

”DOG LEGENDS” BOOK SERIES-THE HERO ARCHETYPE IN EMOTIONAL EDUCATION AND THE FORMATION OF THE CHILD AS MORAL BEING

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Abstract: *This paper examines the “Dog Legends” book series as an educational narrative intervention with formative potential in moral and emotional development of children. Through an interpretative qualitative analysis, I investigate the structure and coherence of these stories with hero’s myth (Campbell), narrative archetypes (Pearson), theories about meaning (Frankl), the child-animal relationship (Melson), and moral development (Killen & Smetana). These canine characters become symbolic figures through which the child crosses stages like fear, hesitation, moral choice and inner transformation. The story functions as a symbolic space for reflection and building meaning, in an accessible and profound emotional framework. The results suggest the applicability of the series in contexts like moral education, counseling, and personal growth, offering a narrative alternative to the directive models. “Dog Legends” proposes a pedagogy of accompaniment, not correction in which the child is recognized as a hero of their own becoming, not a passive recipient of norms.*

Keywords: *hero’s journey; archetypes; moral development; dog legends; narrative therapy.*

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to explore the way the narrative series *Dog Legends* function as a symbolic educational instrument, capable of supporting the moral and emotional formation of the child.

The primary question of this article that guides this analysis is: How does the narrative structure and the symbolic elements from *Dog Legends* align with psychological, moral, and identity validated models?

For this purpose, this study proposes to follow these specific objectives:

- To identify the correspondence between the hero's myth (Campbell) and the narrative road of the canine characters;
- To analyze the archetypal function of the characters through the six archetypes model proposed by Pearson and their educational relevance;
- To investigate the moral formative potential and self-reflection of the child in relation to symbolic and affective dimension of the story;
- To highlight the relevance of the stories for a pedagogy of meaning, centered on co-creation and not correction.

Children's education cannot be reduced to transfer of information or behavioral learning. The child is a moral being in becoming, who understands the world through symbols, emotions, and significant relationships. Even in the first stages of development, the child searches for meaning- not just rules- and is being formed through experiences, not only the information that is passed towards them. This perspective imposes an upgrading to narrative and symbolic education, in which stories are not an auxiliary means, but a space for identity and moral formation.

Dog Legends is an original narrative project developed by the author, also available as a published book series for children on Amazon and Barnes & Noble. This project proposes this kind of approach: a series of visual stories, built around some archetypal canine characters, who function as symbolic references for emotional and relational development of the child. Inspired by the archetype journey of the hero formulated by Campbell (2004), this project integrates fundamental concepts as moral development (Piaget, 1965; Smetana & Killen, 2008), the logotherapy of the meaning (Frankl, 1984), biophilia theory (Melson, 2001), but also narrative therapy (Fleming, 2003), in an interdisciplinary narrative formula which values both the affective dimension, but also the formative potential of image, voice and symbolic identification.

The characters - Rey (empathy and safety), Ryo (courage and justice), Shiba (vulnerability that transforms itself in power), and Algo, a degu squirrel (play and creative resilience) - become, in the eyes of the child, not just story characters, but affective presences with inner guidance value. Each child can encounter in them a part of the self- fear to make mistakes, the desire to protect, the shame of a vulnerability, the need to do good, but also to be seen. In this way, the story creates a safe space for reflection and transformation, where the child's emotions gain language, and behaviors become meaningful choices.

The series is accompanied by visual and audio materials- animated illustrations in Pixar style, the voice of characters available online on

social media channels, symbolic worksheets and activities for guided reflection- applied until present moment in personal development groups. Each story is designed as a narrative journey that reflects the stages of the hero myth: call to adventure, the refusal of the call, meeting the mentor, crossing the threshold, reward, the road back, return with the elixir.

This article proposes a qualitative analysis of these stories, through a symbolic and educational perspective. It aims to highlight the way in which the narrative, when constructed with archetypal depth and affective anchorage, can support the formation of the child as a moral being, capable of empathy, reflection, and conscious choice.

