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**Bakalářská práce**

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*The Character of Frodo in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the  
Rings*

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl jsem všechny použité materiály a literaturu.

I declare that I have prepared this bachelor's thesis independently and I have listed all the used materials and literature.

In Olomouc:

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Signature:

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## **Table of content**

INTRODUCTION .....	6
THEORETICAL PART .....	8
1 J.R.R. Tolkien.....	8
1.1 J.R.R. Tolkien's Fantasy World.....	10
2 Joseph Campbell's Monomyth: Hero's Journey .....	12
2.1 Departure .....	13
2.2 Initiation.....	14
2.3 Return.....	15
3 Frodo .....	17
PRACTICAL PART.....	19
4 Frodo's Journey.....	19
4.1 Frodo's Departure .....	19
4.2 Frodo's Initiation .....	22
4.3 Frodo's Return .....	26
THE CONCLUSION.....	29
Reference list .....	30
Resumé .....	32
Annotation .....	33



## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzování konceptu Josepha Campbella “Cesta Hrdiny” a následná aplikace této teorie na postavu Froda z J.R.R. Tolkienova *Pána Prstenů*. První část bakalářské práce se zabývá J.R.R. jeho životem a dílem, Joseph Campbellovým monomýtem “Cesta Hrdiny” a postavou Froda. Druhá část se věnuje podrobnějšímu prostudování díla Josepha Campbella a následné aplikace jednotlivých etap na postavu Froda.

Klíčová slova: Frodo, monomýtus, Pán Prstenů, J.R.R Tolkien, Cesta Hrdiny, Joseph Campbell

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis aims to analyse the concept of Joseph Campbell’s monomyth “Hero’s Journey” and then applies this theory to Frodo’s character from J.R.R. Tolkien’s novel *The Lord of the Rings*. The first part deals with J.R.R Tolkien’s life, his work, Joseph Campbell’s monomyth “Hero’s Journey”, and Frodo’s character. The second part is devoted to studying Joseph Campbell’s monomyth more in-depth and then applying individual stages to the character of Frodo.

Keywords: Frodo, Monomyth, The Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hero’s Journey, Joseph Campbell

## INTRODUCTION

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is considered one of the best fantasy novels ever written, and rightfully so. Ever since it has been released it has been thoroughly analysed from various angles and with the use of different theories. Unlike *The Hobbit*, it does not resemble a story for children and has a prominent structure. Such structure is not an accident, and many similar fantasy stories share the same trait of a Hero's journey where he goes through hardships and struggles to come out on top eventually.

One of the theories that *The Lord of the Rings* can be analysed with is a theory by Joseph Campbell. According to Campbell "The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth."<sup>1</sup> There probably is a reason why so many stories share the similar journey of their respective heroes. Joseph Campbell's monomyth "The Hero's Journey" is a common pattern found among multiple stories, even though the authors are most likely not following it consciously. The hero goes on an adventure, overcomes hardships in a crisis, and comes home different or changed. That is at least the short version of Joseph Campbell's monomyth. This pattern, however, is not something that Joseph Campbell came up with himself. We can safely assume that even before Joseph Campbell created "The Hero's Journey", there was an abundance of stories that followed the template regardless, including J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

Even before the phrase "a fantasy genre" was used, there were stories that followed Campbell's pattern, and those stories are myths. Tolkien himself believed that myths or parts of them were true and were ideas of God being expressed in a man.<sup>2</sup> Tolkien was also heavily influenced by mythology in his childhood, Norse mythology specifically. He was so fascinated with these myths that he learned Old Norse and read some of the stories in the original language. He was constantly working with medieval texts and mythologies all his life, and we can observe that he applied some of the elements and structures to his work. Tolkien himself believed that he did not provide something new. According to him, he managed to simply re-tell the ancient stories.<sup>3</sup> All of these myths were older than Tolkien himself. Despite this, most of the stories figure the main hero following Campbell's structure.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 28

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter 1997, p. 29

<sup>3</sup> Carpenter; Tolkien 2014, p. 168

Campbell's system indeed fits J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* very well, but it is not because J.R.R. Tolkien knew of this monomyth, nor is it some weird accident. Myths have always contained this structure, and J.R.R. Tolkien, having been influenced by said myths, only took this structure and used it in his work. All of this happened long before Campbell's template even existed.

However, Campbell's template does give most fantasy books a nice feel of structure and consistency. This thesis aims to analyse the journey and character of Frodo and find out whether his journey does follow the individual stages of Campbell's monomyth, how and to what degree.

# THEORETICAL PART

## 1 J.R.R. Tolkien

J.R.R. Tolkien was born in South Africa, Bloemfontein, on 3 January 1892. He did not remember much of South Africa besides a giant spider, which could be considered one of the earliest influences on his writing, as the spider was most likely an inspiration for Shelob. Shelob is described as an “evil thing in spider-form...the last child of Ungoliant to trouble the unhappy world.”<sup>4</sup> His father, Arthur, was a bank manager who went to South Africa in the 1890s to achieve promotion. His English bride, Mabel Suffield, went along with him, and two years later, J.R.R. Tolkien was born. On 15 February 1896, his father died when his wife and children were in South Africa on a visit. His English home environment has influenced him when describing the country of hobbits, the Shire. Due to diabetes, Mabel Suffield died in 1904, and the Roman Catholic Church's Father Francis brought up J.R.R. Tolkien and his brother Hilary. He provided both material and spiritual well-being, contributing heavily to their education. Later on, they were boarded in with their aunt-by-marriage, Beatrice Suffield.

