



EPIC STORY WRITING

THROUGH DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

Quick! Get into groups! Are you...

SUPER SNEAKY



MOSTLY MAGIC



OFTEN FIGHTY



KIM FIRMSTON

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There are three MAIN things that make a story



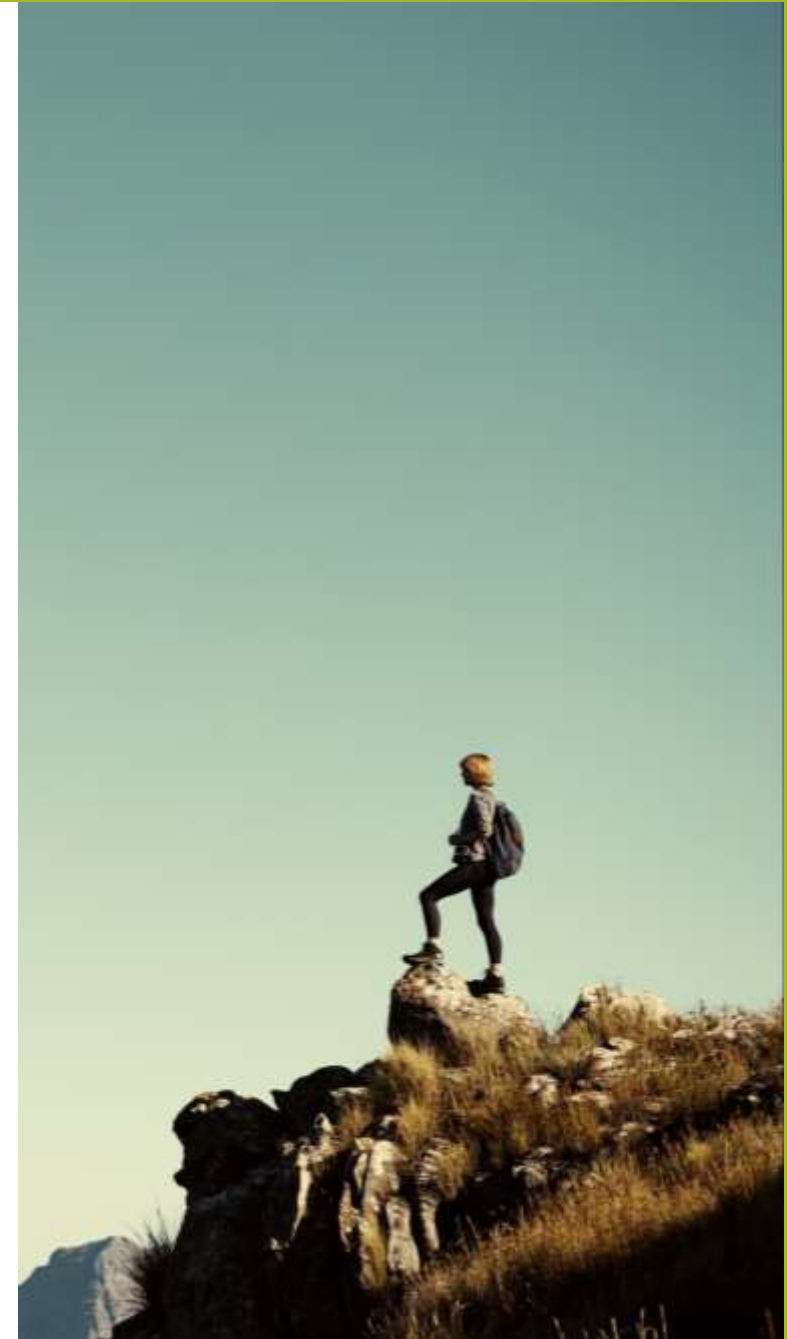
Character



World




Plot



CHARACTER

Let's build one together!

It's Dungeons and Dragons so of course we need a character sheet. But this one is a little different.

Let's go through it! 

CHARACTER SHEET

by Kim Firmston

CHOOSING SKILL LEVELS
How skilled is your character? Each number (0,1,2) must be assigned to two skills below.
Beginner 0
Skilled 1
Expert 2

MAX Hit Points
25
Current HP

CHARACTER TYPE
(pick one)

Often Fighty

Mostly Magic

Super Sneaky

HERO NAME

WEAPONS (Fantasy)

_____ (1 Damage)

_____ (2 Damage)

_____ (3 Damage)

SPELLS (be creative!)

_____ (1 Damage)


_____ (2 Damage)

_____ (3 Damage)


ATTEMPTING A TASK OR FIGHTING AN OPPONENT

Your Dice roll + character's skill level VS Opposed Dice roll + difficulty. Largest number wins.
Fight damage: You win: Subtract spell/weapon damage from opponent HP. They win subtract their HP from your HP. Zero = dead.
DIFFICULTY: Easy 0 (3 HP), Moderate 1 (6 HP), Hard 2 (12 HP), Extreme 3 (24 HP)


SKILL LEVEL

 Athletics
Fighting
Lifting


Strength

 Acrobatics
Sneaking
Ranged Attacks


Dexterity

 Magic
Investigation
Wilderness


Intelligence

 Animal Handling
Medicine
Understanding

Wisdom

 Deception
Intimidation
Persuasion

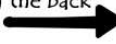
Charisma

 Resistance to
Poison & Illness

Constitution

Positive Trait	When does it become negative
Negative Trait	When does it become positive

How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

*Write your character description on the back 

GMC EXTERNAL (pushes the plot forward)

GOAL (what they want)

MOTIVE (why they MUST get it)

CONFLICT (what or who is stopping them)

WHAT IS THEIR REAL GOAL (even if they don't know about it yet)

GMC INTERNAL (pushes character growth)

INTERNAL GOAL (what they think they need to feel whole)?

INTERNAL MOTIVE (what incident caused them to need this)?

INTERNAL CONFLICT (why isn't this need being met)?

WHAT DO THEY REALLY NEED? (what do they need to learn to actually feel whole)?

And don't worry if you don't know anything about D&D. It's all been simplified and remade as a story writing method. Super easy!

What kind of Character will we build?

Fighty, Magic, or sneaky?

Based on that – what kind of weapons and spells will they have?

Examples

Weapon – Pokey Stick (2 damage)

Spell – Cloud of kittens (3 damage)

Anything goes! This is failure free.

NOW name your character.

CHARACTER SHEET

CHOOSING SKILL LEVELS

How skilled is your character? Each number (0,1,2) must be assigned to two skills below.

Beginner 0
Skilled 1
Expert 2

MAX Hit Points
25

Current HP

CHARACTER TYPE
(pick one)

Often Fighty

Mostly Magic

Super Sneaky

Mulric

HERO NAME

<p>WEAPONS (Fantasy)</p> <p><u>Dagger</u> (1 Damage)</p> <p><u>Pokey stick</u> (2 Damage)</p> <p><u>Biting</u> (3 Damage)</p>	<p>SPELLS (be creative!)</p> <p><u>Giant Web</u> (1 Damage)</p> <p><u>Many Bugs</u> (2 Damage)</p> <p><u>Kitten Cloud</u> (3 Damage)</p>
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ATTEMPTING A TASK OR FIGHTING AN OPPONENT

Your Dice roll + character's skill level VS Opposed Dice roll + difficulty. Largest number wins.

Fight damage: You win: Subtract spell/weapon damage from opponent HP. They win subtract their HP from your HP. Zero = dead.

DIFFICULTY: Easy 0 (3 HP), Moderate 1 (6 HP), Hard 2 (12 HP), Extreme 3 (24 HP)

SKILL LEVEL

Strength
Athletics
Fighting
Lifting

Dexterity
Acrobatics
Sneaking
Ranged Attacks

Intelligence
Magic
Investigation
Wilderness

Wisdom
Animal Handling
Medicine
Understanding

Positive Trait	When does it become negative

Negative Trait	When does it become positive

How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

Now choose your character's skill level.

Beginner 0

Skilled 1

Expert 2

Each number must be assigned to **two** of the skills.

SKILLS

Strength – Lifting crates of tomatoes.

Dexterity – Juggling tomatoes.

Intelligence – tomatoes are fruit.

Wisdom –tomato don't belong in smoothies.

Charisma – Successfully selling tomato smoothies.

Constitution – Surviving drinking a tomato smoothie.

CHOOSING SKILL LEVELS

How skilled is your character? Each number (0,1,2) must be assigned to two skills below.

- Beginner 0
- Skilled 1
- Expert 2

MAX
Hit Points
25

Current HP

CHARACTER TYPE

- (pick one)
- Often Fighty
 - Mostly Magic
 - Super Sneaky

HERO NAME

- WEAPONS (Fantasy)**
- Dagger (1 Damage)
 - Pokey stick (2 Damage)
 - Biting (3 Damage)

- SPELLS (be creative!)**
- Giant Web (1 Damage)
 - Many Bugs (2 Damage)
 - Kitten Cloud (3 Damage)

ATTEMPTING A TASK OR FIGHTING AN OPPONENT

Your Dice roll + character's skill level VS Opposed Dice roll + difficulty. Largest number wins.

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DIFFICULTY: Easy 0 (3 HP), Moderate 1 (6 HP), Hard 2 (12 HP), Extreme 3 (24 HP)

SKILL LEVEL

0 Athletics
Fighting
Lifting

Strength

2 Acrobatics
Sneaking
Ranged Attacks

Dexterity

2 Magic
Investigation
Wilderness

Intelligence

0 Animal Handling
Medicine
Understanding

Wisdom

1 Deception
Intimidation
Persuasion

Charisma

1 Resistance to
Poison & Illness

Constitution

Positive Trait	When does it become negative

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How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

*Write your character description on the back →

GMC EXTERNAL (pushes the plot forward)

GMC INTERNAL (pushes character growth)

USING DICE

Good news! Dice are optional. Instead of dice your students can just decide the outcome based on skill levels.

However – Dice are fun! They add an element of randomness.

You can use any dice you have on hand – 6 sided, 20 sided, 8 sided – it doesn't matter.

ATTEMPTING A TASK

1. Find the skill you are using.
2. Roll your character's dice and add your skill level. Ex. Sneaking = Dexterity
Roll of 3 + 2 dexterity = 5
1. Roll the dice again to oppose the task and add the difficulty of the task. Ex: Difficulty level Hard 2 because the floorboards are squeaky. Roll of 2 + 2 difficulty (hard) = 4
2. Your character's roll was larger so they succeed.
3. What happened in the story?

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Current HP

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(pick one)
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HERO NAME

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<u>Pokey stick</u> (2 Damage)	<u>Many Bugs</u> (2 Damage)
<u>Biting</u> (3 Damage)	<u>Kitten Cloud</u> (3 Damage)

ATTEMPTING A TASK OR FIGHTING AN OPPONENT
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SKILL LEVEL

0 Athletics
Fighting
Lifting
Strength

2 Acrobatics
Sneaking
Ranged Attacks
Dexterity

2 Magic
Investigation
Wilderness
Intelligence

0 Animal Handling
Medicine
Understanding
Wisdom

1 Deception
Intimidation
Persuasion
Charisma

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Constitution

Positive Trait	When does it become negative

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How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

*Write your character description on the back →

GMC EXTERNAL (pushes the plot forward)

GMC INTERNAL (pushes character growth)

USING DICE

FIGHTING AN OPPONENT

1. Find the skill you are using.
2. Roll your character's dice and add your skill level. Ex. Magic = Intelligence. Roll of 5 + 2 Intelligence skill = 7
3. Roll the dice again for opponent and add the difficulty. Ex: Tiny Goblin, Difficulty level Moderate (due to teeth). Roll of 5 + 1 difficulty (Moderate) = 6
4. Your character's roll is larger so they win the round

TIME TO DO DAMAGE:

If your character wins: subtract the damage from the weapon or spell from the opponent's Hit Points (HP). Example: Moderate characters have 6HP. Mulric was using the spell Kitten Cloud which does 3 damage. $6HP - 3 \text{ Damage} = 3HP$ remaining. The opponent will either runaway OR fight to the death!

