground and his school, as his school was a virtual school. He also learned a lot of knowledge from the OASIS as it contained the largest library the world had ever known.

Thus, the second characteristic of Romance exists within the story of *Ready Player One*. Although Wade at this point did not really have a companion yet, he was still being raised by his mother and the virtual characters from the OASIS.

The third characteristic deals with the normal quest theme. In this phase the hero set on his or her journey to out find what he is searching and envision for. Every hero undergoes this phase, including Wade. This characteristic is apparently is not of a huge significance for *Theory of Myth* (Frye, 200). It only shows the hero is about to struggle and the road of trials at the beginning of a hero's journey. In his quest, Wade began his first trial when he was about to enter the *Tomb of Horror* despite being a low-level character in OASIS.

Although Wade had gotten his call to adventure earlier in the story when Halliday announced the hunt, his real trial began much later in the story when he stumbled upon the Tomb. Thus, the third characteristic of Romance is present.

The fourth characteristic of Romance corresponds to the fourth phase of comedy, in which the happier society is more, or less visible through the action of emerging at the few last moments. In this phase the hero struggles to maintain his innocence and his existence even in the presence of negative reactions from the society, and often takes form as an allegory of moral (Frye, 201). Wade was a reclusive individual. He mostly spent his time investigating the hunt and he ever only had one friend which was Aech. Due to this nature he was often avoided by his classmates and he was also often ignored by his aunt.

The fifth characteristic of Romance corresponds the fifth phase of comedy in which the myth focuses on how the society responds to the actions of the hero. In Wade's quest, after he completed the first trial and be the first person ever to appear on the scoreboard, all OASIS eyes suddenly turned to him. He was a celebrity among the society. He received a lot of offers from various companies and he also piqued the interest of Sorrento, the main villain of the story.

The final element of Romance is the marking of the end for the hero's journey. Stories have fine endings and the ending of the story is derived from the experience of the main hero. On a popular and social level this often indicated by comfortable beds or chairs around fireplaces or warm and cozy spots in general (Frye, 202). At the end of Wade's journey, he was is about to meet with his love interest Art3mis in real life, Wade learned that Art3mis real name was Samantha. Wade confessed his true feelings to Samantha and wished to be together with her.

Wade's journey was complete, he gained what he wanted and live happily with Samantha. The story of *Ready Player One* contained all six elements of a romantic myth. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Wade is a romantic hero. But the researcher analyze other myths and give contrast to this one.

c. Autumn: Tragedy

This myth usually requires the hero to be tempted to perform a mission which may risk his life, after the hero's luck starts to decline, the journey ends with the hero's failure or death (Dr. Tearle, 1).

The first characteristic of Tragedy shows the hero is given the highest dignity compared to the others. The dignity here means that the hero must be courageous and innocent, and he has some capability and strengths compared to the other characters.

The first characteristic of Tragedy cannot be found within Wade's journey. Wade was born in a slum and he already lost both of his parents. His life before winning the contest was poor and miserable. He is also constantly abused by his aunt and basically had to fend for himself whenever he's hungry. Thus, the first character which shows the hero given a certain dignity or power does not exist in *Ready Player One*.

The second characteristic involves a bit of romance. It corresponds to the youth of a romantic hero, or to put simply the sense of inexperience and innocence which involve young people in the hero's quest. In most tragedies of this genre, the central character usually survives so the story ends with maturity. Sometimes in any classic romance work, the characters who seem in love would survive the road of trials, though there has to be some tragic scenes, in the middle of the story or the end of the story like a betrayal or one of them dies (Frye, 220). In Wade's journey, Wade managed to live together with his romantic partner Samantha and both of them lived and survived the trials. Therefore this characteristic does not exist within *Ready Player One*.

The third characteristic of Tragedy deals with the emphasis on achievement of the hero and the tragedy which corresponds the central-quest theme of romance (Frye, 220). During his quest, Wade was invited to a private chat with Sorrento. Sorrento ask him how to reach the tomb and how to complete the trial and offered Wade a huge sum of money. Wade declined the offer but then Sorrento revealed that he knows Wade's location. He then bombed Wade's aunt house. Luckily, Wade survives the bombing since he was in his secret basement, but his actions caused her aunt, Mrs. Moors and other innocents to die. Wade is really shaken by this incident. This horrific event traumatized Wade, he decided to escape the trailers and live in an apartment far away. This event fits with the third stage of Tragedy.

The fourth phase of tragedy tells a typical fall of the hero's quest. In this phase we cross the boundary of innocence to experience in which in the direction of hero's falls. After being dumped by Art3mis, Wade isolates himself and live in a self-pity state for quite some time. He abandons the hunt just leisurely logging into

OASIS without a clear goal. This state of Wade's fits with the fourth characteristic of Tragedy.

In the fifth phase we find the hero is turning more ironic instead of heroic, and the characters look further away and in a confined perspective (Frye, 221). This Ironic perspective is gained by making the characters having less freedom than the audience. Wade was in a state of depression. However, through the help of Max and self-improvement, Wade was able to be back on the hunt with newfound spirit and competence. Therefore, the fifth stage does not fit with *Ready Player One*.