It was already apparent that Tolkien possessed a linguistic gift of great significance at such a young age. He was well-round in Latin and Greek and was on the right path to becoming very proficient in several other languages, such as Gothic and Finish. At this time, his hobby that was later projected into *The Lord of the Rings* started rearing its head, as Tolkien loved coming up with his languages. He attended King Edward's School in Birmingham and Exeter College, Oxford. In his later student years, young authors met regularly after school hours. They called themselves "T.C.B.S." (Tea Club, Barrovian Society), where they would read up on each other's literary work and give feedback to one another.

Thus far, Tolkien's life was affected a lot by the death of his loved ones. He lost his father and mother. He lost friends in First World War, in which he fought. Understandably, such emotional pressure affected his writing of *The Lord of the Rings*. His adult life mainly consisted of teaching the English language and literature at the Universities of Leeds and Oxford. He also translated Beowulf in 1926 and gave lectures on the subject. However, private life was where the creation of Middle-Earth happened. He created *The Silmarillion* mainly as a world where his constructed languages could exist. He had four children, whom he had to entertain, and he did that by storytelling. Furthermore, through these means, The

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<sup>4</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Two Towers*, p. 946

Hobbit came to life and was later published in 1937. The book was in high demand, so the publisher asked for a continuation of the story.

Moreover, Tolkien complied, and *The Lord of the Rings* came to light seventeen years later. The main elements from *The Hobbit* remained, such as the Ring. *The Lord of the Rings* was never meant to be a trilogy, but due to its size and lesser risk for the publisher, should it fail to sell, it was divided into three parts. It became well-liked and published in paperback in the United States in 1965 and has been sought-after ever since. Throughout his life, he wrote several other stories such as “Farmer Giles of Ham” (1949); *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* (1962), poetry related to *The Lord of the Rings*; *Tree and Leaf* (1964) and kept writing until his death. J.R.R. Tolkien died on 2 September 1973. He is buried together with his wife Edith in a single grave forever to be remembered as one of the greatest fantasy authors.

## 1.1 J.R.R. Tolkien's Fantasy World

To a reader, who is not familiar with the world of *The Lord of the Rings* the book could be considered a fairy tale with dragons, trolls and other mythical creatures. Tolkien has created a whole new world with several new races, languages, and landscapes.

The book follows a very fantasy-like plot, where the hero sets out on his journey to fulfil a quest and is eventually able to achieve such a feat. What is special about *The Lord of the Rings* is the attention to detail within the book. What is truly remarkable is the story's complexity and the characters themselves. There are countless struggles within the books, not just fights with the evil side but also psychological struggles. Tolkien has always been considered someone who pays great attention to detail and backstories. One would think that every tree branch in this fantasy world has its backstory.

Nevertheless, that is what makes these books so exciting. Countless theories are crafted about why certain events happened within the books and how they affected other events before or after. Creating this within a book series is truly extraordinary, and every instance of re-reading the book can uncover new backstories and explanations.

The backstory to *The Lord of the Rings* book is also very vast and important to really grasp, how thought out this whole new world of Middle-Earth is. As we know, thanks to *The Silmarillion*, the races were created by different gods, and Elves were one of the races. Elves are immortal in the Tolkien universe but not invulnerable. As the time in Middle-Earth passes, their bodies are slowly fading away, and eventually, only an immaterial soul would be left. That being said, they still live much longer than an average human being. The only way they can become genuinely immortal is to stay in Aman, the Undying Lands. However, they would not be able to return and would not be in control, as they were in Middle-Earth. That is where Sauron, the "Lord of the Ring", comes into the picture. Elves were desperate to stop the flow of time and rebel against the supreme god, Eru. Sauron took advantage of this and promised to help the Elves. The Elven-Smiths created magical rings, three for Elves, seven for Dwarves and nine for Men. However, Sauron deceived them and made another ring to rule them all and give him absolute dominance over Middle-Earth. The mentioned nine men would eventually become Sauron's slaves, the Nazgûls. Men and Elves joined forces and marched into war against Sauron and finally defeated him when Isildur cut the Ring off his hand to prevent Sauron from dominating the Middle-Earth. He, however, failed to destroy it as it had great corruptive power over him. The Ring inevitably invited many unwanted guests, resulting in Isildur's death and the Ring falling into the Anduin river, where it remained for over 2500 years. A certain Hobbit Sméagol (Gollum) found it in the books and kept it for 500 years. He

would lose this Ring to Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*, who would later leave it to his nephew Frodo and here is where the story of *The Lord of The Rings* begins.

## 2 Joseph Campbell's Monomyth: Hero's Journey

*The Lord of The Rings* follows a pattern regarding its main protagonist, Frodo.

This pattern is not followed consciously. By the time *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was released in 1949, Tolkien was already finishing up writing *The Lord of the Rings*.

Nevertheless, the pattern appears in several fantasy stories and books, including *The Lord of the Rings*.

Joseph Campbell has explored a significant number of myths, stories, folktales and fairy tales to analyse them and find a similarity in the storylines and symbols. At the end of his research, he developed a pattern called The Hero's Journey. The idea behind The Hero's Journey is that hero sets out on a journey. He encounters different kinds of dangers, both normal and supernatural, completes his quest and comes home with useful items or knowledge to pass on to other people. Campbell says the following about The Hero's Journey: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."<sup>5</sup> As one grows accustomed to Campbell's partition of the plot, it becomes much more observable in other books and stories. Still, *The Lord of the Rings* fits Campbell's theory exceptionally.

