

John Irving and Cormac McCarthy tell the story of a hero's journey. Although both novels discuss this archetype, they stray from literature's classical hero's journey.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:41 AM

**Comment:** Why, do you think?

In the novel, *All the Pretty Horses*, the protagonist or main character, John Grady Cole, embarks on a journey in search of a new life only to find himself back at the beginning.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:49 AM

**Comment:** Awk phrasing

Cormac McCarthy ventures away from the classical journey as the main character returns home unchanged and unsure of himself. John Wheelwright, the central figure in *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, returns from his trip alienated and alone. John Irving strays from the classical journey as the central figure does not recover or find his way home.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:50 AM

**Comment:** Rather than being detailed, can you summarize some of these dilemmas and save details for body paragraph

While both these novels drift away from the classical hero's journey, *All the Pretty Horses* best represents the modern journey as the hero disembarks at home. *A Prayer for Owen Meany* contains a truthful worldview as this hero finds the importance of faith.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:51 AM

**Comment:** Good voice

In the novel, *All the Pretty Horses*, Cormac McCarthy uses the plot line and events to represent the hero's trip. John Grady Cole embarks on his journey away from Texas when he loses his ranch. After crossing the river, he enters into the wilderness, naïve and unaware of the events to come. This is the same in the short story of Young Goodman Brown as he too is called into the wilderness, unsure of the journey that lies ahead. Although the author does not mention directly, the similarities in these two stories provide the reader with the impression that the call into the wilderness deceives the main character. Once he leaves, John immediately encounters confidantes or those who help him along the way—Rawlins and Blevins. With the knowledge and assistance from his friends, John exhibits several strengths as he thrives at a ranch in Mexico as a breeder.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:51 AM

**Comment:** Text always strengthens argument.

These accomplishments reflect an important part of the expedition as the protagonist presents all of his strength. Although the hero becomes very successful, the typical hero's journey presents tribulation and struggle for the main character. As soon as John thinks he has found his place in Mexico, he encounters the temptation of receiving a forbidden love from Alejandra as the two contrasting cultures collide. When he reaches a point of confusion, he receives elderly advice from Alejandra's aunt to chase after another dream. John, being reluctant and stubborn, disregards the advice as he finds himself at his lowest point in prison. In this situation, the author reveals his worldview of naturalism as John must rely on his own strength and desires to find meaning. Just as in the classical journey, John exercises his greatest strength, finding his way back to his horses. As he nears the end of his expedition, John feels guilty, sharing his story to the judge. Although he recovers from his injuries and finds his way back home in Texas, he is left empty not knowing who he is and nonetheless longs for freedom. McCarthy uses John as the central figure to portray the modern hero's journey as he returns unchanged and unaffected by the events.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:53 AM

**Comment:** Not sure what you mean by this . . . or what it suggests (develop it more)

John Irving shows the journey of John Wheelwright in the novel, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. John represents a dependent character as he begins his journey in Gravesend, New Hampshire. He leaves for Toronto, Canada hoping to start a new life. Irving uses this key idea to reflect the goal of the hero; as in every novel, the hero abandons their home for a specific purpose. Once he finds himself in Canada, John receives help from Owen as he puts his faith in Owen and God. The author suggests the importance of God as the hero cannot rely on his own strength in life. In the same way, humans are in desperate need for God's strength to overcome life's struggles. Just when

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 8:54 AM

**Comment:** Needs some kind of transition when going from one topic to the other.

John's trust becomes steadfast in Owen, he falls to the temptation of doubt. He receives advice from his stepdad, Dan Needham, who encourages him to forgive Owen after the death of John's mother. John experiences tension as he continues in a downward spiral to his lowest point. Once he loses Owen in Vietnam along with his mother, he fails to find his American identity as he is stuck in Canada. In the same way, Adam and Eve in the Bible suffer similar exile as they are trapped in the wilderness, distant from God. The wilderness in these two stories shines light on the truth of human sin and separation from God. As John suffers from his loss of identity, he must carry out his biggest strength, cutting off his finger to escape draft into the war. When he shares his struggles with the reverend, he recovers from his journey, finding the importance of Christianity once again. Contrary to the classical story, Irving strays from the hero's arrival as John never returns to Gravesend. Thus, he is alienated and in exile. In the same way, the main character in *Angels* is alienated, as her soul is left empty and depressed. In this novel, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, Irving uses John's life to represent the struggle of identity without God while communicating his worldview.

