

The Hero's Journey of Kamado Tanjirou in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*

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ABSTRACT

Due to globalization, the popularity of manga and anime have increased remarkably. Manga refers to Japanese comic books, the series of which are often made into Japanese cartoons, usually called anime. Although several academic studies have used manga as data source for their research studies, it appears that not much has been done to examine the traits of the hero's journey in manga. Hence, the aim of this study is to identify the stages of the hero's journey in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* and to discover the inner transformation that the main character undergoes as a result of his journey. In order to accomplish this, two theories were adopted: the theory of hero's journey proposed by Vogler (1992) and Weiland's (2016) theory of character arc. The findings indicate that *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* somewhat follows the stages of the hero's journey described by Vogler's (1992). Furthermore, the analysis of Tanjirou's journey leads to a revelation of the inner transformation that he experiences, which is the positive change arc, and thus, making him as a willing hero..

Keywords: *Character arc, hero's journey, manga, willing hero*

INTRODUCTION

Manga refers to Japanese comic books, the series of which are often made into Japanese cartoons, usually called anime (Albert, 2018). It is one of the most easily recognizable unique form of art in Japanese popular culture. Characters such as Astro Boy, Sailor Moon, and Detective Conan are globally known by many people. Their popularity can be compared to characters from Disney such as Mickey Mouse, Bambi, and Pinocchio. Manga may seem to be a new popular culture, however, even long before manga made its way internationally, in the late 18th century it had already become the mainstays of popular culture in Japan (Wood, 2017). And now with the help of globalization, the popularity of manga and anime have increased remarkably. Because of the current global development of manga and anime, comic and cultural studies scholars believe that Japan could be considered as another centre of globalization (Wong, 2007).

The success of manga can be seen from how well it sells in Japan.

According to statistics compiled by the Research Institute for Publications in 2008, volume 52 of *One Piece*, a manga that tells a story about a boy who wants to be a pirate, became the best-selling comic book, it sold 2.5 million copies for publisher Shueisha Inc. Even the English Version of *Shukan Shonen Jump*—Japanese weekly magazine consisting of various titles of manga series—have sold 300,00 copies in the U.S. (Matsutani, 2009). Mangas may cover a broad range of genres, but it is mostly divided into two main marketing genres which are shōnen aimed for male readers, and shōjo, which are dedicated for female readers. *Strobe edge*, *Ao Haru Ride*, and *Dengeki Daisy* are some of the most popular shōjo manga in the manga industry, while *Naruto*, *Bleach*, *Slam Dunk*, and *One Piece* are some of the most popular names of shōnen manga in the manga industry. Popular shōnen mangas above share something in common; they picked up heroic theme stories.

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba is one of the mangas that picked up the

theme of heroism. It is an adventure fiction manga written and illustrated by Koyoharu Gotouge and serialized in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine. *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* also belongs to shōnen manga categories. This manga was published from February 15, 2016 to May 17, 2020 with a total of 205 chapters in twenty books. *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* tells the story of Kamado Tanjirou, a thirteen-year old boy who live a peaceful life with his mother and his five younger siblings. One day, a terrible accident happened to his family; an unknown demon killed his whole family except Nezuko. Even though Nezuko was not killed, she turned into a demon and tried to eat him. Unable to save his family, Tanjirou swore that he would find a cure for Nezuko and kill the demon who slaughtered his family.

Last year after the manga was adapted into an anime, it then become the most popular anime in 2019. The success of the anime leads them to become the best-selling manga in Japan, the manga quickly become number one on manga charts (Kato, 2020). It seems that what makes the

manga intriguing and fresh are the protagonist itself (Natasha, 2019). Tanjirou possessed the common characteristics of a protagonist of a shōnen manga: he is hard headed, very idealistic, and exceptionally kind to other, however Tanjirou is all of that and more (Gibbs, 2019). Throughout the story Tanjirou's main goal is not to seek revenge, but to help his sister who has turned into a demon. Even after joining the Demon Slayer Corps and becoming a demon slayer, his kind heart and empathy never waver, in fact it becomes the source of his strength. Being a demon slayer, he is bound to kill demons, however he feels sympathetic toward those demons who were once humans, thus whenever he wins a battle, there is always a sense of bittersweet from that victory (Ghost, 2019).