This monomyth theory is especially important for us because it divides the story and the hero's character into smaller, more digestible parts that are then much easier to analyse. This is true for several fantasy books, not just *The Lord of the Rings*, and has dramatically impacted our understanding of the plot and hero's character. This will be particularly useful for the practical part of this thesis, as all of the stages can be identified within the book and then applied to the character of Frodo.

Campbell describes seventeen substages of the monomyth. These are then organised into three main stages: Departure, Initiation, and Return. The initiation stage is sometimes divided into sub-sections Descent and Initiation.

In the departure stage, the hero lives an ordinary, peaceful life and receives a call to go on an adventure. However, the hero is unsure whether he should follow this call and is therefore getting help from a mentor figure.

The initiation stage begins with the hero going through a series of trials and tests. The hero will often struggle and not complete one more of these trials. The protagonist is aided by

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 28



the advice, amulets, or some other form of help that he received before entering these trials. The hero prevails and eventually gets through all the challenges.

The return stage is the third and final stage that the individual events are divided into. The hero has completed his difficult task and is now required to return to the ordinary world. Having been through all the life-changing moments, he is now changed and often does not want to return due to his feelings of alienation. He also gained a lot of wisdom that he can now use to benefit his people.

## **2.1 Departure**

As mentioned before, the three main stages consist of seventeen individual substages. The first one is The Call to Adventure. The stage's name is quite telling, as the hero departs on an adventure. They might be "the chosen one" since birth or get stuck randomly in this undesirable position, but they have most likely spent a very peaceful and ordinary life up to that point.

The next substage is called Refusal of the Call – the hero cannot believe he has been chosen and is doubting his own ability to complete the task at hand.

Supernatural Aid is the next substage, and at that point, the hero has already committed to the journey. In that case, their guide or magic help will provide them with advice/talismans or wisdom that will aid them later on in their journey.

To enter the world of "an adventure", the hero must go through the next substage called The Crossing of the First Threshold. In this substage, the hero leaves the boundaries of the world that he lived in up until this point and sets foot into an unknown world. "The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored."<sup>6</sup>

According to Joseph Campbell, Belly of the Whale is the next substage that the protagonist must inevitably go through. It is also the final substage of the Departure stage. This substage represents the hero's final separation from the life he lived before. When the hero enters this stage, he must be willing to go through a change and commit himself to an upcoming journey. The hero also goes through a symbolic rebirth.

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell 2004, p.71

## 2.2 Initiation

The next substage marks the beginning of the second Initiation stage. In the substage The Road of Trials, the hero will encounter many hardships, deceptions and attacks. The main character has to get through rigorous tests to succeed. The number of tests can differ but most commonly occur in threes. The hero must prevail and overcome the challenges laid out before him to get to the next substage.

According to Campbell, the journey is not always a struggle. The hero meets a Goddess figure in the next substage called The Meetings with the Goddess. This otherworldly figure provides him with comfort and guidance when he needs it the most. Such a figure can also give the hero an item that will aid him later in his journey. Campbell suggests that “The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. This is the crisis at the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart.”<sup>7</sup>

Woman as the Temptress is the next substage in the Hero’s Journey. The hero faces different kinds of temptations that can lead him astray from his quest. The protagonist has to fight these urges to choose the easy way and keep pushing to advance to the next substage of his journey. The temptation doesn’t necessarily have to be in the form of a woman but can be something else.

The hero confronts a father-like figure in the next substage called Atonement with the Father. This figure doesn’t have to be his father but represents a tremendous amount of knowledge and power in the hero’s life. Such a figure is often portrayed as a male but is not required to be. It can be simply someone or something with supernatural knowledge/power.

Apotheosis is the eye-opening substage of the hero’s journey. He realises the magnitude of his action and achieves a greater understanding. Thanks to this newly found knowledge, the protagonist is now prepared to face the more excruciating part of his journey.

“Those who know, not only that the Everlasting lies in them, but that what they, and all things, really are is the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish-fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord.”<sup>8</sup>

The last substage in the Initiation stage is The Ultimate Boon. It is often recognised as the climax of the hero’s journey. His goal has been achieved, and he has fulfilled his

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 100

<sup>8</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 154

responsibilities towards a quest that he took on. He has been prepared for this moment by all the previous substages and therefore managed to succeed.

## 2.3 Return

Hero has now finished the quest that he has set out to accomplish. The hero must now return home. The next substage is called Refusal of the Return, and it marks the beginning of the final stage, the Return stage. In this stage, the hero has discovered how pleasurable and delightful the other world is and may refuse to return to the ordinary world that he originates from. According to Campbell, “the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.”<sup>9</sup>

The Magic Flight is the thirteenth substage of Hero’s Journey. In this substage, the hero has won the Ultimate Boon, which can be represented in many ways depending on the book. If the boon is something of great significance and the hero has obtained it, his return from the journey might be just as dangerous as the journey itself. The hero may be chased on his way if the boon “has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons...”<sup>10</sup>.

Rescue from Without is very telling of what this substage is about. Throughout the journey, the hero is aided by guides and supernatural aid. And such powerful beings can make great rescuers and help him with returning to the ordinary world, especially when it seems that the hero is not able to continue on his own. The hero is often weak and powerless as the quest has significantly impacted his physical prowess and psyche.