The final phase is the world of horror and shock, central images of this genre involves; cannibalism, mutilation, and torture (Frye, 222). The specific reaction of shock is justified with the images of cruelty and outrage. Any tragedy may have more than one shocking scenes, but the sixth phase shock a whole and in total effect, and at the end of this phase we see the imagery of demonic vision. Its prime symbols are prison, madhouse, instruments of torture.

Wade able to completes the hunt and throughout his quest he did not fall further than he already did, he is able to get himself back up. Thus, the final element of Tragedy is also not present in *Ready Player One*.

d. Winter: Irony and Satire

This type of myth is ambiguous and filled with complexities of idealized existence. As a structure of myth, it is best to approach irony as the parody of romance. To identify which is satire and which is irony we can look at how the moral norms portrayed. If it is relatively clear and against the grotesque and absurdity can be measured, then it is satire in which only minimal amount of irony incorporated. On the other hand, irony can be identified when the author has no clear attitude or what his own is supposed to be (Frye 224).

The first characteristic of irony or often called as the low norm coincides with the first phase of ironic comedy in which there is no displacement to the humorous society. In order to preserve the hero's balance, the hero must keep his eyes open and his mouth shut in a world of permanent anomaly, crime, and injustice (Frye, 226). In *Ready Player One*, the protagonist Wade is not going through the crisis of balance that Irony and Satire suggests. Wade must struggle to be able to reach his goal, thus this characteristic does not fit.

The second deals with the norms and dogmas that is established in a society and then it is then challenged by a new ideology or society but with no clear resolution. After completing the first trial, Wade did not challenge the society nor that he is trying to instill a new ideology. The world just keeps on going despite Wade's rise to fame.

The third characteristic of satire or often called as high norm, is where the society shifts its perspective after criticizing the norms and the common sense. In this phase we let go of the common sense as common sense also imply certain dogmas. In this phase the society begins to think that there is something wrong with the anti-norm behaviors of the satirist. A satirist cannot possibly explore his form without seeing the possibilities of exploring his assumptions. In Wade's case,

the society begins to question Interactive Online Industries after they were found doing some criminal activity which includes; the bombing of Wade's town, the assassination of Daito and various other. At the end of the story, the Gunters dared to challenge IOI and side with Wade during the final battle.

In the fourth characteristic, the myth moves from the ironic aspects of tragedy, and satire begins to diminish. This phase is labeled as the hero's fall. Though having minimal satire, this phase tries to bring out the tragedy aspect of the character without trying to ridicule them. This phase looks straight at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic side of the state of experience. It weights the humanity's heroes, minimize the inevitability of tragedy, giving a social and psychological answers for a catastrophe and makes the misery of humanity seems superfluous and evitable. It is also the most honest phase of all with a very explicit stress on realism (Frye, 237). Wade did not suffer from a hero's fall. He was able to complete his quest and achieved happiness. Thus, it does not coincide with how the fourth stage depicts a hero's fall.

The fifth stage of the myth corresponds with fifth phase of tragedy. This phase has a huge emphasis on the natural cycle of the world. The hero's wheel of fate may begin to turn but the torture continues. The hero may seem to finally find his peace, but he never can. There may seem to be a good ending for the hero, but it is a hell of every ending (Frye, 237). The repeated motifs of torture and unhappiness does not happen to Wade, as Wade was able to achieve his true happiness in the real life, with Samantha. Thus, the fifth characteristic does not present within *Ready Player One*

The last phase illustrates human's life in chains. Its central settings are mostly prisons, madhouses, and torture chambers. In this phase the hero meets his end and the hero may be shown to be deceased or feared of a bigger threat next to him. The last characteristic of Irony and Satire is also not present within *Ready Player One*, simply by looking at how the story ends. The hero found his closure and happiness during a bright sunny day, confessing his love to Samantha.

e. Discussion

Based on the analysis the main point that can be discussed is that Wade's character has gone through almost all stages of the monomyth except for Refusal to the Call as Wade has never appeared to abandon his duty and quest, the main stages and their sub-stages can be found within the work based on the previous analysis. The researcher also found that Wade's myth is best categorized as *Romance* as all the stages and characteristics of Romance can be found within the work. Those stages are; 1. The birth of the hero which happens when Wade gained his fame by appearing on the scoreboard for the first time, 2. The hero's youth, which tells about Wade's childhood before he joins the contest 3. The normal quest theme, which is basically the whole monomyth of Wade Watts and how he deals with his trials. 4. The hero maintaining his innocents and existence, which is about Wade maintaining his existence in both the real world and the virtual world and stay true to his character 5. The society's reactions towards the hero which tells

about how the society reacts when Wade gained his fame and 6. The end of the hero's journey, which is about the end of Wade's journey in *Ready Player One* after winning the contest and gained wealth and power.