If your character loses: the opponent does their HP in damage. Example: Mulric has 25HP. Moderate opponent does 6HP in damage. $25 - 6 = 19$ HP remaining for Mulric.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE STORY?

by Kim Firmston

CHOOSING SKILL LEVELS

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Current HP

19

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(pick one)

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SPELLS (be creative!)

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SKILL LEVEL

0 Strength Athletics Fighting Lifting

2 Dexterity Acrobatics Sneaking Ranged Attacks

2 Intelligence Magic Investigation Wilderness

0 Wisdom Animal Handling Medicine Understanding

1 Charisma Deception Intimidation Persuasion

1 Constitution Resistance to Poison & Illness

Positive Trait

When does it become negative

Negative Trait

When does it become positive

How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

*Write your character description on the back

GMC EXTERNAL (pushes the plot forward)

GMC INTERNAL (pushes character growth)

Positive trait:

- Always tries to be honest.

When does it become negative?


- When the character *honestly* tells the plan to the antagonist.

Negative trait:

- Talks all the time about everything just to fill the space.

When does it become positive?

- When the antagonist captures the character and the character talks so much, they just let them go.



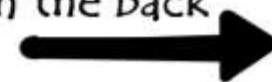
Positive Trait	When does it become negative
Negative Trait	When does it become positive

How Did The Character Come To Be Here?

Backstory!
But backstory with a purpose. What were the events that led our character to come to the beginning of their journey?

Because backstory can take over tales, keep this to a minimum.

*Write your character description on the back



GOAL, MOTIVE, AND CONFLICT (GMC)

Character Goals need to be actionable.
The motive needs to be imperative.
The antagonist – their conflict – needs to be a worthy opponent.
The *real* goal what they want to achieve once they look beyond themselves at the big picture.

The character is missing on the inside due to a past incident that hurt them emotionally.
They want to rid themselves of this pain but their efforts cause more conflict.
However when they realize the THEME they are able to finally heal.

GMC EXTERNAL (pushes the plot forward)

GOAL (what they want)

MOTIVE (why they MUST get it)

CONFLICT (what or who is stopping them)

WHAT IS THEIR REAL GOAL

(even if they don't know about it yet)

GMC INTERNAL (pushes character growth)

INTERNAL GOAL

(what they think they need to feel whole)?

INTERNAL MOTIVE

(what incident caused them to need this)?

INTERNAL CONFLICT (why isn't this need being met)?

WHAT DO THEY REALLY NEED?

(what do they need to learn to actually feel whole)?

WORLD

Let's build one together!

World Building Essentials

There are a few things that are important to understand when you are building a world.

1. The name of the location.
2. The level of technology and types of people who live there. Are they into metal forging and a warrior society, or do they live in the trees and are very primitive.
3. Type of Government and who *REALLY* runs things? Who do they really need to see to get things done.
4. Any Landmarks or important statues? This will help your character find the place.
5. How does your character feel about this place? Can't wait to leave or want to stay? Or even bad memories.
6. Is their bias correct? (ex: like the place, but it's a trap OR hate the place, but the people are helpful)

Of course these aren't the only things you can decide, but starting with these will give you a good basis to expand on.

SENSES = WORLD

We understand the world through our senses. Making a senses dictionary for the location will bring it to life. For each new location – make a new senses dictionary.

SIGHT	SMELL/TASTE	TOUCH	SOUND
Shapes, colours, shiny/dull, materials, clean/dirty, landscape, biome, technology.	Uses the same descriptor words. This is where memories are based. Be specific. What does chocolate taste like? What does cut grass smell like?	Textures, temperature, squishiness, air/water pressure, vestibular (sense of balance), pain/comfort, etc.	Onomatopoeia – the sounds that sounds make. Chirp, zoom, whoosh, shhh. Also descriptions of sounds through simile and metaphor.

PLOT / STORY

Let's plan one together!

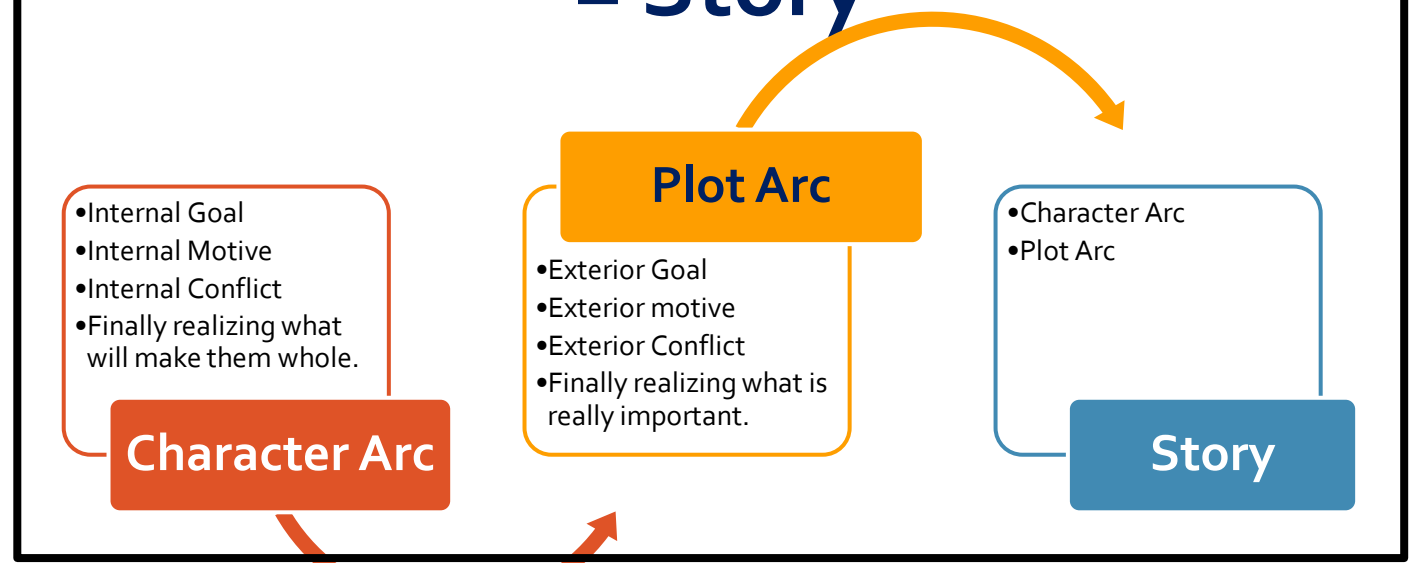


Internal GMC + External GMC

(character arc)

(plot arc)

= Story



I feel
So I act
Actions create outcomes
Outcomes make me feel

THEME

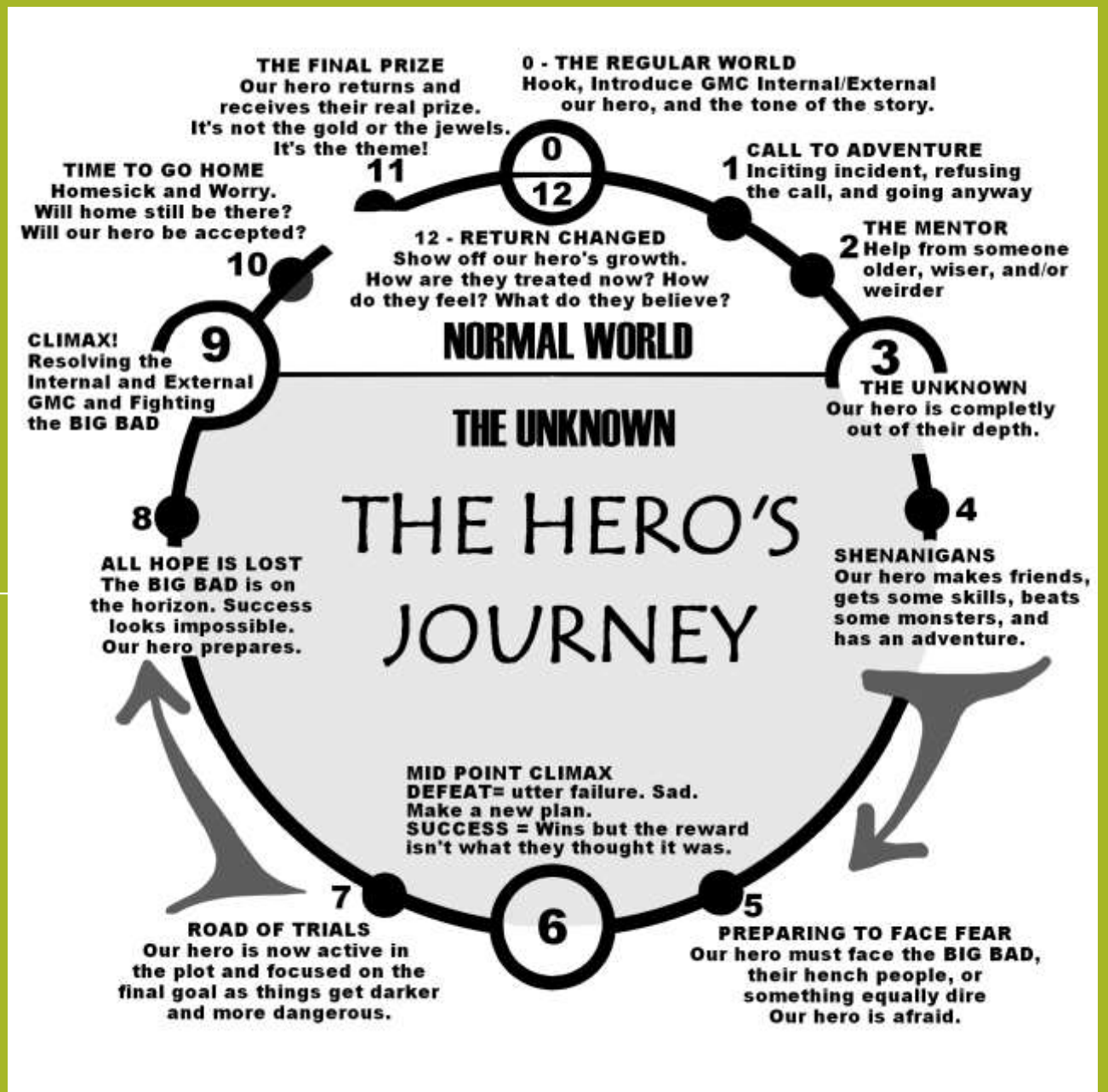
THE THEMATIC STATEMENT - The universal belief that you want to show off in this story stated in a sentence.