In the substage The Crossing of the Return Threshold, the returning hero must return to his ordinary life and try to get used to the everyday life he has led before. He is now wiser and more knowledgeable and should integrate this knowledge into his life. In other cases, the gained knowledge is shared with others through him.

Master of the Two Worlds is about the hero achieving a balance between his ordinary life and the life he has led before. He fully accepts both lives and experiences and becomes content with himself. The time skip between the hero returning and achieving this balance can sometimes be quite significant and is not something that can be achieved overnight. Campbell

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<sup>9</sup>Campbell 2004, p. 179

<sup>10</sup>Campbell 2004, p. 182

explains that “The individual, through prolonged psychological disciplines, gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes, and fears...”<sup>11</sup>.

The last substage of the hero’s journey is called Freedom to Live. The hero has finally conquered his demons, fears and self-doubts and is now free to live his life as he chooses. He can finally exist between the two worlds, the known and the unknown. The hero’s path can differ significantly but often leads to wisdom.

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<sup>11</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 220

### 3 Frodo

*"Even the smallest person can change the course of the future."*

After describing the Hero's Journey, it is important to have a more detailed look at the character of Frodo and his hero qualities.

Reading through the first pages of *The Lord of the Rings*, it doesn't seem very likely for a Hobbit to become a ring-bearer. Hobbits are defined as ancient people who love peace and quiet.<sup>12</sup> He is a character who is very unsure of the task bestowed upon him, as he tries to persuade Gandalf to take the ring himself, fearing the responsibility it brings.<sup>13</sup> At that time, he is not yet required to carry the burden himself, only to keep the Ring for the time being. Despite that, he is already quite frightened of what the Ring represents. Frodo is not a traditional hero with great ability, strength, knowledge, and morals. However, he is humble, adventurous, and curious about the outside world, but not a superhero possessing any special abilities. He is just an ordinary young hobbit trying to enjoy his cousin's birthday. He is not strong, nor does he control magic; in fact, his physical prowess is almost non-existent, and he is initially so weak that he needs the help of a farmer, Maggot, and later on, Tom Bombadil, to even get out of the Shire.

The quality that makes him a good pick for this challenging task is his nature. He is selfless, thoughtful, polite, and has a good heart. His lack of special abilities also means he would not possess a significant threat, should the Ring's temptations win him over. This is not explicitly mentioned, but Gandalf touched on it when declining to take the Ring, as he possesses much more power than Frodo, and through him, the Ring would gain access to this great power.<sup>14</sup>

Once he gets to Rivendell, where the representatives of several races discuss who should take the Ring, his initial acceptance of carrying the Ring turns into his own choice. As discussed at the meeting, he is well aware that this journey will most likely lead to his death, showing us that he is indeed selfless and brave to a degree. Although the expedition did not take his life, it left permanent scars on him and his psyche. He saw the Eye, got stabbed by an immortal blade, and carried the Ring for excruciating eleven months, one week, and six days.<sup>15</sup> All of these events combined made him feel like he could not continue living in the Shire when he said to Sam: "But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire,

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<sup>12</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 1-10

<sup>13</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 55 – 67

<sup>14</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 80 – 81

<sup>15</sup> The One Wiki to Rule Them All

and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, against all odds, the little hobbit finishes his quest. A quest that is so dangerous that a normal hobbit would not even think about taking it on. He shows hero characteristics by saving Middle-Earth, content with giving up his life for the greater good. He achieved something that most people within the book would not. Heroes are not defined by their height or previous life, but by the size of their hearts and their character.

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<sup>16</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Return of the King*, p. 1053

## **PRACTICAL PART**

As per the chapter in the theoretical part of this thesis, the Hero's Journey consists of seventeen stages that the hero goes through. The main stages are Departure, Initiation and Return.

The practical part of the thesis aims to compare the character of Frodo and his journey to Joseph Campbell's Monomyth: Hero's Journey. All seventeen stages should be identifiable within the book series.

### **4 Frodo's Journey**

Frodo's journey as a whole is quite the peculiar one. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that Frodo is not a traditional hero with supreme morals nor any special abilities and it will inevitably show in his journey and decisions. His journey is dangerous and challenging and will push him both physically and psychologically.

#### **4.1 Frodo's Departure**

Before the first substage of the Departure stage, it is shown just how ordinary life Frodo is living. This is often a reoccurring theme in most stories that follow the template of Hero's Journey. Frodo lives a comfortable life with his cousin Bilbo in the Shire among other Hobbits. Frodo, however, is not your typical Hobbit. Frodo has always dreamed of leaving the shire to go on an adventure. This feeling was only fueled by hearing about Bilbo's adventures. Giving up the warmth and cosiness of their homes is something an ordinary Hobbit would never even consider. Despite this, Frodo departs on his adventure and his Hero's Journey therefore begins.