Literature Review

The emotional and moral training of the child requires more than the delivery of rules and cognitive instruction. *Dog Legends* project is based on a narrative and symbolic educational vision, theoretically grounded on multiple scientific sources relevant to the field of developmental psychology, moral education, meaning and purpose philosophy, and narrative therapy. In the center of this approach is the idea that story can be a space for inner formation, and the characters-archetypal figures- become references for the child in the process of identification and transformation.

The Hero Myth as Narrative Map of Becoming

Joseph Campbell (2004) introduced the concept of “monomyth” or the “hero journey”, a universal narrative structure identified in mythologies from around the world. This structure reflects a symbolic process of inner transformation, divided in three main stages: departure, initiation, return.

Departure: The hero lives in an ordinary world and receives “a call to adventure”, a calling to the unknown. Initially, the hero may refuse this call out of fear of change. However, the reunion with a mentor or a guide, encourages the hero to cross the threshold into an unknown world, marking the beginning of transformation. According to one perspective, as described by Hartman, D., and Zimberoff, D. (2009), the call to adventure involves identifying the ego, the true self, and the soul, and it often requires leaving behind the familiar and traditional to find their own resources.

Initiation: In this stage, the hero is confronted with different tests and challenges which test their courage, wisdom, and determination. These trials symbolize the confrontation with unknown aspects of self and contribute to personal development and growth. Jungian perspectives suggest that this stage involves confronting their shadows, working

through inner masculine/feminine elements (anima/animus), and encountering the Mana-Personality as described by Hartman, D., and Zimberoff, D. (2009).

Return: After the hero obtains a profound insight or an “elixir” of knowledge, the hero returns to the ordinary world. This return is often accompanied by difficulties, but the hero brings valuable gifts for the community, reflecting on their inner transformation and contributing to the collective good.

Davis and Weeden (2009) propose the implementation of this structure in the educational context, suggesting that the learning process can be shaped after the hero’s journey. They highlight the role of a teacher not as a “wise” who offers final answers, but as trickster- a figure who provokes and supports simultaneously, empowering critical thinking and self-exploration. This approach encourages students to leave their comfort zone, to confront uncertainty and to develop their own perspectives. This way, the hero myth serves not only as narrative structure, but also as a pedagogical frame that facilitates personal and intellectual growth, promoting a profound and transformative learning.

Moral Development Theory

Jean Piaget (1965) was a pioneer in the study of moral development of children, highlighting the transition from heteronomous morality, in which the rules are perceived as absolute and imposed by the authority, to autonomous morality, characterized by understanding that the rules can be negotiated and adapted according to context and mutual relations. This evolution reflects the ever-growing capacity of children to appreciate the intentions behind the actions and to develop a sense of justice grounded on cooperation and equity.

Later, the studies of Killen and Smetana (2008), extended this perspective, highlighting the crucial role of emotions and social context in the formation of moral judgment. They argue that moral development is not a linear process, but one which involves dynamic interactions between moral judgment, the experienced emotions, and social influences. This way, children learn to navigate the moral dilemmas through experiences that require empathy, reflection, and coping to different social situations.

This integrative approach emphasizes that moral development is deeply anchored in the daily life experiences of children, where emotions and reasoning are blended in order to guide ethical behaviors and responsible decisions.

Logotherapy and the Will to Meaning

Viktor E. Frankl (1984), the father of logotherapy, states that “the will to meaning” is the central motivation of the human being. According to this vision, the human being is not completed by satisfying their instincts, but by finding a personal meaning in their life, even in extreme conditions. In this theoretical frame, education is not just a transfer of information, but a process of discovering the significance of one’s own existence.

Applied in an educational context, logotherapy can support the formation of the child not as an object of the system, but as an active subject in search of meaning. The child is encouraged to interrogate their own emotions, relationships, and experiences, to find coherence and inner direction, not only to memorize or reproduce information. Frankl considered that the human being can’t be taught without an axiological direction, without the question “why?”, which stands at the root of conscious choices.