Character arc (Weiland, 2016) is a theory concerning on the transformation of a character's inner journey, in other words their emotional journey. According to Bell (2014) the function of character arc is to deepen a plot, since the events that happen in a story should impact the characters. Character arc is important in

storytelling because transformation of the protagonist represent the essence of a story. It captures the story beneath the action, and audience can understand the theme only when the transformation is complete (Batty, 2014).

While character arc is used to map the emotional journey that a character's experience, the hero's journey theory is an analytical method that studies a character's physical journey from event to event. The hero's journey was first proposed by Joseph Campbell (1949) and has become a narrative structure that has inspired many popular stories such as *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, and *Jane Eyre*. The structure of hero's journey helps the audience to figure out the actions of heroes and characters on stories. It focuses on the journey a character experiences in order to change. These two theories are considered to fit the story of *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, as the protagonist experience two journeys throughout the story; physical and inner journey. Hence the present study focuses on identifying the stages of the hero's journey in *Demon Slayer:*

Kimetsu no Yaiba, and analyze the inner journey that Tanjirou experiences while undergoing his physical journey.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a textual analysis which draws on qualitative research method. This research drew upon the qualitative method because it aims to identify the stages of a hero's journey in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* and to find out what inner transformation that lies at the stages of Tanjirou's hero's journey. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative methods rely on text and image data; it has unique and flexible steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. Furthermore, qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning of problems or issues held by the subjects in focus. Qualitative research begins with an inquiry in which the data come from natural setting, thus there is no manipulation, or experiment on the data, and data analysis is inductive which create patterns or themes. The final results yielding from the research include "...a complex description and

interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature...” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

In respect to Creswell’s (2007) statement above, a qualitative research is deemed best suited for the present study. This is because the research involves textual analysis of the data, presents a rich description of the protagonist’s journey and interprets based on the narration given the kind of inner transformation he goes through. Hence, the present study is descriptive and interpretative in nature, which is in line with the principles of the qualitative research method outlined above.

The data were collected from the English version of the chapters of the manga *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* created by Koyoharu Gotōge and published by Shueisha in 2016. This manga was chosen as the primary data source because the manga has become very popular after it was adapted into an anime series in 2019. The popularity of the manga itself seems to be related to the unique portrayal of the protagonist. Tanjirou is pure-hearted, but not naïve or

childish like so many other characters in different mangas.

The first step in analyzing the data were downloading the 102 chapters of the manga. After that, the segments of the story were divided and classified based on the stages of hero’s journey proposed by Vogler’s (1992). Next, the stages were further elaborated in order to find out whether a change in character arc has happened or not. Every stage that contains a change in character arc is mentioned and categorized into one of the stages of character arcs proposed by Weiland’s (2016). Then, the stages of the character arc and segmented events were discussed and interpreted. The discussion here centred on the character of Tanjirou, and other literary elements that related to the events.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that the events experienced by Tanjirou fits well to the structure of Vogler’s (1992) hero’s journey. Tanjirou’s story begins and ends in accordance with the patterns of phases of the hero’s journey, although some structural differences can be found. These differences are

particularly evident in the combination of the phases “Refusal of the Call” and “Meeting the Mentor”, and the repetition of the phase “Tests, Allies, Enemies”

1.1 Act I: The Introduction of the Two Worlds

Vogler (1992) presented Act I as the first step in the hero's journey. In Gotōge's *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, the stage Act I begins with the murder of the Kamado family which triggers the “Call to Adventure”. The stage begins with Tanjirou living peacefully without disturbance. This first stage can be found in the first chapter of the manga where Tanjirou and his mother are talking outside their house. This is the stage “Ordinary World” where he lives oblivious of the adventure to come. The next day when he arrived at his house, he saw the bodies of his family members covered in blood. This can be interpreted as a message of the call to adventure. However, Tanjirou, is unable to understand the message until Giyuu confronted him and told him about the existence of demons and Nezuko that has turned into a demon. Hence, Giyuu

would be the herald that leads Tanjirou to special world. One of the features in the phase “Call to Adventure” is the presence of a string of accidents and the archetype of the Herald.