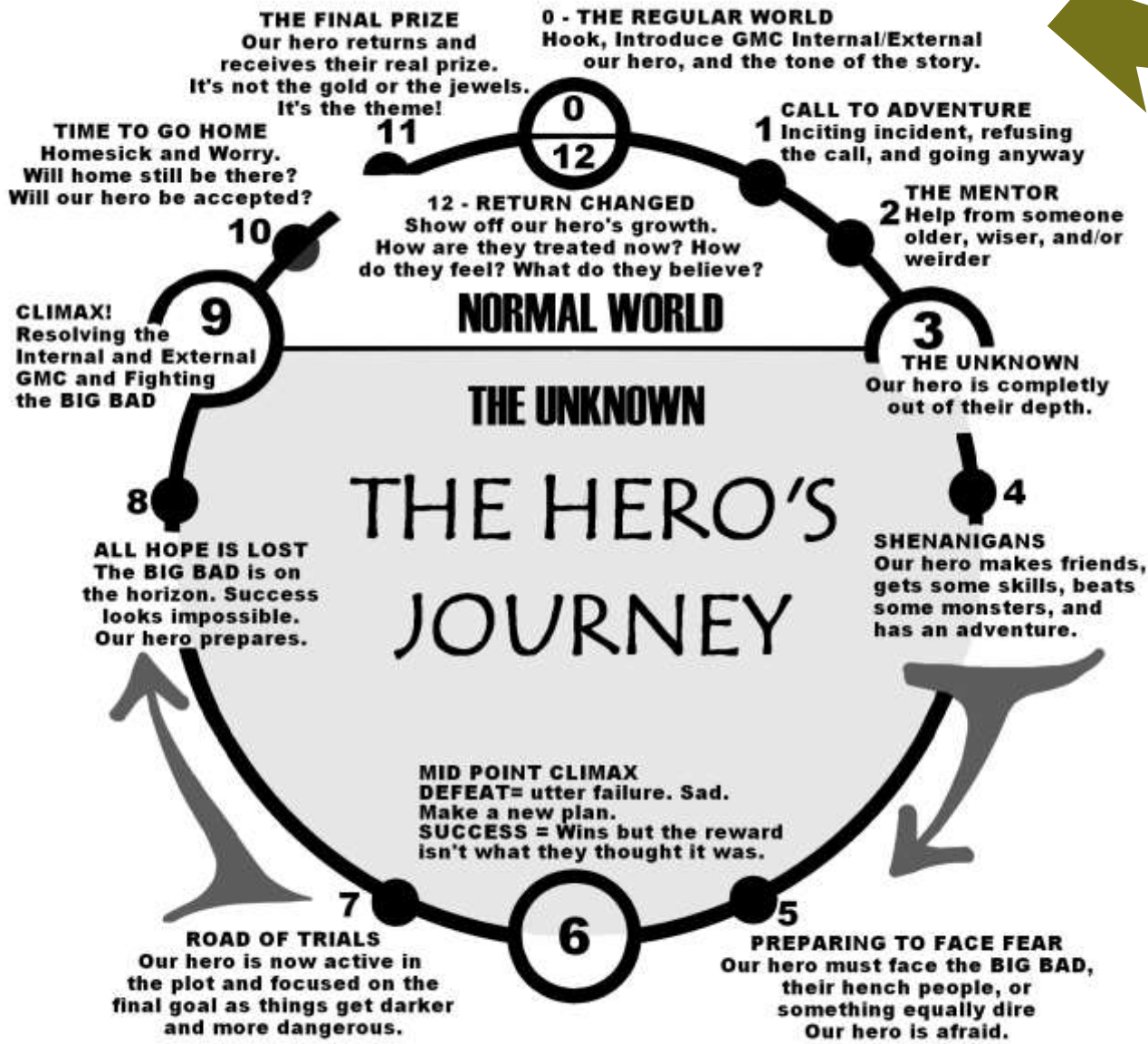
Examples of a few themes:

- Family isn't blood, it's the people who care most about you.
- We try to attain peace not for the whole world but for the people closest to us.
- To be brave, one must first be afraid and yet continue.

YOUR THEMATIC STATEMENT: _____

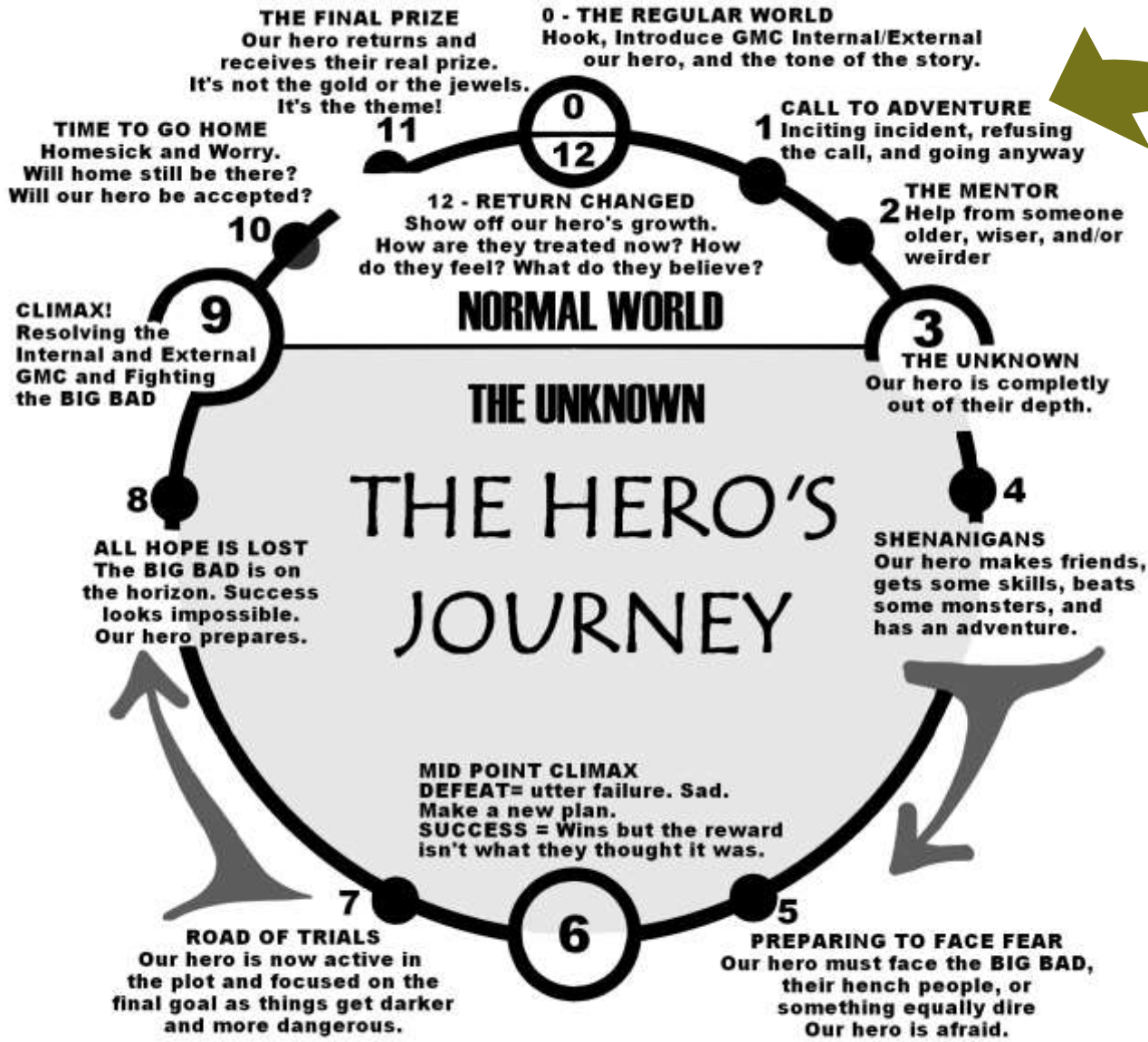
**AND NOW... What
you've all been
waiting for!**





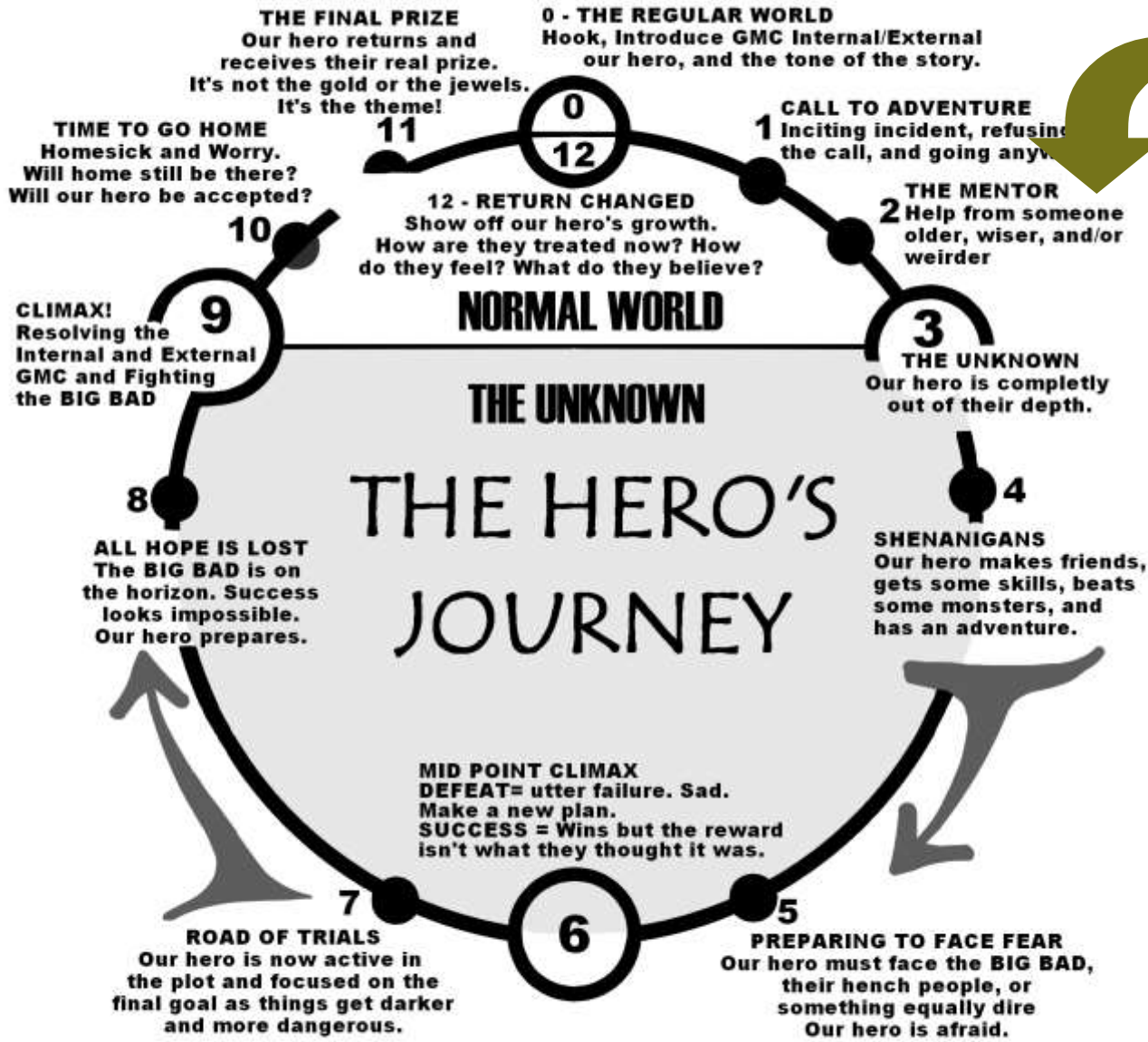
0 - THE REGULAR WORLD

- a) Start with a hook – something that shows off the internal conflict and creates intrigue.
- b) Set the tone (funny, serious, dramatic) and the genre (Fantasy, sci-fi, etc.)
- c) Show off the world as it is normally, and the character within that world.
- d) Show off the internal GMC and External GMC (or at least a hint towards it).



