

## Introduction to Study Guides

Keepers of the Field is unique in that it may be read as three different books. It may be read simply as an adventure story; the chronicles of a man doing a daring thing and surviving in the wilderness. It is a story much like a Jack London tale or Into the Wilderness (albeit with a more positive ending). Looking at Keepers of the Field as an adventure story is much like Bilbo Baggins “there and back again” tale in The Hobbit which is found again at the beginning of The Lord of the Rings.

Another way to consider this novel is as The Hero’s Journey. Comparing and contrasting Keepers of the Field with the classic format of the journey of the hero will bring a deeper understanding and appreciation of the work of the author and the journey and tale of Charlie Smithson.

Yet a third way to approach this novel is as a spiritual journey. A study guide is provided if this focus is chosen. Of course, the novel may be read as both a spiritual and heroic journey, as the paths and experiences often overlap. Looking at Keepers of the Field in these ways will greatly enhance your experience of the novel.

The Hero's Journey  
Summary of the steps by Joseph Campbell.

1. The Ordinary World: Here the person is introduced to the audience. S/he does not know his personal potential or calling. (I plan to put questions in these categories, such as: What evidence is given by the author that Charlie is just an ordinary kid? What do we know about his family? What do we know about his life away from the baseball field? When do we get a glimmer that Charlie may be a little more "special" than the rest of the town?) I just want to get these categories down and then go back to do the questions.)
2. Call to Adventure: The call to adventure is the point in a person's life when he is first given notice that everything is going to change, whether they know it or not. (Does this happen on the baseball field? Does Charlie even understand what Moses tells him? Or does this happen when the Field Book falls through the mail slot 10+years later?)
3. Refusal of the Call/Reluctant Hero: Often when the call is given the future hero refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy, or any range of reasons that work to hold the person in his current circumstances.
4. Meeting a Wise Mentor: Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his guide or helper appears or becomes known. (At this point, Charlie has almost died twice. The horned woman saved Charlie from hitting the deer, Moses saved Charlie from dying in the swamp. Does Charlie have more than one mentor; could he have 1 mentor and several guides?)
5. The First Threshold: This is the point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the known limits of his world and venturing into an unknown realm where the rules and limits are not known. (When do Charlie and Moses make their rules? What does the definition of time contribute to this discussion? What are Moses' rules for a proper camp? Do these help or hinder Charlie during the course of his journey?)
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies: The road of trials is a series of tests, tasks, ordeals that the person must undergo to begin his transformation. Often the person fails one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.
7. Supreme Ordeal: This is sometimes described as the person's lowest point or darkest moment. The separation has been made between the old world and old self and the potential for a new world/self. By entering this stage, the person shows his willingness to make a change, to die and become a new person. (Is this death literal or figurative? How many times does Charlie almost die? (Car, swamp, lightning,

hypothermia when boat floats away) How does each experience change Charlie? Is any one experience more important than any other? Why?

8. Revisiting the Mentor: The person revisits the teachings of an old mentor or meets and learns from a new mentor and subsequently returns to the path he started on. (Does this happen to Charlie? When? Is there a new mentor?)
9. Return with New Knowledge. The trick in returning is to retain the wisdom gained on the quest, to integrate that wisdom into a human life, and then maybe figure out how to share the wisdom with the rest of the world. This is usually extremely difficult. Just as the hero may need guides and assistants to set out on the quest, often times he must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring them back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded or weakened by the experience. (When we leave Charlie at the end of this book, he is heading somewhere, but we don't know where. Does this make a difference?)
10. Seizing the Sword (or Prize): Here the hero confronts and defeats old enemies with the new power and knowledge gained. He is able to overthrow or defeat the opponent, (Is Charlie's opponent internal or external? Can it be both? Does it matter?)
11. Resurrection: The old self dies physically or spiritually and moves beyond the normal human state. (Moses, Job and the Shaman have all moved beyond the Norman human state.) This is a god-like state where the hero acknowledges his new stature. Another way of looking at this step is that it is a period of rest, peace and fulfillment before the hero begins the return.
12. Return with the Elixir (potion or medicine): The return with the elixir is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step, since in many myths the elixir is like a plant, or potion or medicine that supports immortality. For a human hero, it means achieving a balance between the material and spiritual world. There is freedom to live and freedom from the fear of death. This is sometimes referred to as "living in the moment".