In logotherapy, the meaning is not imposed, but discovered, and the process of discovery takes place in an authentic way only when the educator positions themselves not as a holder of the absolute truth, but a companion in an existential process. The educator creates contexts which call for reflection, questioning, and contacting the profound self. Therefore, the educator’s role is not to give meaning, but to support the child in their own search.

Frankl highlights that the meaning can be found in three main ways: through action (work, contribution), through relation (love, togetherness), and through the attitude towards suffering. Even in front of adversity and loss, the child can learn to keep their dignity, to transform an experience into an inner resource, when sustained to see a higher purpose. This way, education becomes a form of training for an existence with meaning, not only performance.

In conclusion, logotherapy offers an educational framework centered on the person, in which the child is seen as a being in the search of meaning, and the story, the symbol, and the relation are pathways through which this meaning can be accessed and integrated.

Biophilia and the Relation Child-Animal

The concept of biophilia was introduced by Edward O. Wilson in the ‘80s, being defined as a human inborn tendency to form emotional connections with nature and other forms of life. According to an analysis conducted by Krčmářová (2009), this hypothesis was formulated on the background of an anthropological and evolutionary need: the connection with nature would represent a structural element for social and mental balance of the human being. Therefore, biophilia

is not just a personal preference, but a potential formative factor in education, morality, and the construction of self.

In the child's education, this connection can be harnessed to cultivate empathy, responsibility, and connection with the live environment. This way, the relation child-animal gains a symbolic and pedagogical significance: the animal becomes a non-verbal presence who can facilitate emotional self-regulation, accountability, and reflection upon the other.

Melson (2001), in her volume "Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children", extensively explores these dynamics. She shows that the presence of animals in the life of a child has a direct impact on emotional and social development: it contributes to emotional regulation, decreasing stress and developing compassion. Children who interact constantly with animals, as play partners, or symbolic contexts, manifest a higher degree of empathy and responsibility in human relations.

Melson also highlights that animals can become a symbolic mirror for the child, a non-judgmental presence that helps the child to understand his or her own feelings, to express and regulate behaviors. In an educational context, this relation can be leveraged not only for forming social abilities, but also to build a healthy relationship with the environment and self. The child learns, in a concrete and emotional way, that protecting, listening, and paying attention to others are gestures of meaning, not mandatory actions.

Thus, biophilia is not merely an ecological theory, but a fundamental hypothesis for relational education and moral training through live and symbolic means. In this frame, the animal becomes a silent pedagogical partner, with a force of influence often more profound than the words of an adult.

The Story and the Narrative Identity

In the narrative paradigm, the personal identity is conceived as a dynamic construction, shaped by the stories individuals tell about themselves and their own experience. Fleming's article (2003), based on White and Epston theory, highlights the idea that these narrations do not reflect reality, but structure it. When a person internalizes a "dominant" story, marked by failure, deficiency, or exclusion, the entire perception towards self can become limited, rigid, and blocked.

The process of narrative transformation proposed by Fleming consists of identification and enabling of some experiences which contradict the dominant story. These "unique results"- facts, emotions or ignored relations- offer the foundation for rewriting an alternative narration, richer and more congruent with the real potential of the person.

Therefore, the story becomes an environment of reconstruction of the identity, not just a passive reflection of the past.

A central element of this process is externalization: the problem is separated from the person and treated as a cultural or relational discourse. This approach reduces self-blaming and opens up space for decision, reinterpretation, and choice. Instead of a dependent relationship towards authority, a reflexive process arises, guided by questions, dialogue, and conscious presence.

This theory has direct implications in the educational field. Story is not only a didactic support, but also a training framework. When the child is encouraged to express the inner narration, to examine and rephrase it, the educational process becomes one of profound learning and transformation. The teacher is not just a transmitter of content, but an active witness of an identity becoming. Thus, learning turns into a reconnection act with the self and affirmation of the possibility of change.