1 – CALL TO ADVENTURE

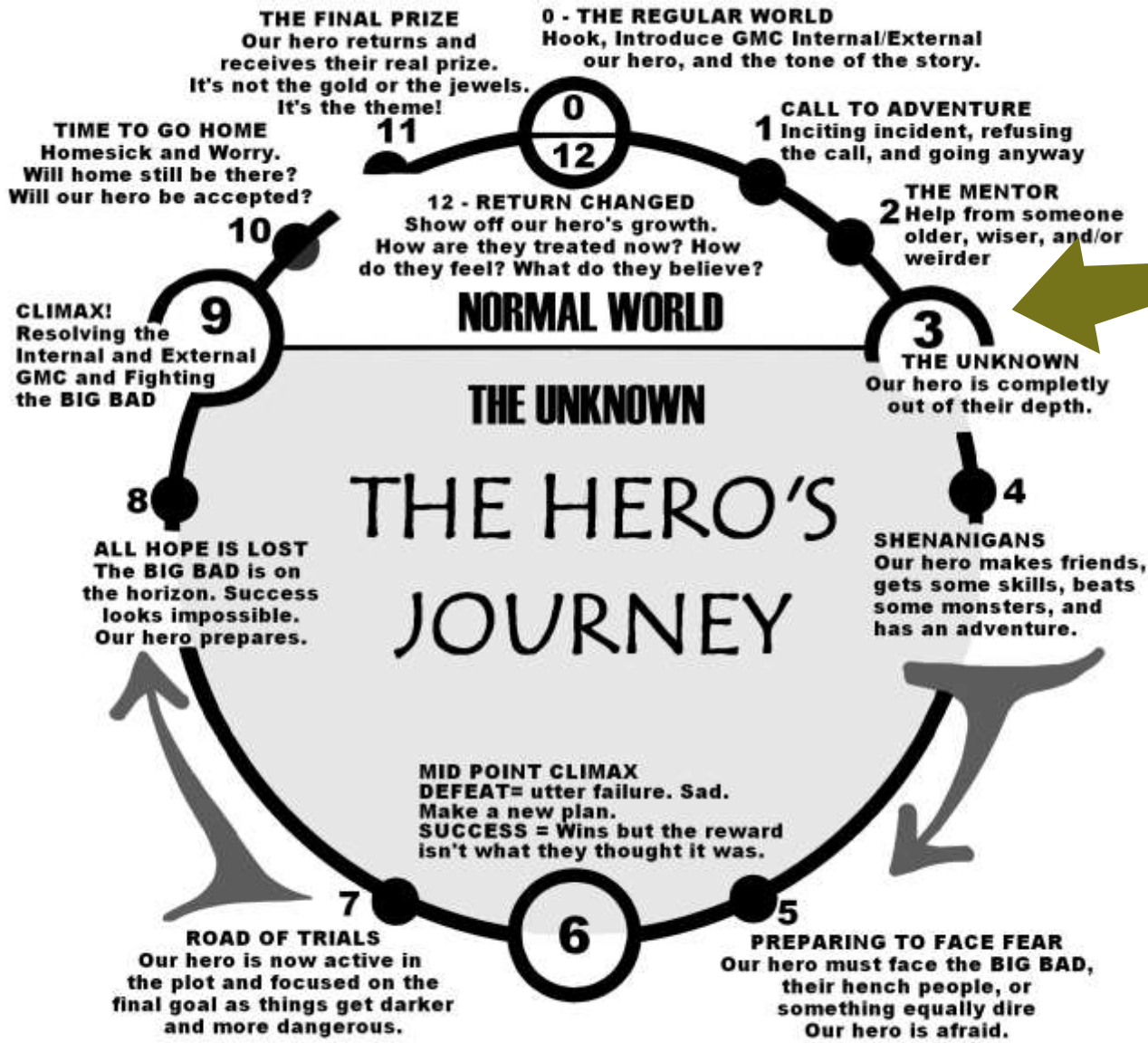
- a) The External GMC affects the main character's world. They must leave.
- b) They refuse the call to adventure because they don't think they have the skills or aren't prepared.
- c) An event or realization pushes them to swallow their fear and leave.



2 – HELP FROM A MENTOR

The Mentor might not be perfect but they *will* help your main character grow and meet the challenges. They probably aren't at all what they seem either. There might even be more than one mentor who joins the party.

- Who are they?
- What are they like?
- How will they benefit the main character on their quest?

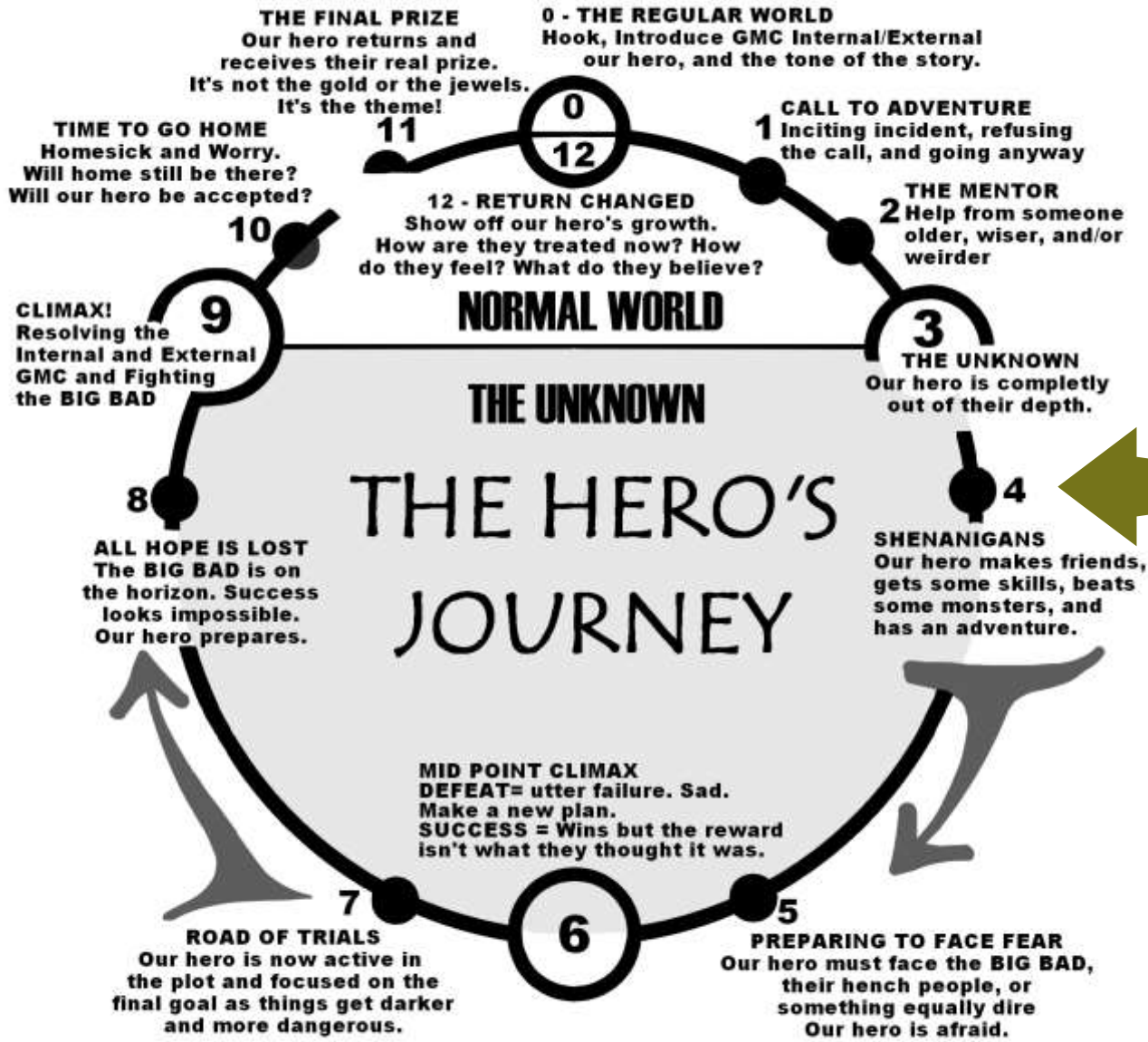


3 – THE UNKNOWN

Your character is entering the unknown and are completely out of their depth. They face their first big obstacle or conflict which leaves them really wondering if they are truly ready for all this. This is a low for them – but, they pick themselves up and keep going.

- a) What opponent/obstacle do they meet?
- b) They are alone and lost – how did they get this way?

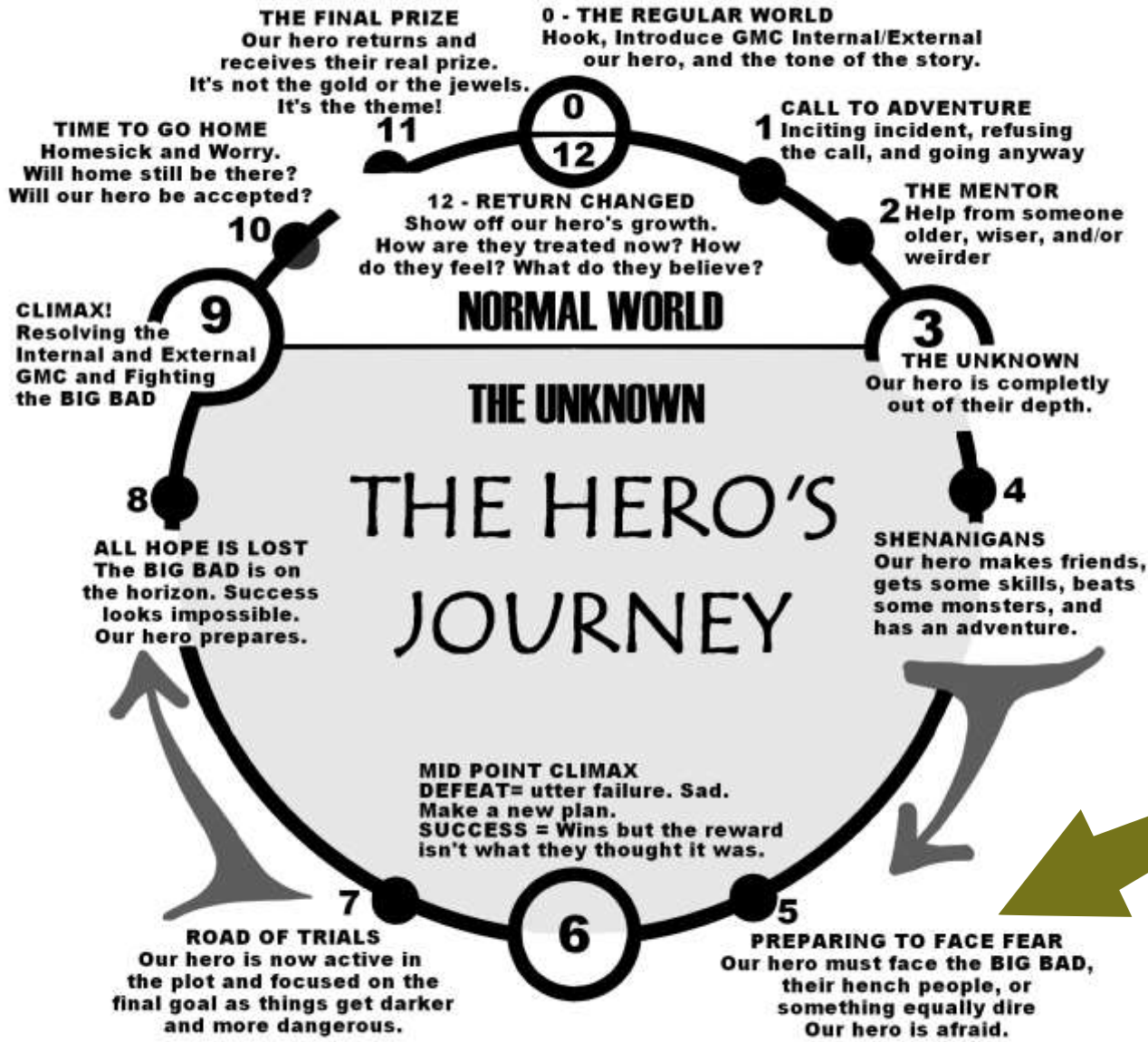
Remember, make it exciting but not as dire as the final boss. Keep it pretty easy. The hard part is that this is all new!



4 – SHENANIGANS

This is a multi-scene montage of problems, weird situations, making friends (who may or may not join your character), and enemies (who may or may not be monsters). In this part, your character is REACTING to what is happening around them. They don't know enough to make plans BUT they are learning and getting better. This is the fun adventure part of the story, but it can still have some serious bits. Every monster or opponent is getting harder, things are slowly becoming more dire.