The Call To Adventure is the first substage that Frodo experiences. It doesn't require him to do anything yet but it is something that inevitably starts something much bigger than he would ever expect to happen to him. The Call To Adventure is something that comes very much randomly and unexpectedly. Bilbo Baggins is soon to be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday, which is quite is quite the feat even for Hobbits, who normally live around 100 years. As Frodo soon finds out, the reason behind his cousin's youth is a certain ring. The one Ring. As Bilbo makes his great disappearance and departs on a journey, he entrusts Frodo with this Ring. Gandalf is very much aware of this as he knew that such an item is in Bilbo's possession. It is Gandalf who starts off Frodo's Journey as he tells Frodo how the Ring must be destroyed and the means to destroy it. "There is only one way: to find the Cracks of Doom in the depths of Orodruin, the Fire-mountain, and cast the Ring in there, if you really wish to

destroy it, to put it beyond the grasp of the Enemy for ever.<sup>17</sup> With this Frodo is “called“ to an adventure, although indirectly. This fits very specifically with Joseph Campbell’s theory, as the hero is usually called to an adventure through receiving some information about the unknown.

Refusal of The Call is the next substage that our hero Frodo has to go through. According to Campbell, the initial call is refused. The reason is often fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy and other reasons.<sup>18</sup> In this specific substage, I think it is quite interesting, that we can observe two reactions from Frodo, that clash against each other. Frodo, on one hand, is indeed very scared and tries to persuade Gandalf to take the ring instead as he deems himself inadequate for such a big task: “ ‘But I have so little of any of these things! You are wise and powerful. Will you not take the Ring?’ “<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, before saying these words he very much wished for the ring to be destroyed. As is very common in this substage, Frodo also questioned the situation and why did it have to happen to him: “ ‘I do really wish to destroy it!’ cried Frodo. ‘Or, well, to have it destroyed. I am not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring! Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?’ “<sup>20</sup> In these passages, we can observe that Frodo is really frightened of this quest, but at the same time wishes for the Ring to be destroyed. This is a common occurrence in Campbell’s template as the hero often refuses the call or is simply unable to act upon the call out of fear. “... the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved.”<sup>21</sup>

Supernatural Aid is a substage that is quite special in Campbell’s template. While Campbell thought the template reappears everywhere, even in movies, it is quite more observable in a genre like fantasy. Gandalf is the Supernatural Aid for Frodo in this case. After having talked him into taking the ring, he provides him with words of advice: “ ‘...you will have to go and leave the name of Baggins behind you. That name will not be safe to have, outside the Shire or in the Wild. I will give you a travelling name now. When you go, go as Mr. Underhill. ’ “<sup>22</sup> The hero often needs help from the outside to set out on his quest. All that the hero has to do is to have trust: “One has only to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear. Having responded to their own call, and continuing to follow courageously as the

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<sup>17</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 80

<sup>18</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 54

<sup>19</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 80

<sup>20</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 80

<sup>21</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 54

<sup>22</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 82



consequences unfold, the hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at their side.<sup>23</sup> Frodo is still not certain about this quest, but his good qualities are shown and portray him as a kind-hearted “hero“ of sorts, as he wants to protect his home: ““But I hope that you may find some other better keeper soon. But in the meanwhile it seems that I am a danger, a danger to all that live near me. I cannot keep the Ring and stay here. I ought to leave Bag End, leave the Shire, leave everything and go away. ”<sup>24</sup> It is quite peculiar how Frodo’s thoughts sometimes go against each other. He does not want to leave but also wants to protect the Bag End, even if he sometimes did not like the people there. This could be a foreshadowing for how split he becomes later on in *The Lord of the Rings* story. However, Gandalf might not be the only supernatural aid. When the Hobbits arrive at the Prancing Pony, they realize that Gandalf is not there. They do not know anyone and the situation is very tense. A mysterious Ranger (later revealed as Aragorn) aids them and helps them hide from the Nazgûl. Supernatural aid is portrayed in one more person later on, and that is an Elf-lord Glorfindel and his horse Asfaloth, who bore Frodo across the Ford of Bruinen. This is something that doesn’t necessarily follow Campbell’s chronological order of substages. While Gandalf fits this role chronologically, in this case there are more supernatural aids throughout the book, that help Frodo. This could mean that the Hero Journey’s substages do not have to necessarily follow a precise order to fulfil their role in the template.

The Crossing of the First Threshold is a substage where the story starts portraying the quest as a really dangerous one for Frodo and his companion at the time. Campbell describes this phase as the hero leaving his known world and entering an unknown one, encountering a dangerous situation.<sup>25</sup> In Frodo’s journey, this threshold is very clearly represented in him leaving the Shire and encountering a Black Rider. It is for the first time that Frodo experiences intense fear and slightly grasps the magnitude of the unknown outside of Shire. “ ‘I can’t say why, but I felt certain he was looking or smelling for me, and also I felt certain that I did not want him to discover me. I’ve never seen or felt anything like it in the Shire before. ”<sup>26</sup> He also experiences a great temptation to slip on the Ring, which could also be a factor of unknown danger that follows Campbell’s template: “A sudden unreasoning fear of discovery laid hold of Frodo, and he thought of his Ring. He hardly dared to breathe, and yet

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<sup>23</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 66

<sup>24</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 81-82

<sup>25</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 71

<sup>26</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 99

the desire to get it out of his pocket became so strong that he began slowly to move his hand. He felt that he had only to slip it on, and then he would be safe."<sup>27</sup>

The Belly of the Whale substage was an interesting stage to analyze as I was not quite sure, which of the events could symbolize this substage of Campbell's template. In the "Belly of The Whale" stage, the hero is isolated from the known world to experience a symbolic rebirth. This rebirth changes often changes him as a person. The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into the asphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. Campbell says: "The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died."<sup>28</sup> Upon closer inspection, this stage is almost identically portrayed in Frodo's encounter with the witch-king, when he slipped on the ring. It could be argued that when he got stabbed by this spiritual being, he also stopped being a regular hobbit and started transforming into a spiritual being, a Nazgûl. Frodo is later "reborn" as he is healed by Elrond. It is truly remarkable how this stage of the book copies Campbell's template almost perfectly.