Methodology

This paper is based on an interpretative qualitative approach, focused on the symbolic analysis of the narrative universe of “Dog Legends”. Its purpose is to highlight the internal coherence between the structure of the stories, the character’s functions, and educational and psychological theories previously discussed. The proposed analysis follows the way the texts build a profound learning experience through archetypes, hero’s myth, and the symbolic relation between animal and child.

The methodological approach is of an hermeneutic type, specific to the qualitative research which proposes to explore the layers of meaning of a narrative content through its correlation with the relevant theoretical frame. To this end, the *Dog Legends* universe is analyzed not only as a corpus of stories for children, but as a coherent narrative system, articulated on symbolic and formative dimensions, in which the characters, themes, and conflicts follow more than a narrative line: they activate an inner process of learning, moral reflection, and identity reconstruction.

This qualitative review was constructed through a transversal interpretative lecture of all the volumes, following in a systematic manner:

- The presence and the succession of the stages of hero’s myth, according to the model of Joseph Campbell;
- The archetypal roles attributed to the characters and the relations between them;

- Types of moral and emotional conflicts activated in the narration;
- The presence of recurrent symbols (magical objects; initiatic spaces, support figures; transformative obstacles);
- Manner in which the story incorporates educational dimensions such as empathy, self-reflection, courage, care, gratitude, or decision-making.

This initiative doesn't assume a quantitative or comparative content analysis, but a unifying lecture that allows the shaping of a symbolic frame of interpretation, in which each story contributes to a larger system of meaning. Thereby, recurrent meanings are sought that cross the volumes, not the episodic particularities or style differences.

In the center of the analysis is the idea that "Dog Legends" function as a symbolic construction intended for the formation of the child, not only through message, but through form, structure, and guided relation with the reader. The story is built as an affective and moral initiation, in which the child is encouraged to identify, feel, choose, understand and transform oneself. This perspective is sustained by the theories presented in the above section: the hero myth (Campbell), logotherapy (Frankl), biophilia (Melson), and also the narrative approach of identity (Fleming).

The result of this method is an integrated setting of understanding of the series "Dog Legends", as a narrative educational tool, in which each element - story, character, image, conflict, symbol- participates in the construction of the formative transformative process. The characters are not only protagonists of some adventures, but symbolic architects through which the child explores safety, fear, guilt, trust, gratefulness, forgiveness and belonging.

Epistemological Fundamentals

This research is founded on the hermeneutic paradigm, in which the text is not only treated as an inert object of observation, but as a dynamic space of meaning, where the interpretation plays a constitutive role. In this approach, the meaning is not "extracted" from the story, but co-created in a live relation between text, reader, and the cultural, affective and theoretical context in which it is situated. As Laverty (2003) emphasizes in the hermeneutics of heideggerian and gadamerian inspiration, knowledge is a way of being, not merely a cognitive act; it is influenced by our language, historicity, and pre-understanding, and the interpretation is always a fusion between perspectives, a dialogue between what we bring and what the text opens.

Applying this framework on the stories from “Dog Legends” series, the methodological process implies a symbolic and stratified lecture of the narrative universe, where the means are not predefined, but emerge from the relations between characters, conflicts, and implied values. The story is interpreted as a cultural and educational construction, which activates profound formative trials: identity formation, emotional awareness, moral dilemmas confrontation, and ethical markers internalization.

In the hermeneutic direction, the elimination of the subjectivity of the researcher is not intended, but the reflective assumption of its position - with the self-knowledge of their childhood, symbol, and formation through story. The analysis takes place inside the hermeneutic circle, through a continuous movement between the entire series of “Dog Legends” and recurrent details (themes, archetypes, symbols), constantly coming back over the text with a higher interpretive depth. Therefore, this methodology is not based on the extraction of some universal “truths”, but on the exploration of possible entendres, always contextualized, that can support an education towards meaning, empathy, and inner reflection. The story, in this epistemological framework, becomes an environment for existential transformation, in which the child is called to re-find and re-interpret themselves.