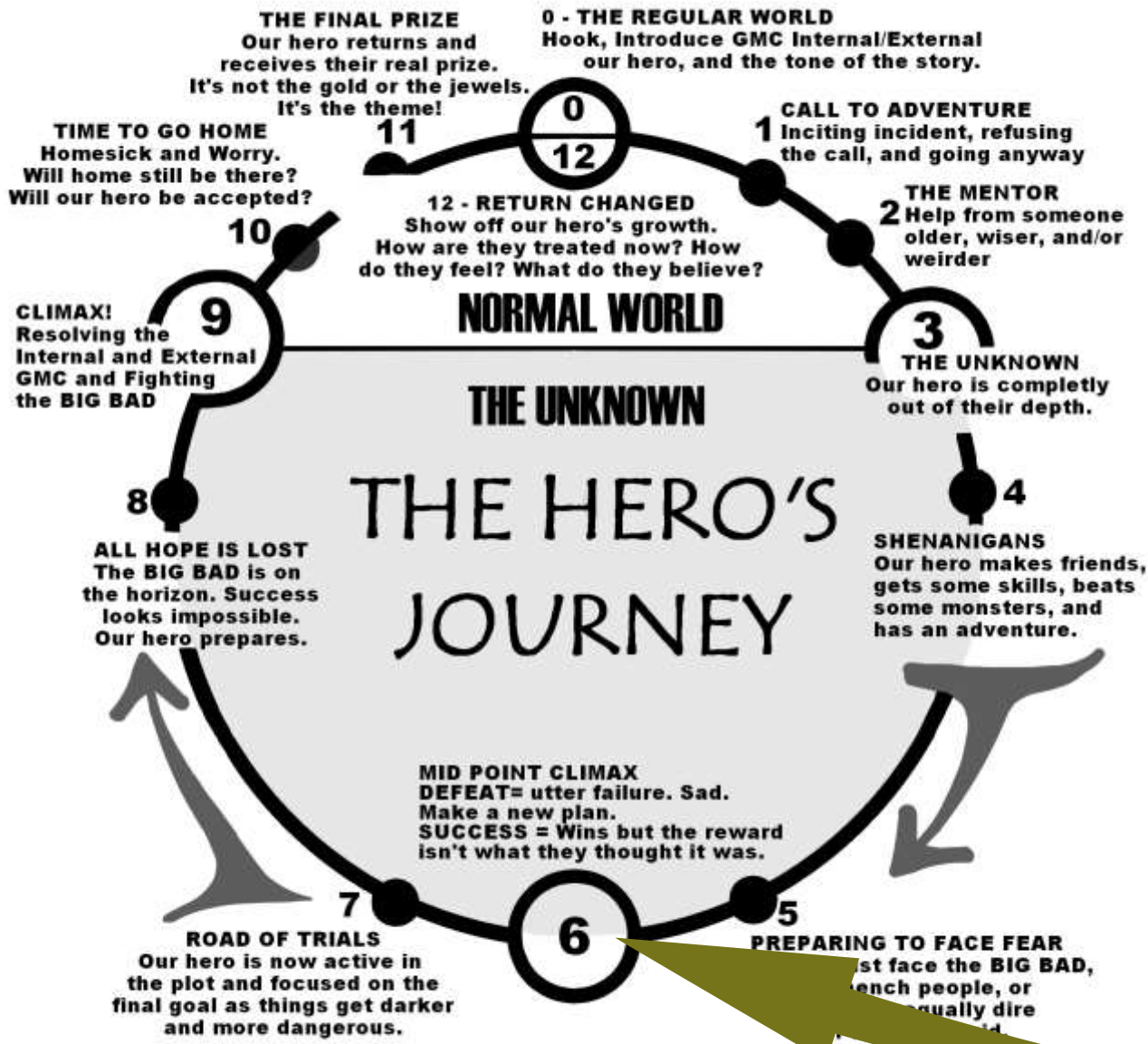
- What happens during the event?
- What they learn or who they meet.
- Their reaction to this event.



5 – PREPARING TO FACE FEAR

As your character is having their adventure, they become aware that there is a larger enemy lurking – the **BIG BAD** who wants to destroy them and the world. Its minions are close and on the prowl. SO... our hero prepares. This is the calm before the storm.

- How does your character prepare?
- What are they thinking?
- How does this apply to your theme?
- How does this affect their internal GMC?



6 – MID POINT CLIMAX

(AKA the False Climax)

Enough prep! The enemy has arrived. Your character is prepared, learned new skills, and has back up. They are ready – or at least they think they are.

Unfortunately, as the scene progresses the hero finds themselves overwhelmed, losing hope, and...

FAILS! Losing self esteem, wishing they were home, then going off to lick their wounds and make a new plan.

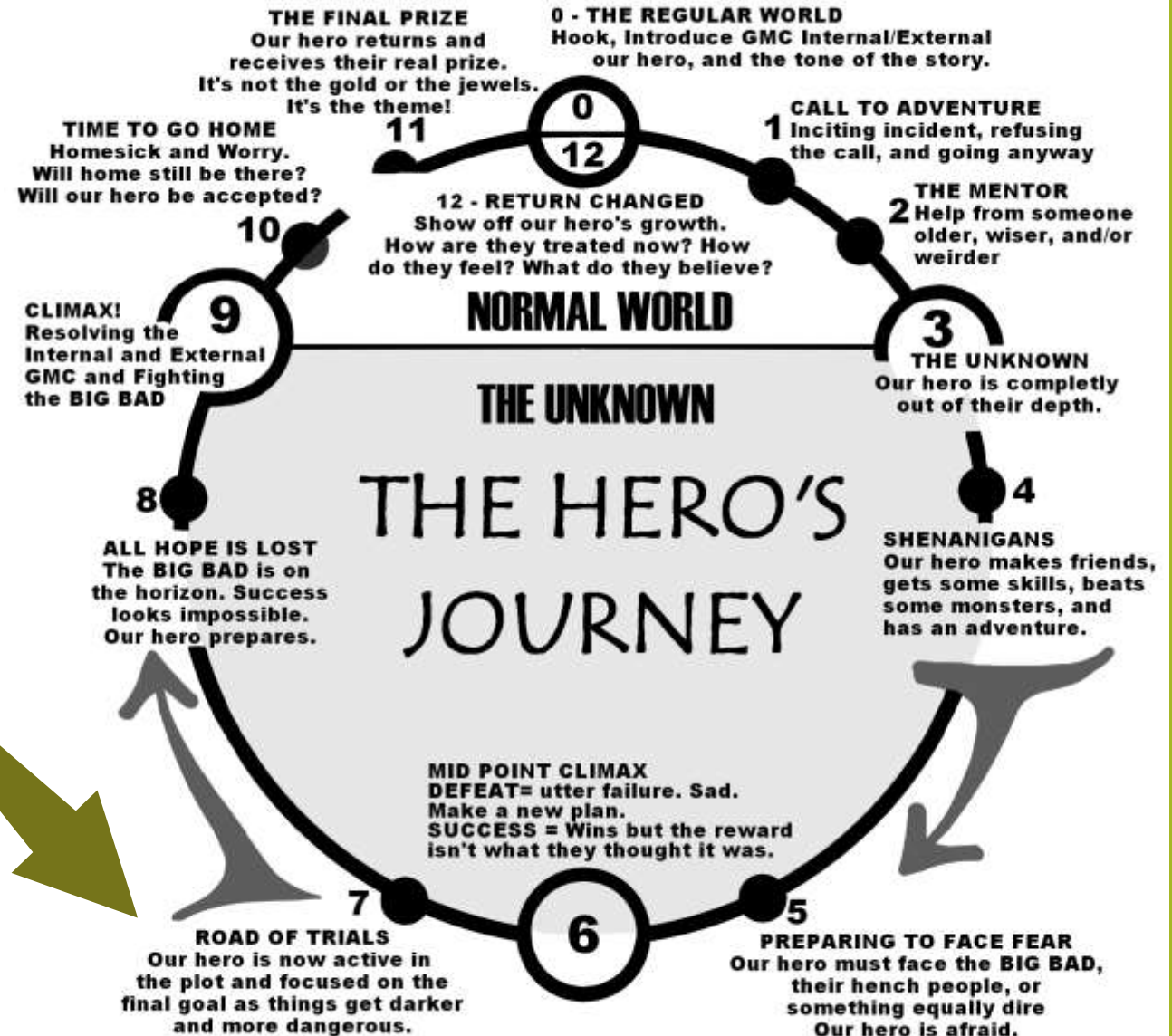
OR

WINS! But it turns out it isn't what they thought it would be. In fact, it's a trap. Now they need to come up with a new and better plan.

7 – ROAD OF TRIALS

Similar to Shenanigans, this is a multi-scene section that grows more and more tense, bringing our character to the beginning of the climax. Because the stakes are growing, your character now goes from REACTING to problems to becoming ACTIVE. They control their life as best they can and try to anticipate what opponents might do. Which is a good thing because every conflict is harder and more dangerous than the one before it.

- What happens during the conflict?
- The Reaction to the conflict:
- What they learn from the conflict:

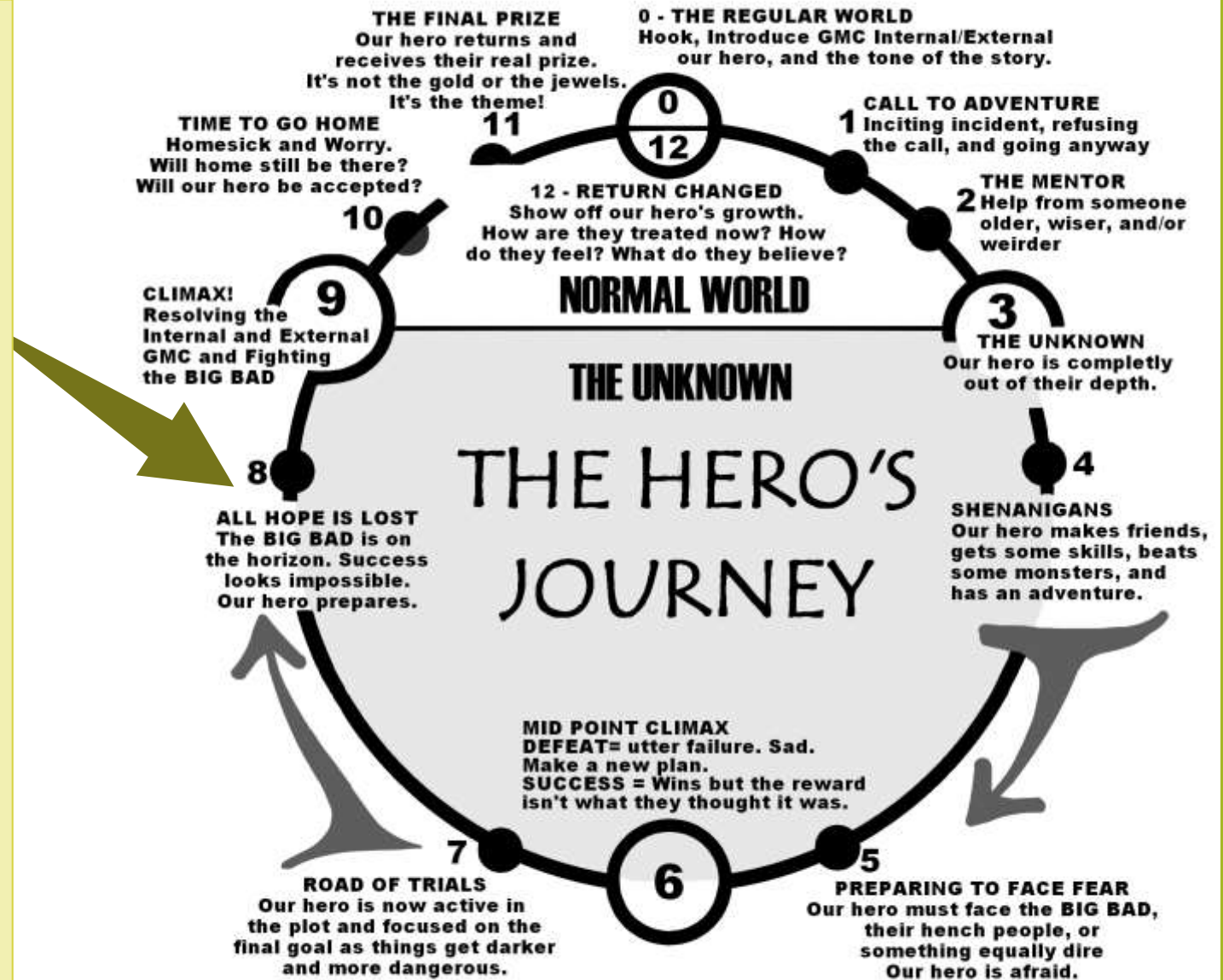


8 – ALL HOPE IS LOST

Similar to Preparing to Face Fear (5), our character is preparing to face the BIG BAD. If they don't win, it could very well mean the end of their home, their family, and the people they care about.