- Kamado Kie : Tanjirou! Your face is pitch-black. Come here. You don't have to go. It's snowing and it's dangerous.
- Kamado Tanjirou : I want us to have a great new year's feast, so I'll go sell as much charcoal as I can. Even if it's just a little.
- Kamado Kie : Thank you. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 1)

Despite the inexplicit manifestation of the stage “Refusal of the Call” as there is no instance in which Tanjirou reveals any sign of willingness to reject the call to adventure, this phase could be identified in a very subtle manner. This can be noticed in the scene where the Kamado siblings are in the middle of their way to the mountain, Tanjirou met a man-eating demon and had to fight it. However, even after Urokodaki helped him to fight the demon, Tanjirou's resolution is too weak and refuses to kill it. This event marks as both the phase “Refusal of the Call” and “Meeting with the

Mentor.” Urokodaki serves as the mentor who will teach Tanjirou about the systems rules of the Special World. The event where Tanjirou incapable to kill the demon is his refusal to the journey. Therefore, the refusal of the call does not materialize but a slight doubt is cast regarding whether Tanjirou will accept the call or not.

Urokodaki Sakonji : This kid is no good. his kindness prevents him from taking decisive action. When facing a demon, he still reeks of sympathy and consideration. He even feels sympathy for a demon. (Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba Chapter 3).

Once this doubt has been discarded, Urokodaki accepted Tanjirou as his student. After finishing his training with Urokodaki, Tanjirou proceed to take the test to officially become a demon slayer. According to Vogler (1992), one of the features in the phase Crossing the First Threshold is the existence of threshold guardians. During the final test, Tanjirou was able to kill the hand demon who has killed many of Urokodaki’s students, and passed the test. The hand demon would be the threshold guardian who

keep the unworthy from entering the Special World. Therefore, this corresponds to the stage of “Crossing the Threshold.” With Tanjirou passes the final selection test, he is deemed to be worthy to enter the Special World and no longer able to go back to his Ordinary World.

Kamado Tanjirou : Sabito... Makomo... I won. You don’t have to worry anymore. The other children that the demon killed probably became spirits and returned as promised to Urokodaki whom they like so much and their home on Mount Sagiri. If I had died, my spirit would have returned to Nezuko and Urokodaki too. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 8).

Act I serves as an introduction of the two worlds in the story. The Ordinary World introduced as the human world where Tanjirou lives his life normally and oblivious to the adventures ahead of him. With the murder of his family, the concept of the Special World is introduced. It is the world where demon and demon slayer exist, a world where Tanjirou faces the major conflict concerning him. A slight difference with Vogler’s classification can be found, in *Demon*

Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba the phase meeting with the mentor happened at the same time with the hero refusing the call. However, this can be considered as a minor difference, as it only consists on a slight combination of two phases.

1.2 Act II: The Conflict and the Tragedy

Act II, for Tanjirou, begins with the phase “Test, Allies, Enemies” through which Tanjirou will have to encounter series of obstacles in order to prove that he is capable to cope with the new challenges awaiting in the Special World. The first and most representative test is his first mission after he officially becomes a demon slayer. Based on Vogler’s (1992) description of the phase “Test, Allies, Enemies”, it must show a contrast between the Ordinary World and the Special World. In his first test, he encounters a real treat from the Special World which is a demon. Tanjirou must investigate a suspicious activity of a demon that has torment the girls in that town. Although it may not seem like a great challenge, it shows the contrast between Tanjirou’s new life

in the Special World and his previous life in the Ordinary World.

Kamado Tanjirou : You guys stink like rotten oil! It’s a foul smell! How many people have you killed?!