## 4.2 Frodo's Initiation

Having survived the Belly of the Whale stage, Frodo is now changed and is no longer that oblivious Hobbit from the Shire. In the initiation stage, Frodo has already set out on his task and later begins his "true journey", just as Campbell explains: "Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, again and again. Meanwhile, there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land."<sup>29</sup> The momentary glimpses could be Rivendell and later on Lothórien as they are a wonderful work of elves and something that Frodo has never seen before.

The Road of Trials substage is a series of tests that the hero must go through to transform himself. The trials are fierce and the hero is, therefore "aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region."<sup>30</sup> Frodo begins his trials as soon as he leaves the Shire. One of the first trials could be when he encountered the black rider and had a temptation to slip on the Ring. Throughout Frodo's journey, several dangerous situations could be considered "a trial", as

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<sup>27</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 98

<sup>28</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 83

<sup>29</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 100

<sup>30</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 89

such situations arise on numerous occasions. The fellowship is attacked by Orcs and earlier were in danger when the Ringwraiths were looking for them. The biggest trial thus far was when Frodo put on the Ring to escape Boromir and he is subjected to the Eye of Sauron for the first time. This substage from Campbell's template is very vast and the nature of the trials is not specifically defined. Frodo naturally also receives a lot of help right from the start. Gandalf has advised him to not use his name on his travels. Frodo is also aided by the poem he learns to summon Tom Bombadil, mithril coat and many others. It would seem this stage does not follow a chronological order. The trials can be bigger and smaller and at different times throughout the story. However, the eventual result stands and the hero needs to get through these trials to go on in his journey.

The Meeting with the Goddess substage where the Fellowship can finally get some rest. Frodo meets lady Galadriel, who is beautiful and wise and provides Frodo with guidance and comfort when he needs it the most. In this case, Frodo is not what a typical hero in Hero's journey is. In this substage, the hero is presented with this goddess as a "final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love."<sup>31</sup> It could be argued that the way this is presented in *The Lord of The Rings* is when Frodo comes and talks to lady Galadriel. She provides him with guidance and comfort. Frodo is really in awe of her knowledge and beauty. She also helps him to form a clearer image of the quests. Galadriel also bestows valuable gifts on the Fellowship as is described in Campbell's template.

Woman as Temptress is quite an interesting substage as there doesn't exactly need to be the only source of temptation for everyone. As the Company makes their way into Lóthorien their hearts are searched by lady Galadriel. The feeling is incomprehensible and otherworldly. It is almost as if what their hearts most wanted is right there, only if they stopped in their quest and go home. However, this is only a trial by lady Galadriel and she also accepts the challenge of the Ring when Frodo offers it to her. Frodo's temptation begins when he is shown the mirror which reveals the past, the present and the future. In Frodo's case, the temptress is actually the Ring. Such immense power and possibility of being limitless. It promises everything and nothing at the same time. Throughout his journey, Frodo is constantly tempted by the Ring to put it on, offering a great power as a trade. If Frodo succumbed to this temptation for a longer period of time, the quest would have been a failure. Multiple times he is saved by other people. In this case, the hero is not exactly perfect. Frodo does not fully resist the temptation and needs the help of his companions on the way.

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<sup>31</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 109

Although he put on the Ring it does not mean the absolute failure of his quest, but it makes it more difficult each time he puts it on. Other members of the Fellowship were also tempted but not all of them were willing to reveal such a secret. Sam was offered a chance of “flying back home to the Shire to a nice little hole with – with a bit of garden of my own.”<sup>32</sup> Merry was offered a similar chance but with a different scenario that he does not wish to share. The rest of the Fellowship did not share what lady Galadriel offered them. Only Legolas and Aragorn seemed untroubled by her temptings. Boromir has reacted strangely, doubting lady Galadriel. It is possible that she tempted him with the possibility of seizing the Ring and using it against the enemy as Boromir tries to take it from Frodo by force later on.

Atonement with the Father is another substage that Frodo has to inevitably go through. The hero encounters a father-like figure, that holds great power over him in his life. The hero must face this figure in order to mature and “open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands —and the two are atoned.”<sup>33</sup> In Frodo’s case, many figures hold great power over him but the biggest one is the Ring and therefore Sauron. As Frodo wears the ring in Amon Hen, he feels the Eye searching for him: “There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him.”<sup>34</sup> After seeing the horrors of war while wearing the Ring he fully understands the magnitude of his situation. After the encounter, he comes to terms with his purpose and is fully set on destroying the Ring: “Frodo rose to his feet. A great weariness was on him, but his will was firm and his heart lighter. He spoke aloud to himself. ‘I will do now what I must,’ he said.”<sup>35</sup> In this substage, we can also observe Frodo’s internal struggle. He wasn’t sure himself, whether he is scared or welcoming the gaze of the Eye. This inner conflict is so big that he resists taking off the ring, even if it meant being discovered. This could be a sign of how much power the Ring already holds over Frodo and fore-shadowing for the events in Mount Doom.