Our character is ready to not make it through this one. They prepare to make an ultimate sacrifice to save the ones they care about.

- How does your character prepare?
- How do they feel?
- What are they willing to sacrifice? (themselves, their morals, or an object)
- What are the stakes if they fail?



8 – ALL HOPE IS LOST (cont.)

To give our character a hope of survival at the climax, we writers need to add some items, ideas, or interesting information to the story prior to this point.

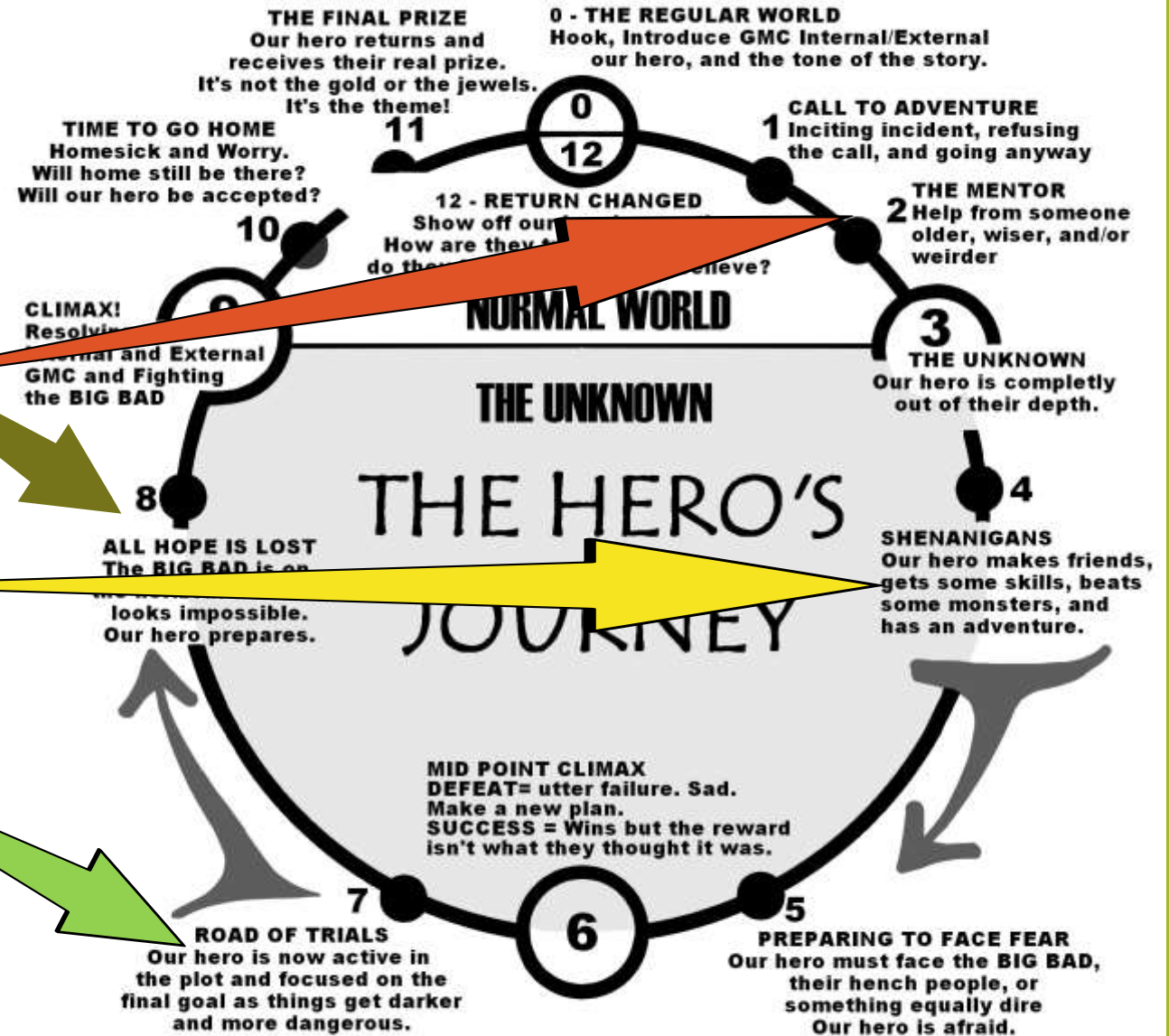
For example:

In THE MENTOR, your character learns, “you can always rely on fresh spring water in the face of evil.

In SHENANIGANS the character fills a water skin at a fresh spring.

In ROAD OF TRIALS – the character notices all the fresh springs have been destroyed as they get closer to their goal.

Take a minute to put three to five items or clues into various points of the plot.



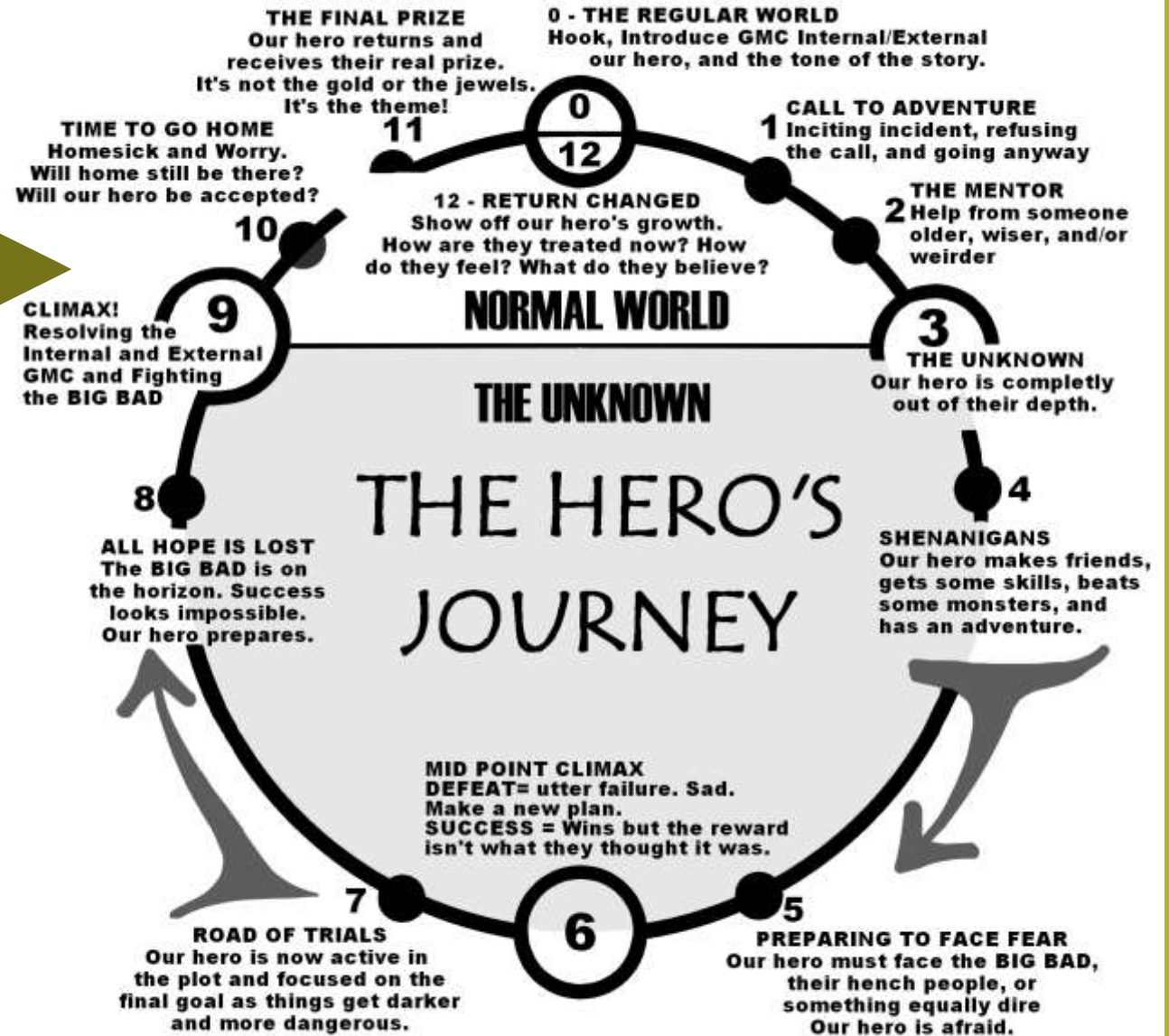
9 – CLIMAX! (Internal)

First things first, you need to resolve your internal Goal, Motive, and Conflict.

CLIMAX – Step One

The Dark Night Of The Soul

Your character is feeling overwhelmed right now. They are alone (mentally or physically). They question their ability to complete the task before them. It looks like they will fail.

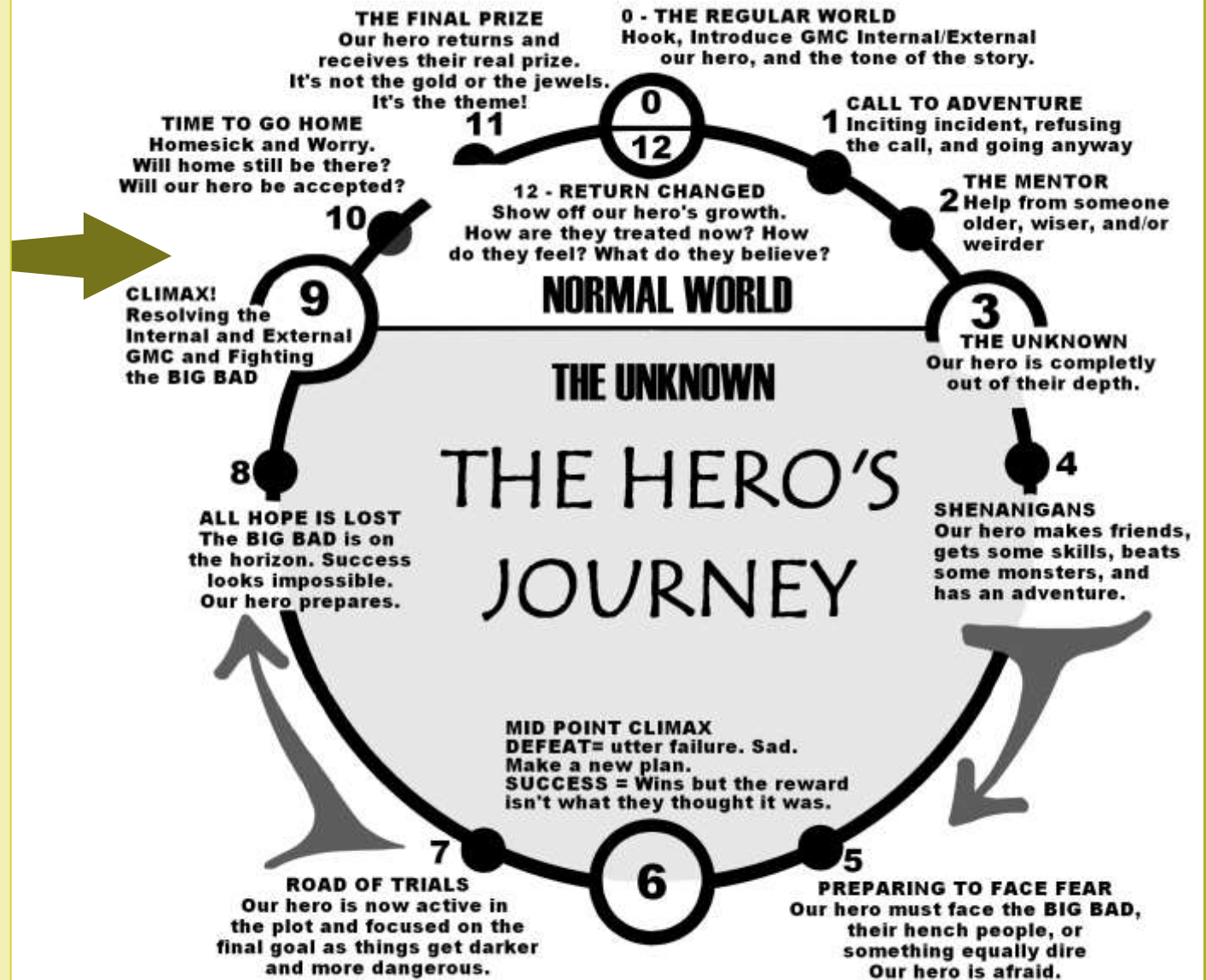


9 – CLIMAX! (Internal)

Climax – Step Two

Now have one, some, or all of the following, so your character can realize they will find a way to triumph. (These can be in any order).