Swamp demon : If you let women age, they get ugly and taste terrible! That’s why we ate them! You should thank us! (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 8)

In relation to the phase “Test, Allies, Enemies”, there is a repetition of the phase in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*. The phase happens four times. This is because the manga consisted of several story arcs. After he successfully completed his first mission, other trials can be further divided into several obstacles, difficulties, and situations of injustice Tanjirou has to overcome. In some cases, it is a life and death mission, trial for having a demon sister, meeting another Upper Moon, rehabilitation training, and even the death of his comrades. Nevertheless, the main quest in Tanjirou’s adventure is to find cure that can turn demons into human and defeat Kibutsuji Muzan, which will be analyzed in

more detail further in the stage “Reward”.

The next clearly identifiable phase corresponds to “Approach to the Inmost Cave”. The key elements of this phase involve Tanjirou becoming fully aware of the fact that the battle between the Demon Slayer Corp and Muzan is near. This awareness comes after Tanjirou’s fight with the upper moon four, Hantengu, in the Swordsmith Village. The Demon Slayer Corps decided to conduct a special training session to improve the demon slayers’ abilities and physical health. This event is the phase “Approaching the Inmost Cave”, where Tanjirou does a final preparation for the supreme ordeal of the adventure. Here, Tanjirou strengthen his bond with fellow demon slayers, sharpen his techniques, and makes plans to defeat the final villain, Muzan. Vogler (1992) describes the function of the phase “Approach to the Inmost Cave” is to give the hero time to make plans, observe the enemy, and strengthen the hero’s relationship with his allies.

Kamado Tanjirou : A special training session began. It was

called ‘pillar training’. Those who ranked lower than pillars trained with them one by one. Usually, the pillars would only train their ‘successors’ and no one else. And that’s because Pillars were busy... but ever since Nezuko conquered the sun, the demons suddenly stopped appearing. I was like the ‘calm before the storm’. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 130)

Once all the preparations have been made, the phase “Supreme Ordeal” takes place. In the case of this manga, this phase happened after the demon slayers’ plan to kill Muzan by poisoning him failed. Thus, he came back to life and started killing the remaining member of the Demon Slayer Corps. This is one of the most important phases in Vogler’s (1992) hero’s journey; through this phase Tanjirou will experience the life-or-death moment in which he must face the greatest challenge and the most fearsome opponent yet. Moreover, this battle take place after Tanjirou has lost many of his comrades while fighting the other demons. In spite of that, Tanjirou still continues his battle with Muzan, revealing his strong determination to end Muzan’s life.

With the help from the other demon slayers, Muzan, the once invincible

Demon Lord, finally defeated,
which end the war between the Demon Slayers and demons.

Kibutsuji Muzan : Would you look at that? You look repulsive, well, well. Who's the demon now? I have no idea, Kamado Tanjirou. You really disgust me.

Kamado Tanjirou : Let's put an end to this Muzan. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 191)

Now that the demon slayers had successfully defeated Muzan, comes the consequences of winning the war. This is the "Seizing the Reward" phase where the hero claims their reward. This reward can be in the form of celebration, self-realization, and epiphany. Through this phase, Tanjirou will achieve his main quest over which the entire manga revolves around, that is peace of the world and a cure that will allow Nezuko to be free from Muzan's curse, and, thus, transforming her back into human. However, these rewards come with consequences; many lives have been lost, including Tanjirou's own life.

Tomioka Giyuu: Where's Tanjirou? Is Tanjirou okay?

Kakushi : He's not breathing, and he has no pulse. Tanjirou...

Tomioka Giyuu: I failed to protect someone again. I'm the one always being protected by people...forgive me. I'm sorry, Nezuko. I'm so sorry... (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 200)

It can be said that Act II is an important phase in Tanjirou's journey. This the phase where Tanjirou finally enter the Special World and confront many obstacles before finally face his main adversary. This is also the longest phase in his journey, in which he receives many information about his enemy while gaining many allies in the process. In Act II, another phase seems to occur differently than Vogler's description. The phase "Tests, Allies, Enemies" repeated four times. Thereby, in this manga Tanjirou requires some more times to gather experiences and allies in the Special World.

