The Hero's Journey in Higher Education

Calling Students to Adventure

Dr Alke Gröppel-Wegener (Staffordshire University)
Robert Farmer (University of Northampton)

Images by Amy Rose and Adam Watkins (Staffordshire University)

The hero's journey in higher education

1. Introductions (and apologies) from Alke & Rob

2. The idea: The hero's journey in higher education

3. A heroic walk around campus? (Currently in development)

4. Your mission ... motivating reluctant heroes

Dr Alke Groppel-Wegener

Associate Professor

### School of Digital, Technologies and Arts

Alke is passionate about helping students link their creative practice to academic research, methods and contexts – work she received a National Teaching Fellowship for. Her own research is on (analogue) experiences and particularly theme park design.

My undergraduate studies revolved mainly around the theatre – after reading Theatre, Film and Radio Studies in Erlangen, Germany, I moved to England to study Performance Design at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts. Based on this I developed a particular interest in not only the design of experiences (further explored through my MPhil), but also how creative practice is externalised and shared (an aspect of which I investigated for my doctoral

✉ a.c.groppel-wegener@staffs.ac.uk

📱 +44 (0)1782 295848

📍 Room L517,
Flaxman Building,
Staffordshire University,
College Road,
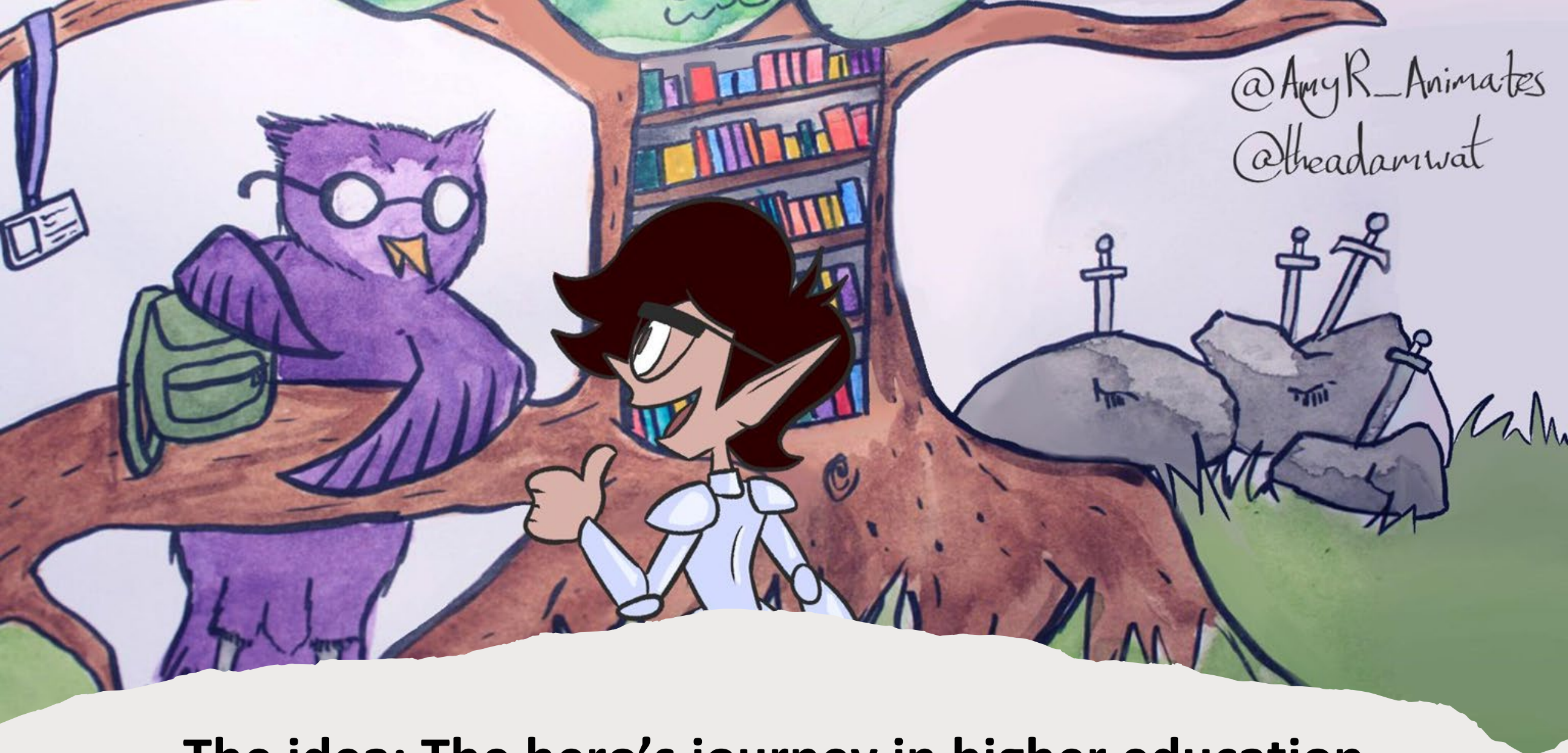
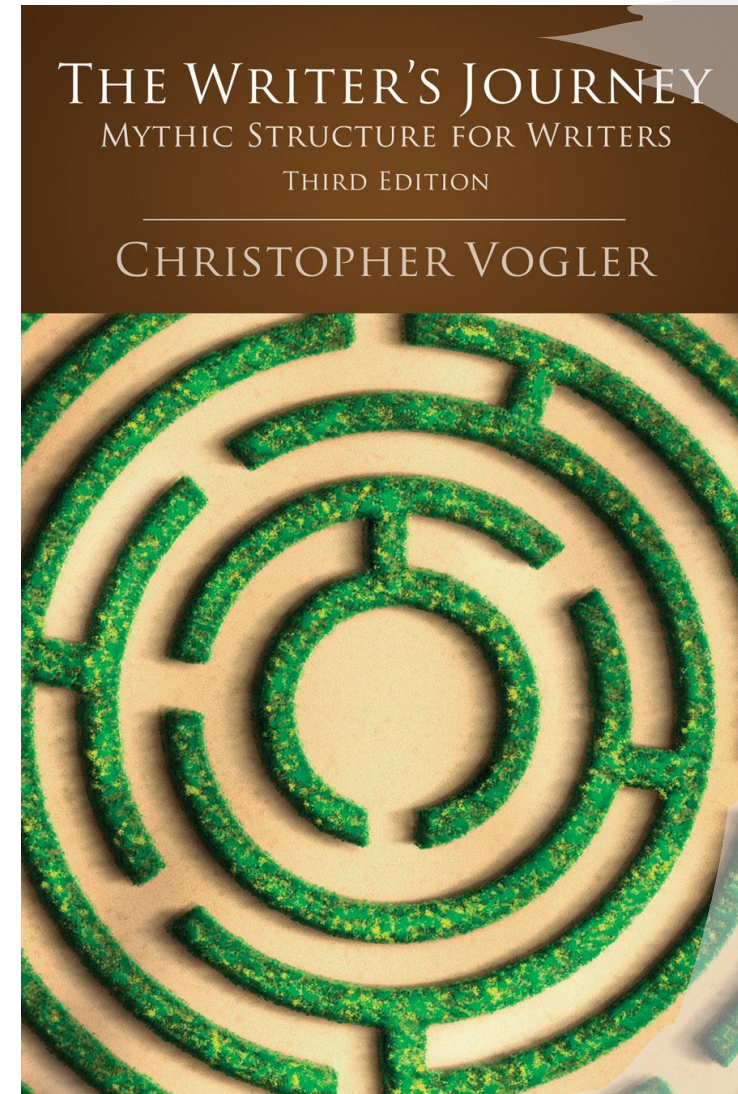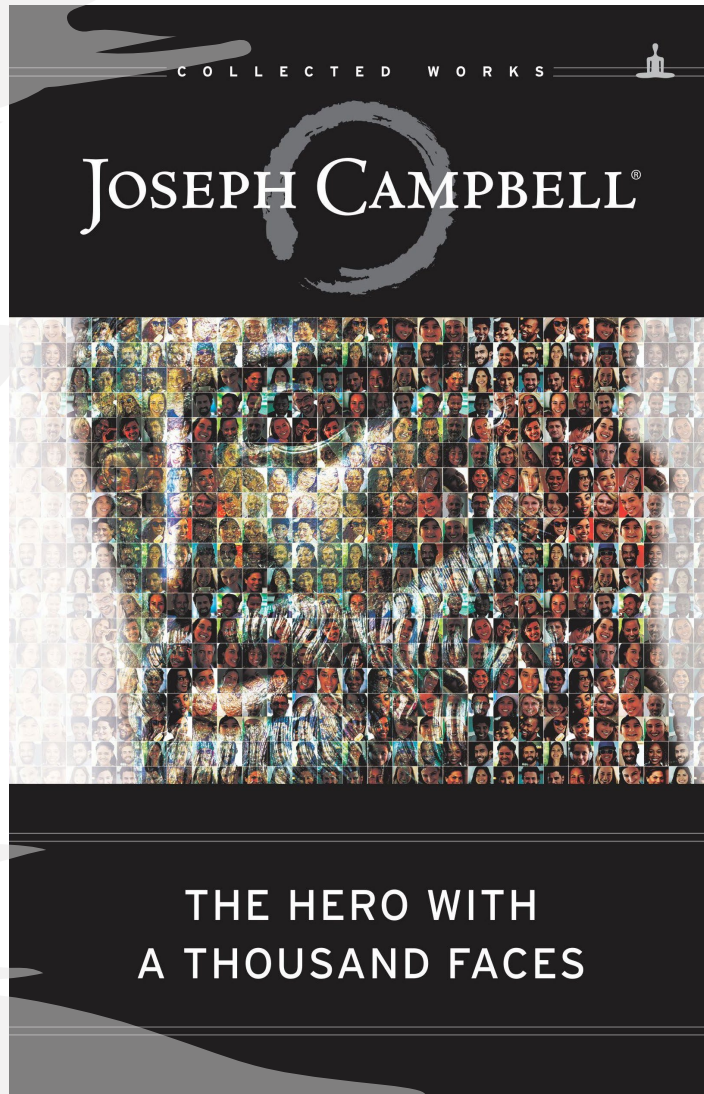**The idea: The hero's journey in higher education**