1. Make a **HEROIC SACRIFICE** - give up something incredibly important (Ex. Their life, and object, or a moral stance).
2. Discover a **PLOT TWIST** - new information that flips everything on its head and gives your character a clue about how to win.
3. Learn a **THEMATIC LESSON**. Your character finally figures out your theme and uses this new knowledge to form a plan.



9 – CLIMAX! (External)

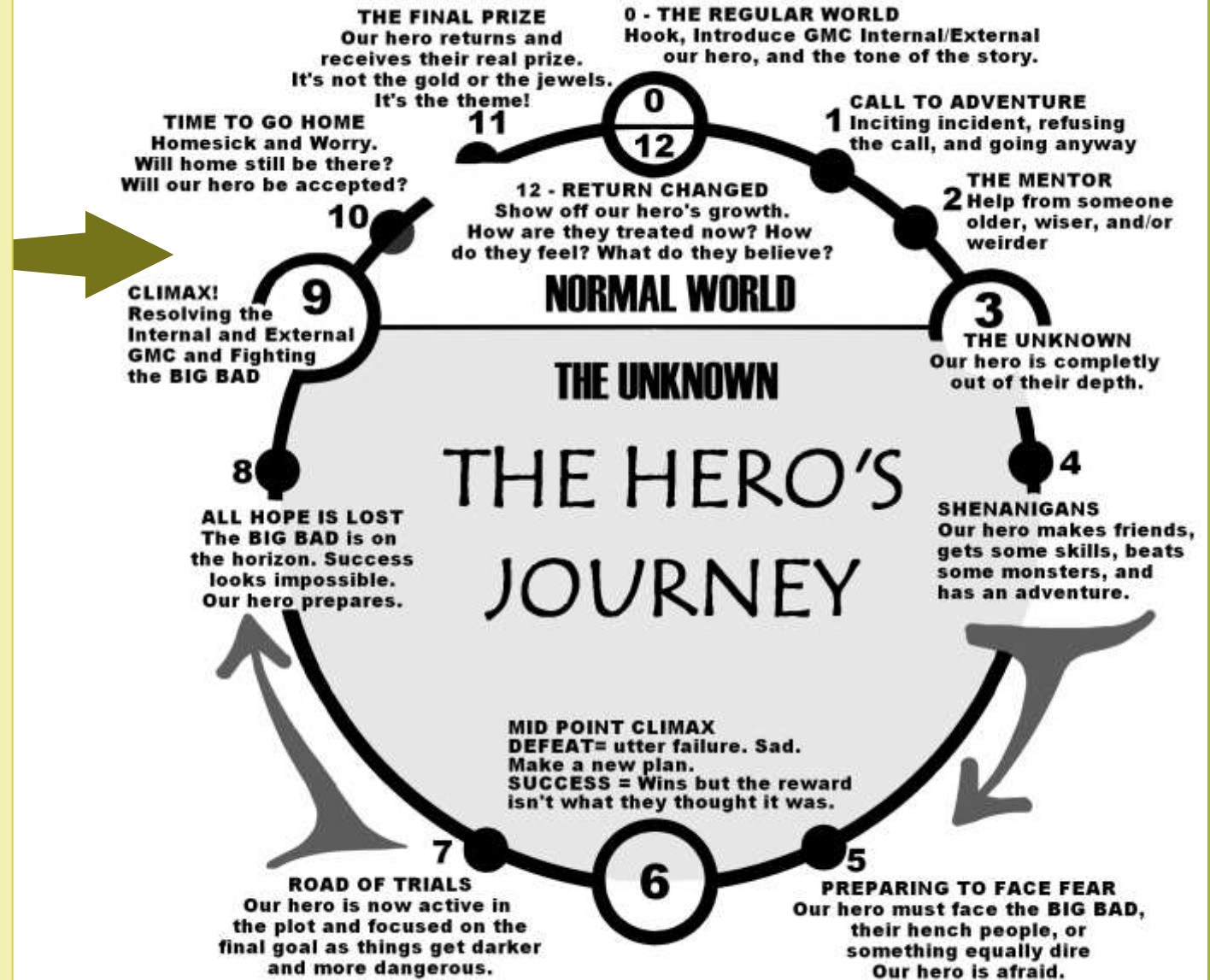
Now your character has their emotions sorted out, they can finally move on to the **External Climax**.

Climax – Step Three

THE CLEVER SOLUTION – this is when your character finally puts all the items and information together and is able to see the big picture, forming a plan to beat the **BIG BAD**.

Climax – Step Four

FINAL STRUGGLE – But just because they have the solution, doesn't mean it's going to be easy! This is a prolonged battle of ups and downs. Make your readers sweat!

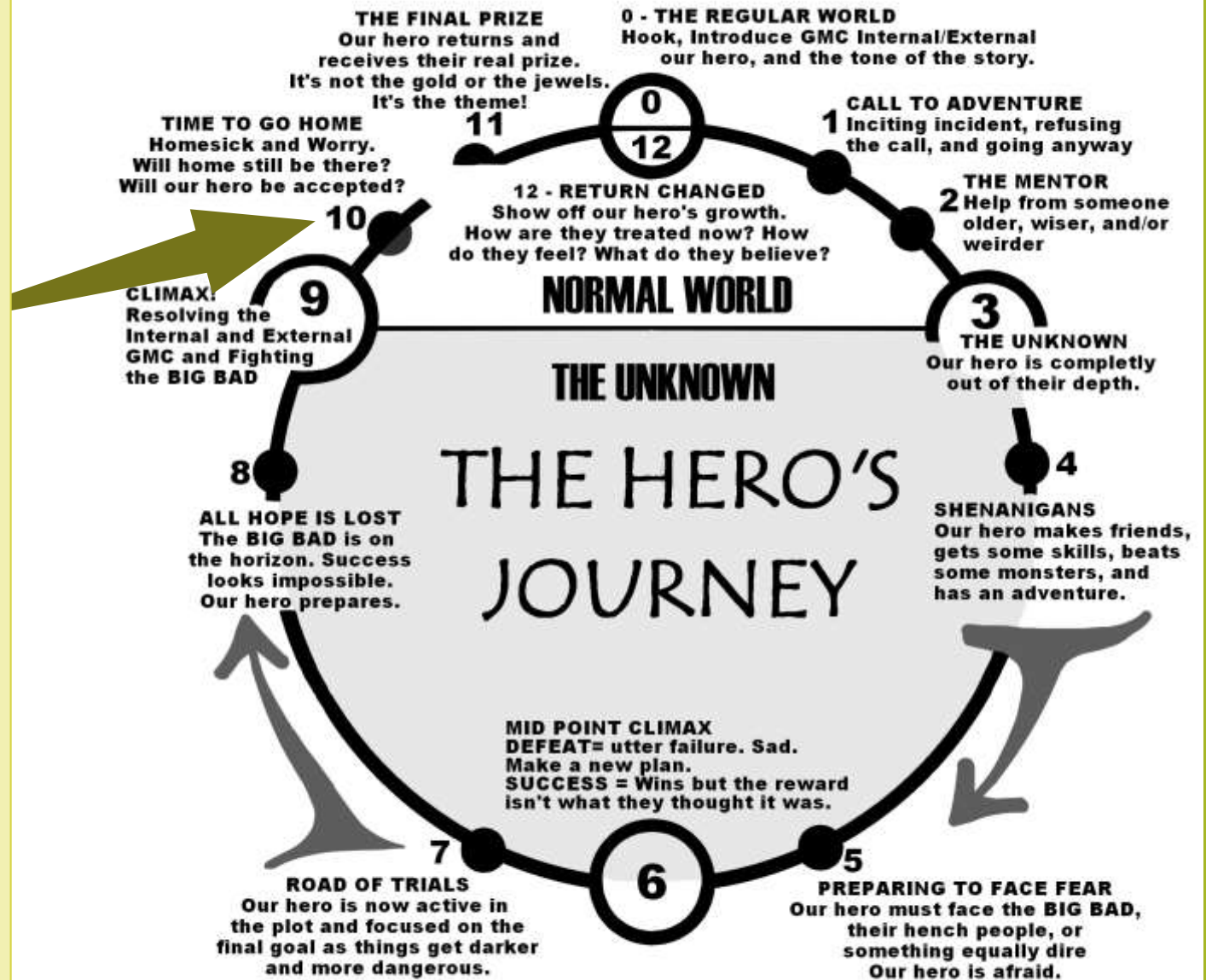


10 – TIME TO GO HOME

While your character may be bloody, bruised, and missing an arm, they've found their own strength and belief system. They are a new person – so much different than the person they were when they started out. They have new friends, allies, skills, beliefs, and self-confidence. They've seen things they can't unsee and they are scarred from it.

All this leads to worry and more internal conflict.

- a) They are homesick – but will the person they have become be accepted on their return.
- b) They love life – but is there still a place for them in this world.
- c) If they aren't who they used to be – who are they now?



11 – THE FINAL PRIZE

This is the culmination of the Character Arc (Internal GMC)

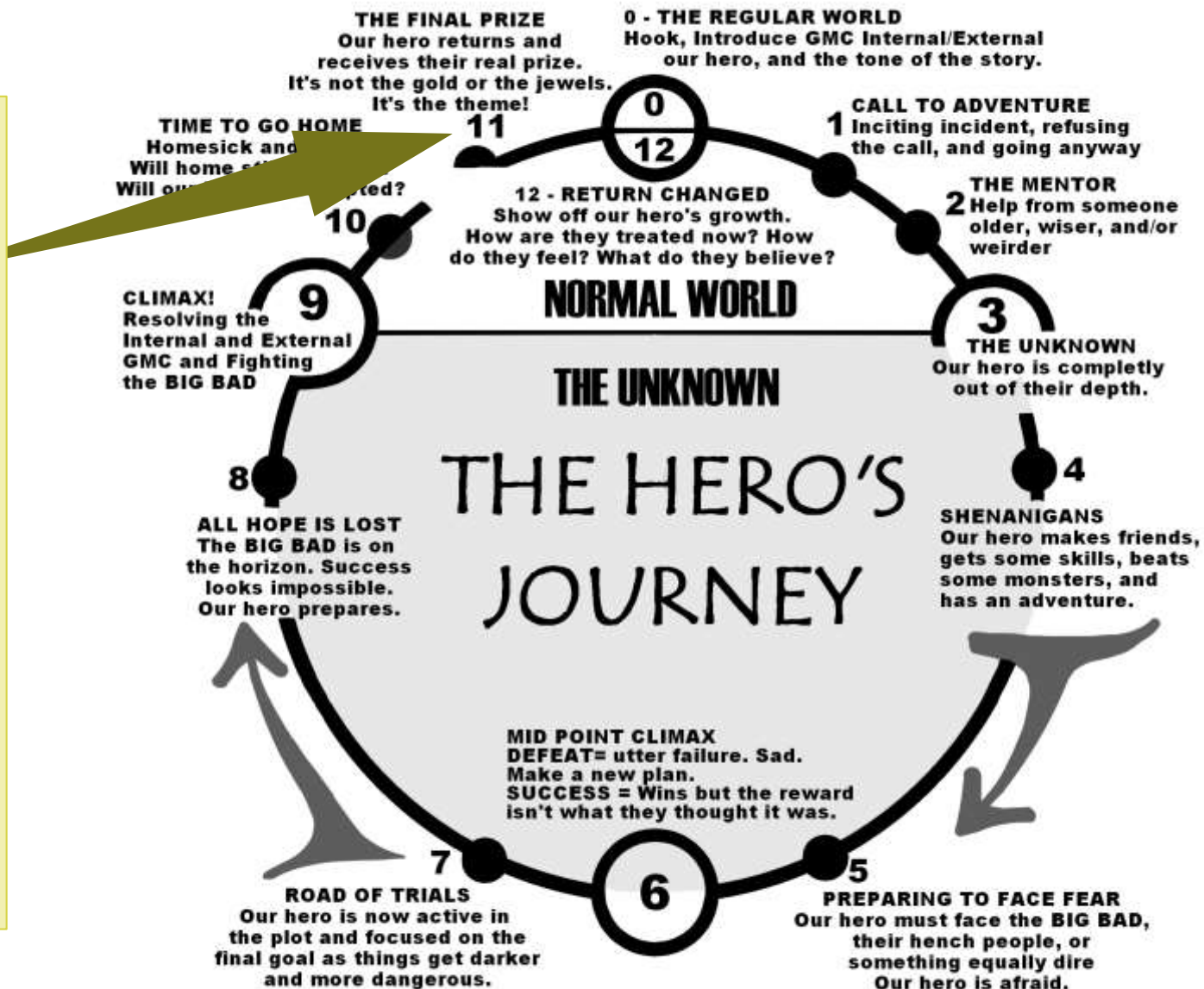
Your hero had a goal.