1.3 Act III: The Hero's Resolution

Tanjirou completes his hero's journey with Act III matching Vogler's (1992) structure of hero's journey. Act III in

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba is initiated by the phase known as “The Road Back”. This phase materializes in the form of a realization that the villains who are not completely defeated in the crisis grow stronger than before. Later, it is revealed that Tanjirou was not completely dead, since Muzan has transformed him into a demon by transferring his power and memories to Tanjirou in the effort to preserve himself. According to Vogler (1992) the function of this phase is to show that the challenge that once has been overcome can rebound in a last-minute defense before it completely vanishes. In the manga, this phase occurs when Tanjirou becomes a demon himself.

Kamado Nezuko : I’m sorry for being unable to understand what was happening this whole time. You carried everything on your own shoulders, onii-chan. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 202)

Having gone through the first life and death situation, the next phase a hero must face is “The Resurrection”. Here, the hero will experience a moment of death and rebirth, similar to the Supreme Ordeal

with a subtle difference. In *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, this happens right after Tanjirou has been injected the cure that can transform demons into humans again. In Tanjirou’s consciousness, Muzan tries to convince him to let himself be consumed by the power to become an ultimate being. In order to return to the Ordinary World, Tanjirou must defeat the final obstacle that prevents him. And so, the final battle between Muzan and him happens in his consciousness. With his strong determination to live as a human, and the help of his friends, Tanjirou breaks Muzan’s demon curse and wakes up as human again.

Kibutsuji Muzan : Do you not smell the blood of your comrades? You did that. They hate you. No one wants you to come back.

Kamado Tanjirou : I want to apologize for hurting everyone. I want to go back and say I’m sorry. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 203)

The final phase of “Return with the Elixir” occurs as explicitly as described by Vogler. In *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, this phase occurs after the final battle ends. Tanjirou wakes up three months after

his battle with Muzan. He learns that with the death of the Demon Lord, Muzan, all the remaining demons in the world have vanish. Based on Vogler's (1992) explanation, this is the phase where the hero has successfully survived the ordeals, lives through death, and return to their starting point, go home, or continue the journey. In Tanjirou's case, he chooses to return to his Ordinary World with his new friends. Now that they live in a world where demons are no longer exist, the Demon Slayer Corps has officially disbanded. Tanjirou is now free and has no obligation to stay in the Special World. Vogler (1992) also explains that the real key to the final stage of the hero's journey is the Elixir. Tanjirou's Elixir is in the form of peace and happiness. Therefore, Tanjirou and Nezuko return to their home near the mountain and live a happy life with no fear of demons.

Kamado Tanjirou : The world no longer has evil demons, but it was at the cost of many sacrifices. Nevertheless, we must continue living as long as there's a tomorrow. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 204)

Act III serves as the conclusion of Tanjirou's journey. The conclusion symbolizes how the story is supposed to be. Returning with the Elixir means the hero will go back to live a peaceful live in the Ordinary World with their newfound knowledge. Tanjirou ends his journey by returning to his former house in the Ordinary World.

Although there are almost no cases in which the relationship between Vogler's description and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*'s is entirely perfect down to the smallest detail, it has been proven that, overall, there is a clear correspondence between the phases described by Vogler and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*. These structural differences were due to the combination of some phases, such as in "Refusal of the Call" and "Meeting the Mentor", and the repetition of the phase "Tests, Allies, Enemies" that repeated four times. However, these differences are considered minor, thus do not represent the creation of a new analytical method. Through closer inspection of Act II, these repeated events happened due to the manga's

characteristics, namely a manga may contain several story arcs that portray different themes from the main story. On the other hand, from this analysis it can be inferred that the structure of the hero's journey can also be adopted by mangas.

1.4 Tanjirou as a Willing Hero

Vogler (1992) claims that heroes in literature are mostly divided into two types: the willing and unwilling hero. While heroes commonly known for their bravery and willingness to commit to the adventure, there are also heroes who are unwilling, thus they must be pushed to the adventure. The characteristic of a willing hero seems to appear in Tanjirou. A willing hero usually active, committed to the adventure, self-motivated, always bravery going ahead, and without doubts. Willing heroes are always ready to give up something valuable, even their own life of the sake of others. Following Vogler's (1992) characteristics on a willing hero, his explanations seem to be in line with Weiland's (2016) description of characters that undergo the positive change arc.