The Mythological Model: The Hero’s Journey

” Dog Legends” series follow in a symbolic and age-appropriate manner, the mythological model of the hero’s journey, as it was formulated by Joseph Campbell (2004). This universal structure, known as ‘monomyth’, includes a succession of stages through which a character starts from an ordinary world, is called to adventure, crosses trials, learns lessons and returns transformed, bringing a gift to the community.

In “Dog Legends”, this journey is not lived by the children in a direct manner, but through the dog- protagonists, who function as symbolic mirrors of the child. Each adventure of the dogs is in fact a metaphor of an internal process through which the child is accompanied in order to reflect upon some universal themes such as: fear, shame, courage, friendship, forgiveness. Through this narrative mechanism, the story becomes a safe space for identification, where the child can re-find themselves without being exposed, and learn without being corrected. The correspondents between the hero’s journey and the symbolic journey in “Dog Legends” can be summed up as follows:

The Mythological Stage	Reflection in Dog Legends
The Call to Adventure	The dog-character confronts a disturbing situation: a moral conflict, a heavy emotion.
Refusal of the Call	Hesitation, withdrawal or shame of the character, who doesn't feel ready for the mission
Meeting with the Mentor	A guide shows up- often, another character from Dog Legends universe- who offers support.
Crossing the Threshold	The character symbolically accepts the calling and crosses in the unknown (forest, conflict, etc.)
Tests, Allies, and Enemies	The adventure is carried out with obstacles, friends, symbolic challenges (rejection, wandering)
Approach to the Inmost Cave	An identity crisis moment: self-doubt, confrontation of a profound emotion.
The Ordeal	Inner transformation: acceptance, moral choice, new perspective
Reward	The character discovers something essential: an inner truth, a value, a wisdom.
The Road Back	The character returns in the world with a gift: an attitude, a lesson, a gesture that repairs or unites.
Return with the Elixir	Their example or action inspires and transforms the world around.

Table 1. Correspondents between Hero's Myth and Dog Legends' Journeys

These stages are not didactically exhibited in the narration, but integrated in an organic, symbolic, emotional form, adapted to the comprehension of the child. It is relevant that the structure of the myth

offers a profound framework for the construction of meaning, in which the child is a witness of becoming and through identification, they become a part of it.

This approach allows the story to simultaneously function as an esthetique narration and a formative tool, in which the dog is more than a character: is the projective figure of the child in search of answers and belonging. Through this symbolic crossing of the hero's journey, the child is accompanied in a thoroughly educational process, built on understanding, compassion, and inner transformation.

The Characters Archetypes in Pearson's Model

The Model of the six archetypes developed by Carol S. Pearson in "The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By" (2015), offers a symbolic perspective over the major stages of the inner journey. Each archetype expresses an existential need and a lesson for psychological education, reflecting a way of being in the world, a form of confrontation with the self and the relation between individuality and community.

Applying this grid to the main characters from "Dog Legends", a profound coherence is being shaped between the narrative structure and the symbolic dimension of each archetype.

Shiba- The Orphan

The Orphan Archetype, in Pearson's vision, is the first form of inner growth, in which the child discovers that the world is not completely safe. It's the stage of illusion loss and pain confrontation, but also the beginning of the search for meaning, support, and belonging. The Orphan lives a rupture- most of the time an emotional one- that leaves behind a wound and a deep need to heal.

Shiba reflects this archetype in her entire narrative structure. It's the character that comes from injury, abandonment, uncertainty. But, it doesn't remain in the position of victim. Its entire becoming is a symbolic passage of the journey from rejection to retrieval. Shiba searches, hesitates, approaches with fear, but gradually learns to trust. As an Orphan, Shiba embodies the inner voice of the child who needs to be seen, accepted, and welcomed - and who, through their vulnerability, develops force and insight.

