

FIRST PRESENTATIONS -- AGES AND STAGES OF LIFE -- SPRING 2006

The first set of 20-25 minute presentations deal with the theme of initiation. Present the story so it sinks into the soul -- possibly telling story in stages interspersed with comments that relate the story to life. Success is determined by the **memorableness of the presentation** and the **quality of the class discussion** that the group can stimulate. Be creative -- link the archetypes to LIFE!

The classical rites of initiation deal with the youth-to-adult transition. Traditional analysis of these rites of passage see them as having **three phases**:

First, **a leave-taking** -- a going away from the familiar, the safe, the known- away from **Youth** status. Perhaps you leave family and tribe and go into the wilderness on a Vision Quest. Second, **(threshold experience)** -- in the place apart, you fast and meditate and seek to discover or extend your gifts. You see visions and dream dreams. You are changed. Third, you **return to the tribe, with gifts to share**. On your return, the elders help you to interpret what has happened. You may receive a new name. You take on new responsibilities for yourself and for units larger than yourself -- family, tribe, and the encircling world of plants and animals, rivers and mountains. You take your place as an **Adult** in a wider world.

There is some controversy as to whether these three phases also reflect women's initiatory rites. The claim is that women's identity does not involve having to separate so decisively from the mother and family unit. We shall explore this claim via the first two presentations.

Key texts for presentations will be Michael Meade's book: **MEN AND THE WATERS OF LIFE** (San Francisco: Harper, 1993); Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (eds), **BETWIXT & BETWEEN: PATTERNS OF MASCULINE AND FEMININE INITIATION** (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1987) and Sylvia Brinton Perera, **DESCENT TO THE GODDESS: A WAY OF INITIATION FOR WOMEN** (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981) -- on 2 hour reserve for PHL 343 in the Elon Library.

Additional notes on Storytelling:

The Chinese word for any **Transition/ Crisis** is written as a combination of two sub-characters -- one represents "**Danger**;" the other, "**Opportunity**." Any situation has qualities of danger AND opportunity. This paradoxical quality -- beyond conventional good/bad -- is especially important in dealing with folktales, fairy tales, and myths. When we move into "the other world," we have moved beyond a world of conventional right and wrong into a magical, mysterious realm where everything is what it is and more, where everything is both good and bad, fearful and fascinating, where ordinary moral rules are suspended and a character may be asked to kill or steal from other characters. REMEMBER: EACH OF US IS ALL THE CHARACTERS -- HUMAN, ANIMAL AND ELEMENTAL -- IN THE STORY!

For this presentation, after everyone has read the material, you will need to meet twice -- once to assign parts and discuss the telling of the tale and a second time to rehearse. Generally, you need a Master of the Story (might be two persons -- a Master of the Story and a Narrator) plus people to take the main parts -- if needed, one person can play more than one part; if not enough speaking parts, someone may represent the non-speaking elements. Note: woman can play men's roles and men, women's roles -- where appropriate or where gender of character is inessential. But be careful -- the reading/playing of parts should not become farcical unless the characters are meant to be comic.

First, let the Master of the Story "cosmicize the space" and set the tone for a listening. Then let the group tell the tale seriously, mysteriously, in ritual fashion (not lightly and trivially). Use techniques of readers' theater -- very sparse use of props, stylized clothes, etc. Think of how Bly tells a fairy story. The story may be stopped at intervals by the Master of the Story, calling for the repeat of a line, encouraging the audience to experience what has been presented, etc.

Bring to life the key metaphors and bring them into the listener's inner world. We are all the characters in the drama. **The story must speak to the heart and move the audience to deepen their lives. Avoid literalizing or psychologizing. Stay in the mystery, in the dream. At the end, take us out of the mythic time and space.** Note: The presentation will be judged on the basis of the memorability of the story and the insightfulness of the discussion.

RED GROUP -- Presentation -- on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2006 -- of the story "**The Lizard in the Fire**" (Lope, Africa) in Meade, pp. 111-134.

ORANGE GROUP -- Presentation -- on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2006 -- the **Myth of Innana** in Sylvia Brinton Perera, Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women. Monograph 94 pages.

YELLOW GROUP -- Presentation -- on Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2006 -- of story "**The Sweetness of Life**" (Ronga, Africa) in Meade, pp. 68-82."

GREEN GROUP -- Presentation -- on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2006 -- of story "**The Boy and the Half-Giantess**" (Hausa, Africa) in Meade, pp. 85-110.

BLUE GROUP -- Presentation -- on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2006 -- of RITUAL in "**Singing for Life: The Mescalero Apache Girl's Puberty Ceremony**" by Claire Farrer, Chapter 14, (pp. 239-263) in Betwixt and Between.

FIRST TEST ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2ND.

INDIGO GROUP -- Presentation -- on Tuesday, March 7, 2006 -- of the story "**The Waters of Life**" (Germany) in Meade, pp. 289-296.

VIOLET GROUP -- Presentation -- on Thursday, March 9, 2006 -- of the story "**The Companions**" (Universal) in Meade, pp. 365-374.

Tuesday, March 14th and Thursday March 16th are regular classes -- no presentations.

SPRING BREAK BEGINS AFTER CLASS ON FRIDAY, MARCH 17TH. ENJOY!