The key element of the positive change arc is the drastic change of the protagonist's life. This change includes the character's beliefs about themselves and the world. The positive change arc is divided into three stages: The First Act is where the protagonists first introduced. This is the stage where the protagonists believe in a Lie and live in their Normal World. The Second Act is where the protagonists go out of their Normal World and confront their inner misconceptions—the Truth. In order to overcome the Lie the protagonists will experience many hardships and keep on making mistakes in this stage. Finally, The Third Act, or the last stage in the positive change arc. This is the stage where the protagonists finally understand the Truth and act according to the Truth. The protagonists will completely overcome the Lie by finding and accepting the Truth in the Third Act. Through the analysis of the events, it is found that Tanjirou experiences the positive change arc in his journey.

In *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* "The Lie that the Character

Believes” manifested in Tanjirou’s believes that he lives in the world without the existence of demons. However, throughout the analysis, it is also found that after the murder of his family takes place, Tanjirou gains another Lie. Tanjirou believes that he is responsible for the death of his family members. Corresponding to Weiland’s (2016) explanation of the important points in creating character arc, Tanjirou also possesses “The Thing He Wants” and “The Thing He Needs”. For Tanjirou, his goals arise after his Normal World is disturbed. What Tanjirou wants is cure for his sister, Nezuko and revenge for Muzan. However, what he needs is forgiveness from his family. Thus, Tanjirou’s Ghost is the guilt for not being able to save them.

In the First Act of his character arc, Tanjirou is introduced as a reliable brother that support his family in the Ordinary World. There he lives in the mountains with his mother and five younger siblings.

There is no significant transformation in his inner journey during the First Act of Tanjirou’s

character arc. This is because he is just starting to realize the problem. Thus, the only notable change in this phase is the increased awareness of the Truth and the reluctance to change. He comes to a realization that his pitifulness that originate from his regrets will not help him to save his sister. The only thing needed is to move on from the incident and look forward to a new life awaits him. This realization happens after he meets Giyuu and gets scold after begging for mercy and being defenseless despite knowing that Giyuu is an enemy. Thus, his meeting with Giyuu forces him to change.

Kamado Tanjirou : But then why don't they eat everyone?
Old man Saburo : Because demon slayers cut them down. Have for ages... (Demon Slayer: *Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 1)

Corresponding to Weiland’s (2016) structure of character arcs, the Second Act is where Tanjirou begins to explore an uncharted territory—the world of demons. In this new territory Tanjirou must learn on how to survive and how to overcome the Lie. His training with Urokodoki can be interpreted as the stage where he has

given the information on how to overcome the Lie.

Urokodoki Sakonji : Only one demon in this world has blood that can turn humans into demons. The one who became the first demon over a thousand years ago. In other words, Tanjirou, it is that demon who killed your family. And I think he knows the way to return your sister's humanity. The demon's name is Kibutsuji Muzan. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 11).

Tanjirou experiences an apparent inner transformation in the Second Act of his character arc. From the beginning of the story Tanjirou's inner journey has always revolves around his regrets for letting his family died, thus every time an inconvenient happens—for example the death of his senior—he always blames himself and end up having a moment of hesitation where he is unable to move forward and start questioning his own resolution. The Second Act of his character arc is where he experimenting with change of his inner journey. This is why his inner journey is constantly being tested in this phase. In order to have a significant transformation in his inner journey, Tanjirou needs to undergo

many tests and hardships—from losing a battle to losing a comrade. This way Tanjirou can learn to accept things that already happen and move on from it without any regrets. At the end of this phase Tanjirou beginning to accept those things, he is able to continue his battle even after seeing his friends passed out and injured. He is also accepting the fact that the senior he respects have died in their battle. This is a very different attitude from the First Act of his character arc. In the First Act, every time he encounters problems he will dwell on regrets, and blames himself for it, but here he tries to accept it and continue with his life. However, even though Tanjirou's inner journey successfully changed in this phase, the changes come from external factors, he still needs to be reminded by his friends and sister, he still unable to change by himself.