Ryo- The Warrior

The Warrior is the one who declares boundaries, engages himself in fight, and learns to sustain a cause. In the Pearson model, the Warrior is not aggressive, instead is the symbolic figure of moral courage, loyalty, and actions consistent with the values. The Warrior undertakes the mission to protect what is important and to face injustice.

Ryo is that voice. Not only through its past as a former detective dog, but through its clear positions towards choice, loyalty, truth, and justice. Ryo is that character that helps the child learn how to be firm without being harsh, how to protect without control, how to affirm their values without enforcing.

Rey- The Altruist

The Archetype of Altruist is the one who shares. But not anyhow: in its evolved form, the Altruist knows how to offer without canceling itself, to take care of others without sacrificing itself in a destructive way. Pearson shows that this archetype is often mistaken with obedience, but in reality, is a sign of affective maturing and relational responsibility.

Rey is the clear expression of this archetype in a balanced manner. It doesn't "save" the story, but supports it silently. Rey is there with kindness, presence, and a hushed voice. It gives direction without forcing, hugs without suffocating, inspire without asking. Rey is the stable figure that brings that kind of love meant to bring safety.

Algo- The Innocent

The Innocent, in Pearson's model, is not the naive child, but the child with essential belief for the better, who maintains hope even when things become difficult. The Innocent sees the world with new eyes, has curiosity, and the capacity to forgive. It is a vital archetype, because it protects joy and affectionate cleaning that any child needs to balance.

Algo, the degu squirrel, is the Innocent through excellence. Not only is it playful and unpredictable, but also brings light where others bring gravity. It doesn't confront, but asks. It doesn't teach morals, but seeks wonder. In the story, Algo is the energy that breaks tension and restores the affectionate rhythm. It is the ludic voice, the authentic one, of the child who can still believe.

The characters from "Dog Legends" are not simple narrative roles, but stages of an inner journey lived in mirroring with the child-reader. Each archetype identified by Pearson finds a correspondent in these symbolic figures, which offers these series a profound formative consistency.

Results and Discussion

Results

The qualitative interpretative analysis of the stories from "Dog Legends" series highlighted a profound narrative coherence between the internal structure of the stories and the mythological model of hero's journey established by Joseph Cambell (2004). Without following a rigid narrative template, the characters are going through

recurrent symbolic stages that can be correlated with ten moments of the monomyth: call to adventure, the refusal, meeting with the mentor, crossing the threshold, trials, crisis, transformation, reward, the return, and the impact on the community.

Each main character - Shiba, Rey, Ryo, and Algo- was built as a symbolic figure meant to accompany the child-reader in an inner process.

The results of this symbolic analysis show that these archetypal figures are spread consistently throughout the series, creating an internal balance between action, reflection, vulnerability, and wisdom. Pearson's archetypes- The Orphan, Warrior, Altruist, and Innocent- can be found in the depth of each character, sustaining the narrative and formative process.

Discussion

The "Dog Legends" series functions as an integrated narrative system, in which mythological and symbolic structure is at the service of an education oriented towards meaning, reflection, and emotional development. The fact that these characters are not designed after self-righteous stereotypes, but through an inner transformative dynamic, allows the child-reader to reach them not with fear, but empathy and mirroring.

This correspondence between myth and formation sustains the allegations from the literature review regarding the educational value of the myth as a symbolic map of growth (Campbell, 2004; Pearson, 2015; Frankl, 1984). Moreover, the narrative analysis reveals the fact that the "Dog Legends" series do not propose moral lessons, but create narrative spaces of symbolic encounters between the child and their inner self, emotion and meaning, conflict and transformation.