In analyzing Wade's journey and his myth, the researcher found the correlation that some stages of hero's journey also indicate the characteristic of Romance. The birth of the hero happens during Wade's Departure stage of the Monomyth, specifically the crossing of the first threshold. In this stage Wade gained the courage to complete his task and thus his birth as a hero began. The normal quest theme of Romance seen as the road of trials for Wade. In this characteristic the hero is faced with a quest that he must complete in order to reach his ending. Furthermore, the end of the hero's journey in Romance is pretty much the stage of Freedom to live of the monomyth. In this stage the hero reached his goal and he has obtained the object of his desire, in Wade's case that is Samantha, his romantic interest and the wealth he gained after inheriting the OASIS. Having these same stages and characteristic, it can be assumed that hero and myth are closely tied together. A hero's journey is simply a myth in the making.

Now, as a comparison, Ade's analysis of the hero's journey and myth in *Inferno* is a good start. Ade's research shows that the character of Langdon has gone through almost all the stages of hero's journey except for the Magic Flight, and the Crossing of the Return Threshold. Whereas in this research, almost all the stages of monomyth are present within the work except for Refusal to the call. Ade's research has similarities with this one, the character that Ade is trying describe, Langdon, does not complete all the stages of monomyth, however Langdon is still very much a hero as his quest can be described from the beginning till the end by just using the monomyth. Furthermore, Ade also found that characteristics of Tragedy is the most dominant within his research, thus he concludes that Langdon's heroic journey is Tragedy. Ade arrived at the conclusion that myth and heroism cannot be separated.

After reviewing the similarities of Ade's research with this one, the researcher arrived at the insight that myth and hero is important. In studying one of them, there is bound to be some similarities that can be found. Each hero and myth are different. However, they are all rooted and closely tied together. To study either hero, or myth, both fields can be reviewed together to further enhance the credibility of the research.

E. CONCLUSION

Having analyzed widely about the topic researcher comes to these conclusions. The major phases of *Departure, Initiation and Return* are all present within the work, except *refusal to the call* as the researcher could not find the stage within this work. In Departure, Wade has gone through *The call to Adventure* when he received the announcement of Halliday's quest and sets on his journey to fix his miserable life, leaving behind his past life and showing that *The Refusal to the Call* does not happen in the story. Wade received the *Supernatural Aid* from Ogden Morrow, Halliday's best friend when he offered him and the high five

shelter and provided him a piece of advice during the interview. *The First Threshold* was King Arcerak, in order to obtain the first key, Wade has to win against Arcerak in a game of Joust and *The Belly of the Whale* happened during the time when Wade gain his fame and becomes the target of Sorrento, so he choose to move away to a safer place in Ohio. In *Initiation* Wade has gone through *The Road of Trials* which comprises of the quest to find the three keys and three corresponding gates of each key. The *Meeting with the Goddess* which is Art3mis, Wade's romantic interest in the virtual world. *The Temptress* ironically is also Art3mis as she hinders the progress of Wade's journey. Wade go through the *Atonement with the Father* with Max, his virtual assistant during his seclusion time after having his heart broken by Art3mis and decides to start anew. His *Apotheosis* begins as Wade decides to risk his life by sneaking into the IOI base to obtain his *Ultimate Boon* which is the information that he needed to win the game. In *Return*, Wade has gone through *The Magic Flight* when Ogden Morrow offered him a shelter so that he can continue his journey, the magic flight happened because Ogden fly him to his place with his private jet. In *Refusal to Return* Wade finds himself to be sole survivor of the blast during the final trial as he was saved by his magical quarter that brings him back to life, Wade received his *Rescue from Without* as his friends helped him to complete the quest from the real world, the Crossing of the Return Threshold is the final challenges that Wade has to face to truly claim his reward. After winning the contest Wade now becomes *The Master of Two Worlds* as he gained both power in the real and the virtual world. Wade choose his *Freedom to Live* when he decides to live with Samantha and forget about the OASIS for a while.

The second research question is about the characteristics of myth that are present within *Ready Player One*. To answer that, the researcher referred to Frye's *Theory of Myth*. *Theory of Myth* is used to describe Wade's journey according to the four major common myth. Which are; *Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Satire and Irony*. The researcher found that Wade's journey belongs to Romance more compared to the other myths. The common characteristics of Romance are; 1. The birth of the hero, in *Ready Player One* this characteristic happens during Wade's rise to fame and giving him the meaning of being born. 2. The hero's youth, which tells about Wade's youth. 3. The normal quest theme, which is about the road of trials of Wade during his heroic journey. 4. The hero maintaining his innocents and existence, as Wade keeps on getting fame, he has to deal with how the society reacts to him as they seek the information out of Wade 5. The society's reactions towards the hero, which is indicated by how Wade's society reacts to his rise to fame and, 6. The end of the hero's journey which tells about the end of Wade's journey.

This research expected to give contribution to the development of literary analysis, literary work in any field. Especially myths and heroic stories that may use the hero's journey or the genre of myth theory. This study also expected to enlighten and give an additional reference for future researchers who are interested in hero's journey. This research also served a practical and precise

description of the monomyth that can be applied in any literary works especially in adventure, lore and mythical story. For future researcher, there are plenty of literary works that can be analyzed using Joseph Campbell's monomyth because every story that has a 'journey' theme, conscious or unconsciously using monomythic structure. The researcher also suggests that various aspects can still be developed and discovered from Cline's *Ready Player One*.

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