Apotheosis substage is where the hero fully realizes what needs to be done and is resolved and ready for the more dangerous and rigorous part of his adventure. Throughout his journey, Frodo becomes more aware of the world, its temptations and dangers. As he decides

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<sup>32</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 465

<sup>33</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 135

<sup>34</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 523

<sup>35</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 523-524

to take the Ring to Mordor, he gains recognition from others. This however is still not the Apotheosis. The moment he reaches this substage is most likely when he fully realizes that he has to travel to Mordor alone. This could be caused by his encounter with Boromir and having come face to face with the Eye in the Atonement with Father substage. The power and temptation of the Ring are simply far too strong for others to handle. Frodo leaves the Fellowship, his friends and the safety of others to go alone. The quest is dangerous and he does not know what awaits him, but still, he decides to leave. Fortunately, he is joined by his companion Sam, who is set on going with Frodo. This substage very much fits Campbell's template almost perfectly.

The Ultimate Boon substage is something that could be considered a climax of the story. It is the achievement of the hero's quest. According to Campbell, the boon is something of great importance to gods or a powerful figure, who represents one: "The gods and goddesses then are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir of Imperishable Being but not themselves the Ultimate in its primary state. What the hero seeks through his intercourse with them is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance."<sup>36</sup> Thanks to the help of an army that is led by Aragorn and Gandalf, Sam and Frodo can reach Mount Doom as Sauron sends all of his forces to the Black Gate. With the help of Sam, Frodo then reaches the Sammath Naur and destroys the Ring with the unwanted Gollum's intervention. The boon here is portrayed as the Ring. Frodo does not steal the boon from Sauron, who is the owner of the Ring, even though he tried to keep the Ring. The Ring's destruction symbolizes the end of Sauron, the power that he had through the Ring vanishes and therefore ends the whole war for Middle-earth.

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<sup>36</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 168

### 4.3 Frodo's Return

As Frodo gets through all the dangerous ordeals, reaches Mount Doom with Sam and destroys the Ring he entered the Return stage. This marks the end of his quest but he still has to return home, to the Shire. He has now completed the quest he set out to accomplish and is free to return back to his regular life.

Refusal of the Return is according to Campbell; "When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds. But the responsibility has been frequently refused."<sup>37</sup> Frodo has been carrying the Ring for a very long time. Every time he slipped it on it corrupted him just a little more. This whole time the Ring was eating at his sanity and resolve to destroy it. It was trying to do anything to return to its master Sauron. As a result of this, when Frodo finally enters Mount Doom he refuses to destroy the Ring: " 'I have come,' he said. 'But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!' And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight."<sup>38</sup> With this decision, he refuses to return to the world as he knew it. The Ring had finally bent his will to its liking, causing Frodo to put it on and try to keep it for himself. However, Gollum who has been chasing the Ring this whole time also wanted the Ring for himself. He bits off Frodo's finger along with the Ring and falls into the depths of Mount Doom. Frodo, having spared Gollum previously, has now fulfilled his quest through Gollum, who fell into Mount Doom along with the Ring.

The Magic Flight is a substage where the hero needs to usually escape with the boon. In *The Lord of the Rings*, this substage is very different. Frodo lost the Ring when Gollum bit his finger off and fell into the depths of Mount Doom. Frodo fell to his knees injured. Sam then comes to him and helps him up and they escape Mount Doom together. It is very much different as Frodo is not chased by any entity from whom he has stolen the boon. The Ring is destroyed and now they only have to run from the exploding volcano as it crumbles. This could be somewhat resembling the part, where the hero is chased but it is also something different from what Campbell has laid out in his template.

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<sup>37</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 179

<sup>38</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Return of the King*, p. 1237

Rescue from Without substage is often bound together with The Magic Flight. After destroying the ring the hobbits are immensely tired and are content with their end, especially Frodo. They struggle to muster up any hope of returning to their ordinary lives and expect to die under Mount Doom. However, Frodo is finally at peace and his normal self returns after he has finally achieved the difficult task of destroying the Ring: “ ‘Well, this is the end, Sam Gamgee,’ said a voice by his side. And there was Frodo, pale and worn, and yet himself again; and in his eyes, there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear.”<sup>39</sup> This dire situation is when the hero is in desperate need of powerful rescuers to come and help him escape. As it has been throughout the whole book, this figure is once again Gandalf. He is aided by the Great Eagles and saves both Sam and Frodo. Gandalf has been a mentor and a supernatural guide to Frodo this whole time. This is proved once again in this substage.

Crossing the Return Threshold is a substage where the hobbits enjoy a peaceful recovery in Ithilien. For the first time in a long time, they can rest without the burden of Ring binding them down, especially Frodo. Nevertheless, when they return to the Shire they face yet another challenge. The true threshold here is to restore the Shire back to normal as it is in the power of Saruman. The Shire is a ruin that is hardly recognizable. After they successfully outcast the intruders they still have to restore the Shire. A gift that Sam was given by lady Galadriel plays a significant role here. The gift of dirt returns the Shire to its former glory and the return threshold is therefore crossed. It is extraordinary to observe how a gift from a previous substage plays such a major role in the Crossing the Return Threshold substage giving us a better idea of how close are the individual substages intertwined.

Master of the Two Worlds is probably one of the most difficult substages for the hero. The hero often needs to come to terms with his split personality and how both worlds have affected his psyche. Frodo finally returns home but he is not the same as he once was. The past events of the quest have left a deep scar on him and he is no longer that careless happy Hobbit he once was. The wound that he received from the witch-king is a constant, never healing reminder of the world outside of the borders of Shire. Frodo is now not just a Hobbit but a hero accepted by all the other races. He has befriended Men and Elves and now he also has Bag End, where he resides with Sam and other Hobbits. Frodo himself must realize that he will never be the same after having witnessed the horrors of the outside world. This

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<sup>39</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R. 2007, *The Return of the King*, p. 1239

realization is most likely critical to advance into the next and final substage of the Return stage. Nothing will ever be the same.

