

The Descent into the Underworld: Analyzing the Heroic Journey in Dungeons and Dragons

In the movie *Dungeons and Dragons*, the heroes go on a big quest, and the part where they go into the underworld is probably the most important part of the movie. The scene is in the middle of the movie, but it also feels like it's the movie's heart because this is where they finally realize who they really are. They are not just fighting - they are facing their fears and learning from them. The descent into the caves is cool cinematically, but it also has a meaning that the movie doesn't say out loud. Instead, the effect the descent has on characters is shown through action and emotion. You can also see it in the scenes where our heroes have to make choices.

First of all, the subterranean scenes are literally located underground. Our characters have to make this impressive descent to the place where the scary creatures and shadows dwell and where other mortals don't walk. It reads not just as a physical place. It's like a metaphor - they are not going somewhere, they are going inside themselves, if that makes sense. If we take classical stories as an example, the hero in these stories will always leave their normal life behind or go on some kind of quest or a mission to retrieve what belongs to them or finally understand who they really are. Think of it as a confrontation with the self. I believe the movie shows it really well.

The group of heroes in *Dungeons and Dragons* is like this classic team with different backgrounds. You have a bard who is this massive talker but does not believe in himself and is deep down afraid of his own actions. He tries to hide the insecurities behind his cynical sense of humor and his jokes, but the viewers see that this is a shield that he uses when he does not want to confront what is really in front of him. He had a lot going on in his past, and now he has to face the consequences of his actions. There is also a warrior woman who does not belong in her tribe and wants to find a home where she will not be judged. She feels guilty for a lot of stuff and needs people to understand that strength is not the only quality that defines her.

We also meet the shapeshifter who does not trust humans and thinks every person has bad intentions. She did not want to join the quest at first, but the heroes convinced her that their mission was to overthrow a bad guy and restore justice, and only then she agreed. The shapeshifter is moody, skeptical, overly suspicious, and thinks that humans do nothing but harm each other for their personal gain. She has to overcome her biases on this journey and needs to stop assuming things about people before they show their true colors. We also have a wizard who thinks he is a failure as a magician because he has only been doing cheap tricks in the past. His name is Simon, and though he is very powerful and has talents, his refusal to trust his abilities makes him appear weaker than he is.

All of these people have something in common. It's the issues that they need to confront, and the underworld seems like the best place to do it. It is the place where each and every one of these problems comes to the surface, and our heroes have to either solve it on the spot or never leave the caves again. The viewers see that the underworld is a kind of test. However, it is not the type of test that you will have in school, where a wrong answer makes no difference. Here, the wrong step can literally lead to your demise, so this is kind of like a soul test if you will. It shows you who you really are and what you are capable of. So, the characters fight magic and evil forces and traps in order to find out who they really are. However, the main fight happens not around them but in their hearts.

This is very much like the old myths and stories where the heroes go down to the underworld to overcome unseen forces and come through the other side. Except this story is filled with very dangerous magic and traps that can get our heroes in trouble.

One of the most obvious parts is when the magician has to go through a mirror and he hears the voices that narrate all his past deeds and misgivings. He has to endure the voices that tell him he is not good enough and will never be as famous or legendary as his ancestors. The moment is very charged, and though there is no real fighting involved, you can see that the character is hurting based on his facial expressions alone. This is a very pivotal moment for his character development that shows that he has to accumulate his confidence and take a step forward that will make him more fearless and trusting in his own powers. When the magician finally punches the shadowy figures that whisper about his failures, he is rewarded with them melting away and revealing that these were his own fears and insecurities that he was dealing with, not some forgotten figures of the past. After this, the character becomes unstoppable, showing us as the viewers that sometimes, you have to face your inner demons rather than hide from them. Also, it is a very definitive “hero” moment for him.

The shapeshifter comes up with a clever plan on how to overcome a series of obstacles the heroes are faced with. It is with her help that the group has a narrow escape. At the end of the journey, she realizes that she was wrong to mistrust humans and rekindles a sense of hope regarding the future of her race and the elves in general. She is no longer a loner who is too afraid to be a part of the team. She has respect and admiration for her new friends and views them as her new family. The wizard messes up while they are in the underworld but then quickly comes back on track when he is faced with a decision that can help the group traverse the caves. He discovers an ancient magical artifact disguised as a walking stick and helps our heroes get to the other side using the artifact. Thus, he proves that he can be useful to the team and that he has his own hidden talents and depths.

The movie does a great job with this whole dynamic. It is not boring, it is not one-sided, and it definitely adds to the tension of the film. Some people are opposed to simple tropes like light vs darkness, but I believe that most tropes work well when done right. In Dungeons and Dragons, the classic hero trope is shown beautifully. Yes, it is very simple at its core (sometimes you have to enter darkness to find light), but at the same time, it is very powerful and resonates well with the audience. The movie has an excellent way of combining sad scenes with funny scenes, and the pacing is awesome. The descent into the underworld is also a bonding moment for the group because this is when they realize that they have to work together if they want to achieve something.

It is also nice that the movie does not try to explain everything. It lets you feel things and guess what the characters are thinking instead of spelling it out for the viewers and “helping” them understand the character’s motivations. There is not too much talking. The characters’ internal dialogue is expressed through their actions, which is a lot better than someone saying, “This character feels sad because X, Y, Z” as the story’s omniscient narrator. The point of view presented by the movie works well within the plot because it’s so simple yet powerful. The characters change and become heroes. They embrace their fears instead of hiding from them. Their journey is about trust and becoming their real selves. Even though it’s fantasy with magic and monsters, it’s really about people and what

they go through to find what values they represent. This is the reason the hero's journey to the underworld never gets old and becomes one of the best parts of the entire movie.