As opposed to traditional didactic stories, "Dog Legends" value the archetypes as bridges between identity and becoming. For that purpose, dogs become more than characters: they become projective voices of the child, figures that carry within fears, wishes, choices, transformations. They allow the child to live from within the story, without feeling fixed, but accompanied.

This narrative construction, alongside visual images and gentle emotional tonality, creates assumptions for an interdisciplinary educational initiative that can be valued in contexts of personal development, counseling, moral education, and therapeutic storytelling.

Educational Applications and Pedagogical Relevance

The *Dog Legends* series are not limited to an aesthetic and symbolic function, but offer a concrete framework of educational intervention

and personal development. The stories and the characters can be successfully integrated in formal and nonformal educational contexts and, especially in activities centered on the development of socio-emotional competencies, psycho-pedagogical counseling, moral, and narrative education.

To this day, these stories have been applied in personal development groups enabled by psychologists for children between 6 and 11 years old. Each group encounter had a theme- friendship, courage, vulnerability, belonging - and combined guided lecture with a wide range of expressive and symbolic activities.

Every meeting included:

- Guided lecture of the story through animated videos of *Dog Legends* (the voice of the characters, Pixar Style illustrations)
- The identification of the resource-character that mirrors the child or the mentor;
- Drawing of self “hero journey”;
- Games for identifying fear and reframing it into a symbolic resource;
- “Hero’s Anthem”- generative music through artificial intelligence, used as emotional support;
- Questions for narrative reflection (examples: “What do you think that being a good friend means?”, “Why do you think that Rey decided to search for Cami’s necklace all night?”, “What would you have done if you were instead of Rey and had to help a friend?”)
- Creative group activities, such as creating a collective story in which each child has their own mythological role.

An example of a group activity was the collaborative story in which each child imagined their own internal myth- a symbolic road of courage, trust or forgiveness, and together, as a team, alongside Rey, they supported a vulnerable character, like a lonely hedgehog, in his way to find friends. Therefore, children not just identify themselves individually with an archetype, but they become part of a symbolic community of heroes who cooperate for healing and belonging.

This approach can easily be adapted for class-meetings, educational counseling, or psycho-pedagogical interventions, offering a solid support for cultivating life skills: empathy, emotional self-regulation, critical thinking, moral responsibility, and self-trust.

Thus, *Dog Legends* proposes not only a collection of stories, but an integrative narrative pedagogy, centered on meaning, in which the child is seen as a being in formation, with the need for understanding, feeling, and rebuilding themselves in relation with self and others.

A Symbolic Narrative Illustration: “Shiba’s Adventure” story according to hero’s myth (Campbell)

“Shiba’s Adventure” story (Motorca & Motorca, 2024) from the *Dog Legends* book series, follows the stages of the hero’s journey formulated by Joseph Campbell and reflects the dynamic of development of the child as a moral being.

Below are listed the 10 essential stages and narrative correspondences during the course of the main character:

1. The Call to Adventure

Shiba leaves the safe world of family, drawn to by a playful butterfly. This occurrence triggers the symbolic beginning of initiation - a discreet but irresistible call, to the unknown: “*Shiba saw a butterfly... She followed it... beyond the familiar place.*”

2. Refusal of the Call

Arriving in the crowded city, Shiba feels lost and scared. The first confrontation with a heavy emotion appears, longing, fear, loneliness: “*She missed her parents... Shiba whimpered softly.*” This hesitation symbolizes the natural resistance towards change and lack of emotional preparation.

3. Meeting with the Mentor

Shiba doesn’t receive direct advice, but her inner voice, woken by experience, takes the form of a symbolic guide: “*I miss my family, but I know I am brave.*” This thought becomes her inner mentor born out of pain, but fed with hope. She accesses her own resources of courage and coping.

4. Crossing the Threshold

Crossing the Threshold happens when Shiba starts to take care of herself, she finds shelter, eats from strangers, learns the unwritten rules of the city, all representing the crossing in the initiatic world of challenges.