Freedom to Live is the final substage in The Hero's Journey. According to Campbell freedom to live is when the hero stops fearing death and starts to live in the moment. He does not regret the past, nor is he anxious about the future: "The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he is. "Before Abraham was, I AM." He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment (or of the „other thing“), as destroying the permanent with its change."<sup>40</sup>. Frodo comes back to the Shire, along with Sam, Merry and Pippin. They take the Shire back from Saruman and provide freedom for other Hobbits residing there. In Frodo's case, it seems that everything is fine for a while. This changes when the wound that he received from the witch-king starts to hurt again. A wound made by a Morgul knife will never truly heal, not in Middle-earth. Because of this Frodo decides to live a life without the pain and accompanies Gandalf, Bilbo and the High Elves to the lands beyond the sea. Frodo hopes to finally find the peace that he has been seeking for so long.

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<sup>40</sup> Campbell 2004, p. 225



## THE CONCLUSION

Having compared Frodo's journey with Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey showed us how Frodo's journey does indeed transpire similarly to what happens in Campbell's template. Frodo goes through the various stages and substages, but they do not match perfectly. This shows us that not all mythological and fantastic stories can be simply explained with a single theory. However, the match between Hero's journey and Frodo's journey does not have to be perfect for Frodo to go through the stages and fulfil his quest. The symbols are what usually differs the most. No substage usually has one clear answer. Crossing the First Threshold could be many things. It could be encountering the black rider or leaving the borders of Shire. Another example is in how the temptress is portrayed in *The Lord of the Rings*. The temptress is usually described as a woman but in Frodo's case, the real temptress is the Ring. Probably the most wast substage is The Road of Trials. There are simply way too many dangers and challenges that could be considered a trial for Frodo. Sometimes it is very hard to pinpoint the exact moment when Frodo transforms and can move on into another substage.

Despite all of this Frodo does indeed go through all the described substages. Sometimes it is fascinating how accurate the substage and its descriptions are. Belly of the Whale is something that I have found perfectly matching. This substage is a final separation of the hero and his apparent death. The hero however does not die and is reborn. This simply fits all too well with *The Lord of the Rings* plot when Frodo is injured by a Morgul knife. He is slowly turning into a Nazgul and has seemingly died. Later on, Frodo wakes up after being healed. The description and the actual plot fit all too well with Joseph Campbell's template. Maybe that is why it is indeed a template. There is never a right or perfect answer. A template simply leads and paves the way but can also sometimes be a little changed or move astray.

It is truly remarkable how Joseph Campbell has come up with a template for Hero's Journey only through the study of myths and other stories. The template could be applied to other books and stories, not just *The Lord of the Rings*.

In the practical part of the thesis, the aim was to prove that Campbell's template does indeed pave the way in *The Lord of the Rings* and this is the case. All the substages are there for Frodo and he continuously goes through all of them, although sometimes the plot of the substage is portrayed in a different way or through different symbols.

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## **Resumé**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá primárně Josephem Campbellem a jeho monomýtem Cesta Hrdiny a postavou Froda z J.R.R. Tolkienova Pána Prstenů. Cesta Hrdiny a její jednotlivé části jsou nejdříve popsány v teoretické části společně s životem J.R.R. Tolkiena, jeho dílem a postavou Froda. V praktické části jsou pak jednotlivé etapy rozebrány a analyzovány více do hloubky. Poté jsou tyto etapy aplikovány na postavu Froda a rozdíly jsou následně porovnány.

## Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Vít Skotnica
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Vedoucí práce:	doc. Mgr. Janka Kaščáková PhD
Rok obhajoby:	2022
Název práce:	Postava Froda v J.R.R. Tolkienově <i>Pánu Prstenů</i> .
Název práce v angličtině:	The Character of Frodo in J.R.R. Tolkien's <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> .
Anotace práce:	Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzování konceptu Josepha Campbella "Cesta Hrdiny" a následná aplikace této teorie na postavu Froda z J.R.R. Tolkienova <i>Pána Prstenů</i> . První část bakalářské práce se zabývá J.R.R. jeho životem a dílem, Joseph Campbellovým monomýtem "Cesta Hrdiny" a postavou Froda. Druhá část se věnuje podrobnějšímu prostudování teorie Josepha Campbella a následnou aplikací jednotlivých etap na postavu Froda.
Klíčová slova:	Frodo, Monomýtus, Pán Prstenů, J.R.R. Tolkien, Cesta Hrdiny, Joseph Campbell
Anotace v angličtině:	This thesis aims to analyse the concept of Joseph Campbell's monomyth "Hero's Journey" and then applies this theory to Frodo's character from J.R.R. Tolkien's novel <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> . The first part deals with J.R.R. Tolkien's life, his work, Joseph Campbell's monomyth "Hero's Journey", and Frodo's character. The second part is devoted to studying Joseph Campbell's monomyth more in-depth and then applying individual stages to the character of Frodo.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Frodo, Monomyth, The Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hero's Journey, Joseph Campbell
Rozsah práce:	33 stran
Jazyk práce:	Anglický