Kamado Nezuko : Don't apologize, Onii-chan. Why do you apologize all the time? Do you want to put the blame on someone that badly? Then father dying from his disease would be a bad thing too. Even if we tried our utmost best, it was all hopeless. We can't do anything about those things. We're all human

beings... so not everything will go our way. (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 92)

Giyuu-san's life in danger! So what if I lost an eye! I can still see things through 'smell'! (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 182)

In *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, the transformation in Tanjirou's inner journey can clearly be seen in the Third Act. Weiland (2016) explains that the Third Act is all about a character figuring out if they really want to serve the Truth after all, this is going to be their last chance to choose between the Lie and the Truth. With the influence of the Truth that has not yet complete, he will continue to experience doubts throughout the Third Act. His final battle with Muzan prove that Tanjirou is no longer the boy with weak resolution in the beginning of his journey. This stage proves that Tanjirou has come a long way and become a capable swordsman. However, just like what it explains before, doubts will always follow Tanjirou since he has not fully rejected the Lie.

Kibutsuji Muzan : The pillar with the stripped haori and the female pillar were already killed by my subordinate, don't you know?

Tomioka Giyuu : Tanjirou!

Kamado Tanjirou : Don't become a burden! Don't put

The Third Act is the last stage of Tanjirou's inner journey, meaning by the time he reaches this point, he has completely transformed his inner journey. In this stage he experiences the final attempt at the big change of his inner journey. At the beginning to the middle of his journey, Tanjirou has always full of regrets, and blame himself for every bad thing that happens in his life. He refuses to forgive himself and afraid to move forward because he always believe that he does not deserve happiness after what happen to his family. Even though in the middle of his journey he slowly learns to accept it, some part of him still doubtful that and hesitate. But in the Third Act when his ultimate enemy tries to convince him that he responsible for all the bad thing that has happens, Tanjirou refuses to listen to him. He is now confident to say that nobody blames him. His heart that used to be full of doubts changed. He is no longer hesitated to continue living from the past. It is worth noting

that the final battle between Tanjirou and Muzan takes place in Tanjirou's subconscious, not in the physical world. It represents that Tanjirou has always struggle in his own mind; that he always struggles with his weak determination and negative thoughts.

Hinatsuru : Come visit when things calm down. Here's our address and a snack.

Kamado Tanjirou : Oh, thank you! (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* Chapter 204)

Through the analysis of the events, the changes that Tanjirou's experienced in his inner journey corresponds to the characteristics of the Positive Change Arc. The key element of the Positive Change Arc is the drastic change of the protagonist's inner journey; their motivation, way of thinking, and even priorities. At the beginning of his journey, Tanjirou believes that he is responsible of the murder of his family, thus he carries this guilt throughout his journey. This is also becoming the key of Tanjirou's inner journey transformation. His inner transformation focuses on letting go and forgiveness. The last fight with Muzan in his subconscious shows that

Tanjirou finally able to forgive himself by letting go the bad memories of the past and accepting the pain and sorrow that come from those memories. He realizes that as long as Nezuko and him are alive, he can live in a memory of those happy days with his love ones. Tanjirou finally accepts that fact and earn his forgiveness.

The positive changes that Tanjirou experiences in his inner journey marked him as a willing hero. Even though at the beginning of the journey Tanjirou seems to refuse the journey, and was full of doubts, as the journey progress, Tanjirou learned how to overcome his doubts. And despite his limited knowledge of the demon's world, Tanjirou still proceed to take the training to become a demon slayer, this can be interpreted that he is self-motivated, and bravely going ahead. Even after becoming a demon slayer and experience many life-threatening situations where he received major injuries and lost many of his friends, he never gives up on his journey or lost his way. This action can be interpreted that Tanjirou is committed to the adventure. There are

also many times where Tanjirou shows his bravery, from when he is willing to fight powerful upper demons to the moment when he faces the life and death battle with Muzan. Even at the end of the story Tanjirou shows his willingness to give up on his life for the sake of others. He is willing to sacrifice his life so that Muzan can die and the world can be free from demons.