5. Tests, Allies, and Enemies

Every day, Shiba confronts the unknown: hunger, rejection, but also gestures of kindness. These experiences become a way of learning and constructing a new identity.

6. Approach to the Inmost Cave

In a moment of profound reflection, Shiba admits that she is longing, but she chooses hope: “*Each sunrise brings a new day...I’m not just wandering. I’m on a journey.*” This revelation marks the identity crisis and at the same time the formation of a new perspective towards self.

7. The Ordeal

By helping a lost kitten, Shiba acts out of empathy. Her choice of protecting another lost soul becomes the act of moral

transformation: “*Hey there, little one... I’m with you.*” Therefore, her fear transforms into care, a sign that she has integrated what she has been living.

8. Reward

Shiba discovers that she is not weak, but capable of support, love, and healing. This knowledge of personal value becomes the inner reward of the journey.

9. The Road Back

Although she doesn’t return to her original family, Shiba walks in a world in which she feels ready. She has a new meaning, an inner map, and a valuable lesson: “*I’m on a journey to discover where I belong.*”

10. Return with the Elixir

The Elixir brought by Shiba is not physical, but symbolic: a new attitude towards life. She becomes a character able to inspire, protect, and transform. She is no longer only a lost puppy, but a symbol of gentle courage.

Conclusions

Dog Legends book series offer an original narrative frame, with profound formative value for moral, emotional, and relational development of children. The qualitative symbolic analysis presented in this paper highlights the fact that these stories faithfully follow the structure of the hero’s myth and integrate recognizable archetypes, with projective and educational function.

The canine characters, each embodying a distinctive symbolic dimension (courage, empathy, vulnerability, hope), become emotional mirrors through which the child can explore their own choices and feelings. Without imposing moralizing lessons, these stories open narrative spaces for reflection and transformation, in which the child is encouraged to discover themselves, feel, and consciously choose.

In an educational landscape often oriented towards performance and conformity, *Dog Legends* proposes a pedagogy of authenticity, meaning, symbol, and supporting. The story becomes a living formative frame in which the child is not “trained to be good”, but supported to find their own way and build a self-moral identity.

This paper supports the idea that story, when built with archetypal profoundness, affectivity, and meaning, can function as an initiatic educational space. The child not only learns about “good” and “bad”, but learns how to feel, reflect and choose with presence.

In an educational world often centered on norms, conformity, and efficiency, *Dog Legends* cultivates a pedagogy of accompanying, not correction, one in which the child is recognized as a hero of own

becoming, not only a receptor of some rules. It is a proposition of education that embraces meaning, not only performance, spirit, not only just behavior.

These conclusions sustain the fulfillment of the proposed objectives, illustrating in an integrated manner the symbolic correspondence between hero's myth, archetypal structure of characters, and the formative value of the story in moral and emotional education of the child.

Limitations of the Study

This paper is founded on a qualitative and interpretative analysis of the universe *Dog Legends*, therefore is a symbolic, subjective, and contextualist approach. Because of this, the results cannot be generalized to an entire infant population or other educational contexts, but must be understood as a proposal of a formative and exploratory framework.

Moreover, quantitative or experimental methods were not used in order to evaluate the measurable impact of the stories upon the moral and emotional growth of children. Applying the stories in personal developmental groups had an exploratory nature, and the offered interpretations reflect the researcher's perspective in the dialogue with the theories of reference and the symbolic answers of the children.

This limitation should not invalidate the process, but highlight the need for additional research - applicable, longitudinal or clinical type - in order to confirm or extend the observations presented in this article.

Conflict of Interest

The author is the creator and the co-author of the *Dog Legends* book series, which is commercially available worldwide. However, this article is qualitative and symbolic analysis of the narratives, not a promotional evaluation. The work does not include sales data, user testimonials, or marketing language. The analysis is grounded in established academic theories and is intended to contribute to the fields of moral and emotional education. No external funding or institutional sponsorship influenced the content of this manuscript.

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