



By Joe Byerly

In 2008, Michael McClellan, an up and coming lawyer, sat in the corner of a cocktail party with an award-winning author and excitedly described an idea he had for the perfect, epic novel. It was one of those pitches that happens all of the time to artists, musicians, and writers.

It usually begins with, “I’ve got this thing you should write about....”

McClellan described in vivid detail his idea for a story and why he thought this author would be the right person to tackle it. The author listened intently and determined his pitch had merit. But then, the author did something interesting. He looked at the young lawyer and said, “I love the idea! But, I’m not going to write the novel. *You are.*”

And with those words, the author became the mentor and the lawyer the protege. Over the next twelve years, he helped McClellan along a journey in becoming an author. The challenges, fears, and anxieties were similar to the ones he encountered on his own journey decades previously. Now, it was his turn to lead someone else on theirs.

In June of 2020, McClellan finally held in his hands, his first novel [The Sand Sea](#). His mentor, [Steven Pressfield](#), who had written titles that included [The Legend of Bagger Vance](#), [Gates of Fire](#), and the [War of Art](#), was there to encourage him, push him, and help him when he needed it.

Michael recounted this story on the second episode of our [From the Green Notebook Podcast](#). It's an inspiring story and made me reflect on my own journey of starting the blog, leaning on mentors, and guiding others. It's a journey that so many have set out on: The Hero's Journey.

### **The Hero's Journey**

[The Hero's Journey](#) is the theme that is common to myths across all cultures and we can recognize it in popular culture today, and even our own lives. [Joseph Campbell](#), who was an author and professor of comparative mythology, observed that every myth follows a similar template.

It begins with the central figure of the story stuck in the ordinary world, not realizing they have a larger purpose. Then they receive the call. At first they refuse the call, but then a mentor or guide appears to escort them across some mythical threshold into a new world. As they navigate this new world, they encounter trials, enemies, helpers, and eventually find themselves in the thick of it, engaged in the ultimate battle, where much is at stake. Eventually, they make their way back to their hometown, but they are different now. They have changed. And in every myth the new hero brings a gift they give back to their people.

The Hero's journey is the template or blueprint, upon which all great stories are built. You can overlay it upon The Odyssey of Homer, The Hobbit, Star Wars, and even the popular Marvel and [Disney movies](#) today. In his book [The Artist's Journey](#), Steven Pressfield writes that he believes we all have a journey in life to take -it's only a matter of whether or not we answer the call.

### **Moving from Hero to Guide**

In 2013, I had an idea to start a blog, but I was scared. I didn't feel comfortable putting my thoughts out there for others to read, especially considering I was only an Army Captain. Eventually, I could no longer sit on the sidelines, I *had* to write, I *had* to start a blog. As I wrestled with this decision, mentors appeared to guide me through it. And started writing.

Over the course of seven years I found my voice and the blog grew into an important platform for professional development. In the process, I changed. I became more confident in my abilities and developed habits in reading and writing that have proven beneficial. But the success of the blog wasn't because I stayed on my journey as a solo character, it was because I decided to change roles in the journey. I moved from the central character in my story to the guide that helped others in theirs. Many of the top posts on the site aren't ones I wrote, they are ones we helped others write. They were ones that we encouraged others to publish, even when they doubted themselves. Along the way, I realized that I didn't necessarily gain fulfillment by remaining focused on my own story, I gained it playing an active role in the lives of others.

This is also the lesson I pulled from McClellan's story. Pressfield didn't stop at his own Hero's Journey. He took on the role of mentor to help others. His example teaches us the real reward or ultimate achievement is not for us to become the man or woman who slays the dragon, destroys the Empire, or rescues the people; The ultimate goal of the Journey is not to stay the Hero, but to become the Guide.

Share this:

- [Email](#)
- [Tweet](#)
- 
- [Print](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)