They had a motive.

They went through life changing conflict.

But now they realize that after all they've been through... after all they've learned... the prize they sought isn't what they actually thought it would be.

INSTEAD it is understanding the THEME and applying it to their life.



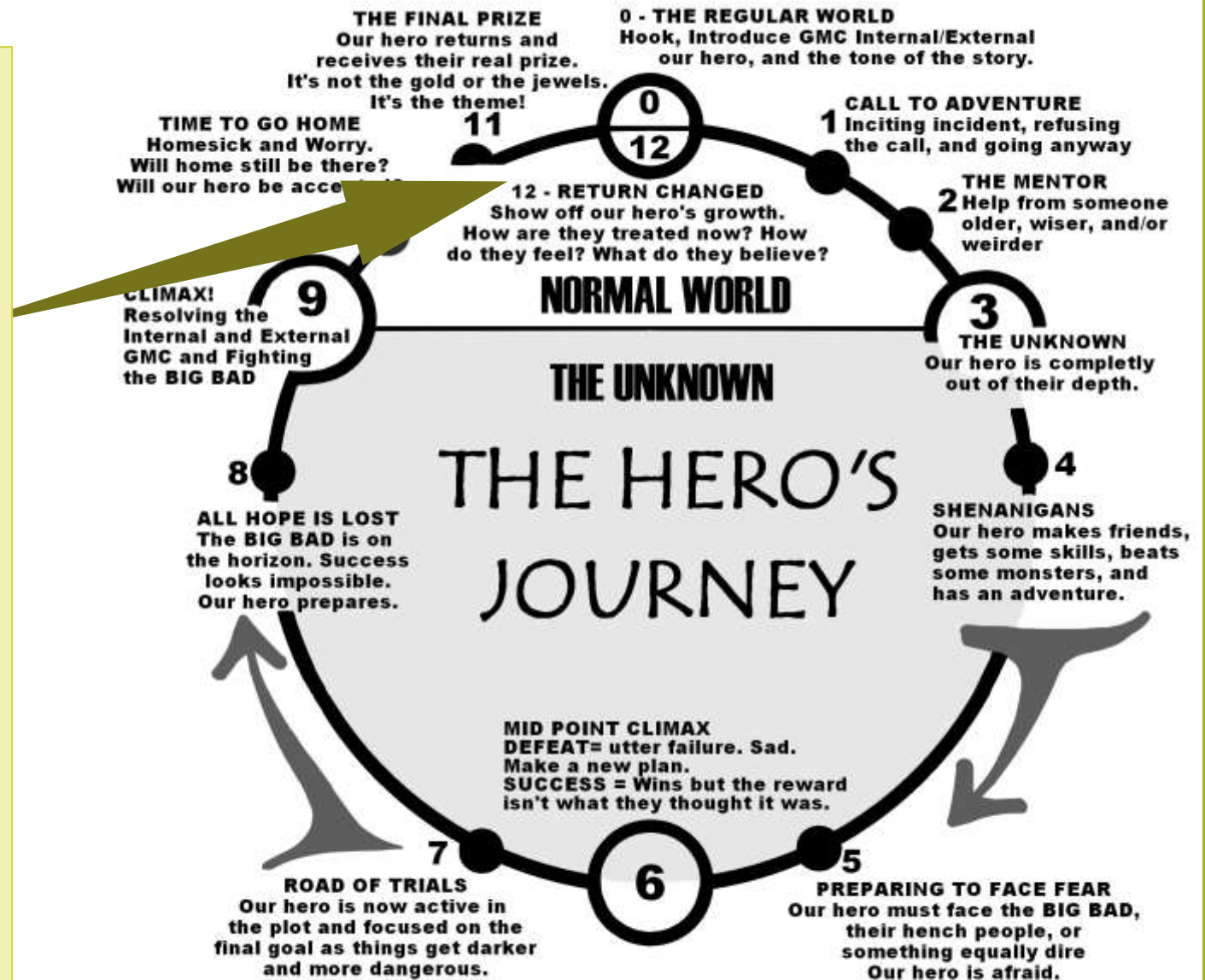
12 – RETURN CHANGED

As your character finally arrives at the place they called (or now call) home we show their growth. We show how or if they fit in.

Were their fears realized?

How do they show how they have changed to others?

This can be a mirror of the opening scene – this way the reader can directly compare the way the character was and the way the character is now.



MULTIPLE LEARNING METHODS

FIVE ways to use the plot, world, and character resources with your students.

CLASS COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING



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Work as a class to create a story while the Instructor leads the way and becomes the storyteller.

GROUP COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Put the class into small groups and have them help with each part of the story.

This is similar to Class Collaborative Storytelling except instead of asking individuals for input, small groups create the input.



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INDEPENDENT GROUP STORY WRITING



This style has the small groups each creating their own story together and writing it out. Each student will be in charge of various parts, which, when put together and edited, will make a whole story.

INDEPENDENT SHORT STORY



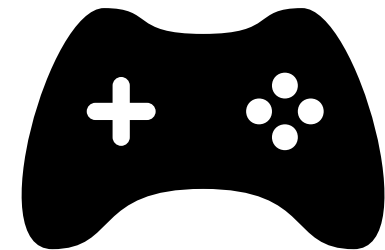
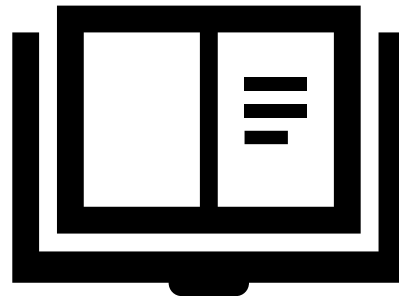
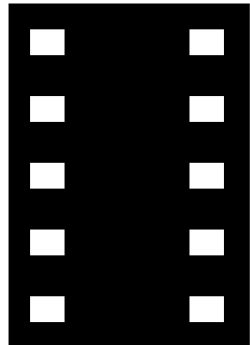
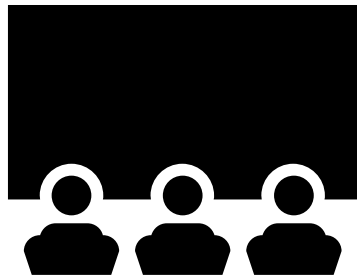
Here we have each student write their own story using the resources.

A few ways to keep your students on track:

1. Go through the resources by using oral storytelling to go through the Class Collaborative storytelling as an example.
2. Make each part of the writing of the story timed. Give students time to discuss and plan and then get them to write. 10-15 minutes per section should be enough to complete the first draft in two to three classes.

REFERENCE FOR DISCOVERY

Once your students understand how a plot arc and character arc work, what a climax looks like, and how internal and external GMC operate. You can get your class to identify these parts in various media that they watch, read, or play. And if things don't exactly match up, you can ask them why they think that happened and if they think the choices the author made worked.



THE AWCS AND YOU

How our writing centre can help you and
your students.

FOR TEACHERS

We have lots of programming to help you become the teacher and person you want to be!

- Workshops
- Classes
- Literary Events
- Presentations
- Social events
- Open mics
- Drop in programs
- And beginner or advanced writing classes.

FOR CLASSROOMS

We can come to you in person or online! We have workshops for kids Kindergarten to Grade 12 in all the humanities. And not only do these programs align with curriculum, they already have both learning outcomes and curriculum touch points for each grade on the booking sheet, making it easy for you to get our visit approved.

We have

- Single class
- Half day
- Full day
- And residencies available for your students.

Don't see what you need? Ask us and we can develop a program for you.
School can't afford the fee? Let us know and we can try to work something out.

We are here to spread the love of writing and storytelling with your students!

FOR SCHOOLS

We offer PD Days for groups of teachers or support instructors, at your place or ours, to help you pick up the skills you need to make you confident in front of your class. We will not only give you techniques but also resources that you can use and reuse year to year.

FOR KIDS AND TEENS

The Alexandra Writers' Centre has a vibrant extra curricular program as well as a wide ranging summer schedule and short online workshops. We also hold events and have a youth writing retreat to help young writers form a community and make friends with other young writers. We offer special projects like documentary making, or collaborative book publishing. So if you know an aspiring or even seasoned youth writer, send them our way.

HAVE STRUGGLING STUDENTS?

The Alexandra Writers Centre' has a tutoring program for youth, post secondary, and adults who need a bit of help. Our instructors can get kids and adults struggling with the humanities on the right track through homework help and skill building.

The logo for the Alexandra Writers' Centre Society (AWWCS) is contained within a white rounded rectangle. The letters 'A', 'W', and 'S' are rendered in a dark teal, serif font. The letter 'V' is replaced by three stylized books of varying heights and shades of brown and tan. The letters 'A', 'W', and 'S' are all connected to a single dark teal horizontal bar at their base.

AWWCS

ALEXANDRA WRITERS' CENTRE SOCIETY

Three white triangles of varying sizes are arranged in a fan shape on the left side of the text.

**JOIN US AND MENTOR A
PASSION FOR WRITING**

Three white triangles of varying sizes are arranged in a fan shape on the right side of the text.

WHO WE ARE

The Alexandra Writers' Centre provides a friendly and encouraging environment for writers of all skill levels and ages. So whether you have a couple of hours or a few weeks, are a beginner or been writing for years, we have something to pique your interest.



MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



- 25% discount on classes and workshops
- 1 free visit with our Writer in Residence
- Free drop-in programs
- Guest Speakers, Author Discussions, and Members Only programs
- Free access to our Literary Salon

J. MICHAEL FAY SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Based on the philosophy of writers supporting writers, the J. Michael Fay Subsidy Program is available to anyone who finds themselves in financial need.



HERE FOR TEACHERS

Flexibility is the key to success. Work with us to design a program individualized for yourself, your teachers', or your students' needs, time, and budget.

PD DAYS FOR TEACHERS AT YOUR PLACE OR OURS

Develop your literary skills in a no-fail atmosphere — then take what you've learned back to the classroom along with great resources to share.



AWCS IN THE CLASSROOM

By building students' literary toolbox, we support writing, journaling, and storytelling development from the early grades all the way to the grade 12 classroom.



GROW A PASSION FOR WRITING

With so many after-school programs to choose from, as well as summer camps, workshops, and events, we help youth grow a passion for writing.

JOIN US TODAY

SCAN ME



@AlexandraWriters



@AlexandraWritersCentreSociety



@AlexWriters

**Thank You For
Participating!**

ANY QUESTIONS?

**ENTER TO WIN
A FREE ADULT WORKSHOP**



Come for the writing, stay for the community
www.alexandrawriters.org | info@alexandrawriters.org