In the novels, *All the Pretty Horses* and *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, the authors show a journey away from home while at the same time make a distinction from one another. John Wheelwright and John Grady Cole similarly leave their home in search of significance while they return very dissimilar. In the novel, *All the Pretty Horses*, McCarthy uses the setting of the Mexico Ranch to represent the wilderness, John Grady's place far from home. Similarly Irving uses Toronto as John Wheelwright's wilderness. These two novels touch on the hero's search for identity; John Wheelwright strives to be like Owen while John Grady Cole searches for his identity within his country. Both

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:06 AM

**Comment:** Perfectly done. It reads a bit like a shopping list, but it does what should be done, which is recount the hero's journey on the whole.

McCarthy and Irving insert the key aspect of friendship in their work. For example, when John Cole finds himself alone and lost, McCarthy introduces Rawlins and Blevins in a crucial moment of the novel for support and encouragement. Irving introduces the friendship from Owen Meany as John struggles throughout his life. Although these novels may appear mostly similar, the wilderness takes on a different role for the two heroes. John Grady Cole's experience reflects a realistic journey as he finds himself in the same location he began. By contrast, John Wheelwright's journey fails to follow the classical expedition when he cannot find his home. Concerning worldview, McCarthy reflects a naturalist view as John Grady Cole must figure out the meaning of life and where he belongs on his own. Dissimilarly, Irving presents a Christian worldview as he shows Wheelwright's life before and after he finds faith in God from Owen. This is vital as the hero finds his meaning from God's standards, not his own. While these novels characterize a hero's journey, they are diverse from one another in worldview and purpose.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:07 AM

**Comment:** Develop why this difference a little bit . . . it's important.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:08 AM

**Comment:** Style issue: when you have a set up sentence (a sentence without details), punctuate and elaborate – it keeps the reader's attention flowing

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:08 AM

**Comment:** Good insight

After catching a glimpse of two different hero's journeys, the reader can learn the difference between the classical journey and the modern journey. With both novels, the authors fail to provide an important feature included in the classical journey. John Irving leaves the hero in the wilderness creating an empty feeling when there is no arrival or accomplishment at the conclusion of the story. In the same way, McCarthy excludes a vital part of the classical journey as John Grady Cole experiences no change or knowledge from his experience. Although these novels do not match a hero's journey perfectly, *All the Pretty Horses* contains a more realistic conclusion and plot because the hero returns home. John Wheelwright in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* never escapes or

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:09 AM

**Comment:** Don't speak on behalf of the reader – just state your opinion as if it is fact.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:09 AM

**Comment:** Punctuate and elaborate

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:10 AM

**Comment:** Why, do you think?

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:09 AM

**Comment:** Why, do you think?

ends his journey leaving the reader confused and misinformed of a journey's purpose.

While *A Prayer for Owen Meany's* plot is confusing, its worldview reflects an important truth in life. It illustrates the dire need for faith as the main character finds God and forgiveness through his friend. *All the Pretty Horses* portrays the reality of the human finding meaning of life for himself. This view is tainted as it neglects the importance of faith. Irving and McCarthy master two different concepts, one being the hero's worldview while the other illustrates a successful plotline.

Mark Houseman 11/16/11 9:11 AM

**Comment:** Right, but make the last line something in tune with the rest of your paper: you have made an emphasis on how the authors left out important facts; finish with a line about what that could mean in relation to the modern hero.

Nice job on the paper. I realized when I finished that you rarely used the verb "is" – unlike so many in the class. Do so, you made the flow of the paper user-friendly, and that is no small feat. If anything, I suggest learning some punctuation techniques that you can rely on (semi-colons and dashes). When you write a periodic sentence (a base sentences that ends with a period) that contains no details, you stop the readers momentum. If you can pause (with a punctuation mark other than a period), the reader naturally moves onto the next subject. It's a bit of a trick, but it's worth the effort. Also, a little more thinking on author's intent and exploration of sub-text, and you will have a nearly perfect paper. Really good job, though. Please keep up the hard work. Score: 11/11