The hero's journey in this manga is both familiar and unique. Familiar in the sense that it mostly follows the main patterns of the hero's journey and unique because even though it follows the same patterns, it also gives several changes of the patterns. The prominent change between Vogler's hero's journey and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba's* hero's journey lays on the stage "Tests, Allies, Enemies". While it only happens once in the original structure proposed by Vogler (1992), this particular stage happens four times in the manga. This repetition of the stage "Tests, Allies, Enemies" gives the manga a lot more time to elaborate more of the problems within the story.

By having this stage repeated for four times, it gives the readers a deep understanding of the story; for examples the plot, and characters. Instead of having a short path, readers can see more of Tanjirou's struggles to gain his goals. This stage in particular describes Tanjirou's struggles in the Special World and his time to gain allies. The more struggles Tanjirou gain the more it will affect his inner journey.

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba follows the archetypal structure of hero's journey that exist for a long time in literary world. The protagonist, Tanjirou, also possesses the characteristic of the archetypal hero; he is male, brave, and strong. However, despite having those stereotypical characteristics, Tanjirou is more than that. Tanjirou as hero is far from flawless, he does not have the brightest childhood, makes several mistakes, and sometimes pessimistic. But that side of him is also compelling for readers. Because it makes him, the hero of the story, seems very relatable to ordinary people. Stories that includes flawed heroes tend to be able

to gain more empathy and support from the readers.

In conclusion, heroes should not be seen as just an archetypal. Many heroes may share similarities, even if they have different themes, settings, characters, and plots. This is because the journey of heroes most likely follow similar structure to the hero's journey, as described by Vogler. However, even if a hero follows that structure, it should not be reduced to a simple archetype. Many heroes, especially those from contemporary works, possess more traits than the archetypal hero. Heroes from contemporary works tend to be more human; they have flawed personality and background. Their flaws prove to be the reason for their popularity (Shang, 2018). Readers can relate and sympathize with those heroes, thus supporting the actions of the heroes. Hence, when Tanjirou is revealed as a hero, that does not mean he only possess the characteristic of an archetypal hero. The present study has identified a certain structural pattern known as the "hero's journey" in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* and

investigated the transformation of Tanjirou's inner journey. Tanjirou's hero's journey proves that it is possible for a contemporary work, such as manga, to follow certain aspects of the existing structural pattern of the hero's journey while also going against it in other aspects.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that the hero's journey of Tanjirou in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* is similar to that outlined by Christopher Vogler in his book *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Even though there are almost no cases in which the relation between Vogler's description and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* is entirely perfect down to the smallest detail, it has been proven that, overall, there is an obvious correspondence between the phases described by Vogler and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*. These structural differences have been identified in combination of some phases, such as in "Refusal of the Call" and "Meeting the Mentor", and the repetition of the phase "Tests, Allies, Enemies" that repeated four

times. This repetition of the same stage happened due to manga's characterization: a manga may contain several story arcs that portray different themes from the main story. Nonetheless, these differences are considered minor considering all of the similarities in content and order that have been identified and analyzed, especially considering the overall structural image. Thus, the differences do not represent the creation of a new analysis method. On the other hand, this analysis shows that the structure of the hero's journey is also applicable to mangas.

As a character, Tanjirou shows the characteristics of a willing hero. Tanjirou is not afraid to show his courage and willingness to commit to the adventure. Following Vogler's (1992) characteristics on a willing hero, his explanations seem to be in line with Weiland's (2016) description of characters that undergo the positive change arc. Through the analysis of the events, it is found that Tanjirou experiences a rather drastic change. This change includes the change in his beliefs, mindset, and physical strength.

Tanjirou started his journey with doubts; however, despite his doubts at the beginning of his journey, Tanjirou never once shows any desire to give up his journey, indicating his commitment to the adventure. There are also many times when he is not afraid to show his bravery while fighting his opponents which sometimes can cause him serious injuries and almost kill him. Tanjirou is also willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of others. The focus of Tanjirou's inner journey is earning forgiveness. Thus, during his journey, he learns to forgive himself by letting go the bad memories of the past and accepting the pain and sorrow that come from those memories.

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