The idea of the hero's journey

"Is your course like a journey, a parable, a game, a museum, a romance, a concerto, an Aristotelian tragedy, an obstacle course, one or all or some of the above?"

Ken Bain (2004) What the Best College Teachers Do. Harvard University Press, p.186

The idea of the hero's journey

The stages of the hero's journey

The stages of the hero's journey

Act 3: Return

Act 1: Separation

The Ordinary World

The Special World

Act 2.2: Initiation

Act 2.1: Descent
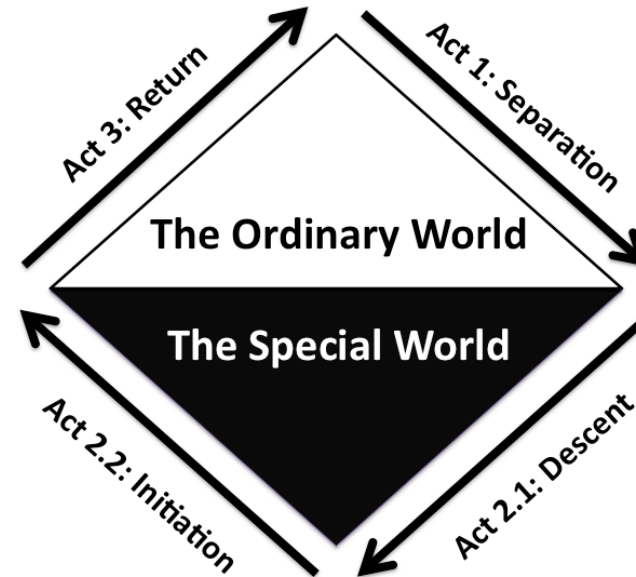
The stages of the hero's journey
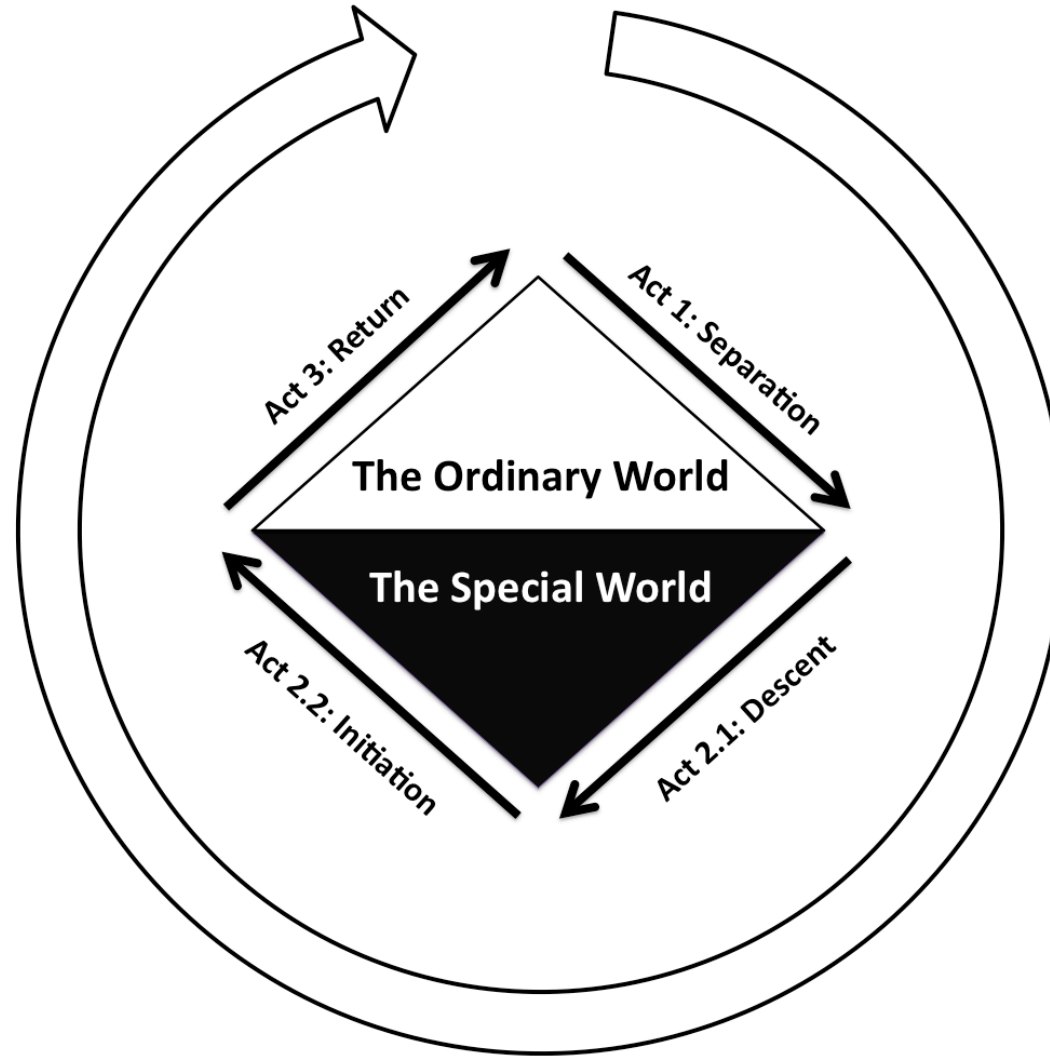
The stages of the hero's journey
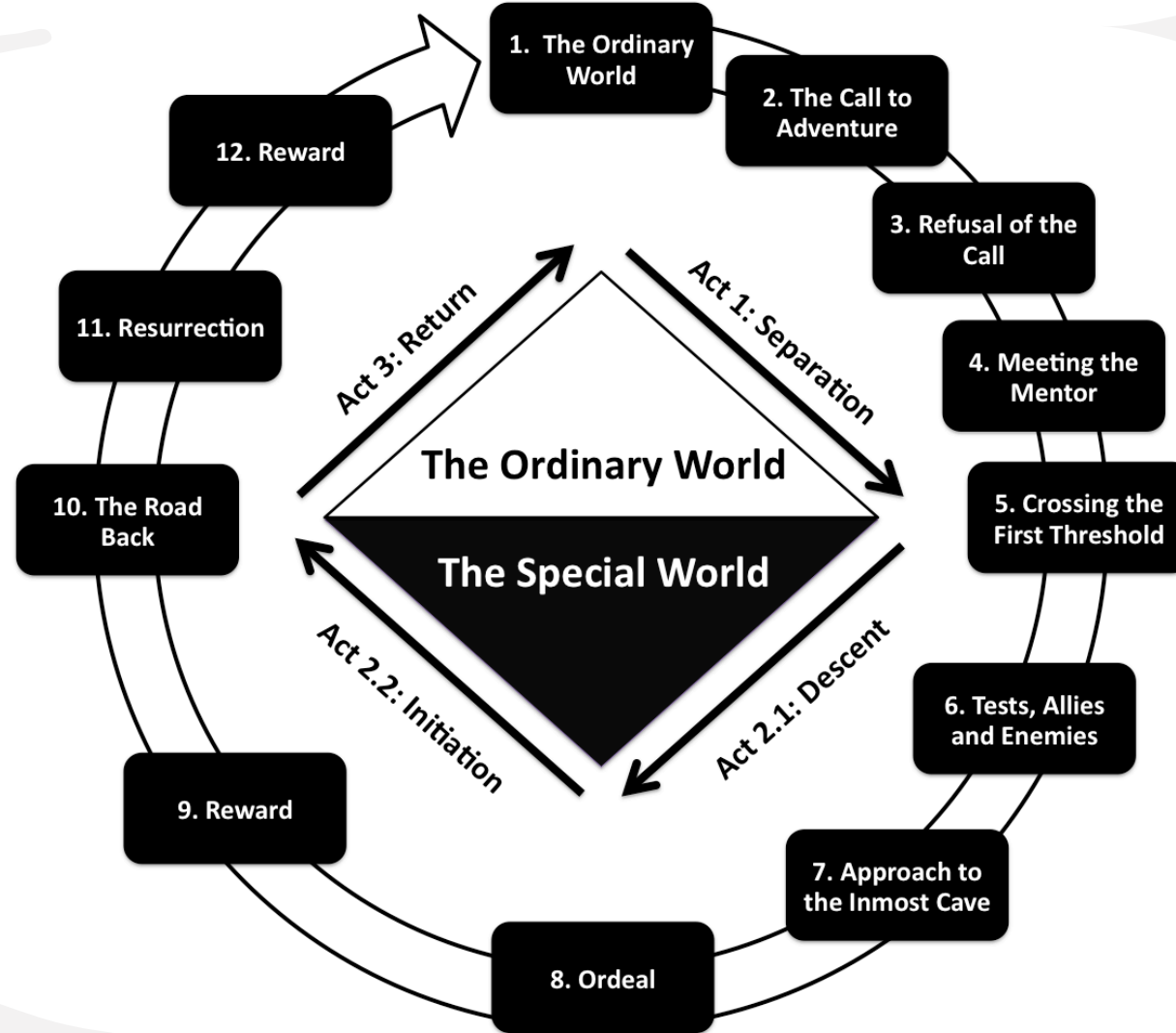
Stage i) The hero is introduced in their ORDINARY WORLD
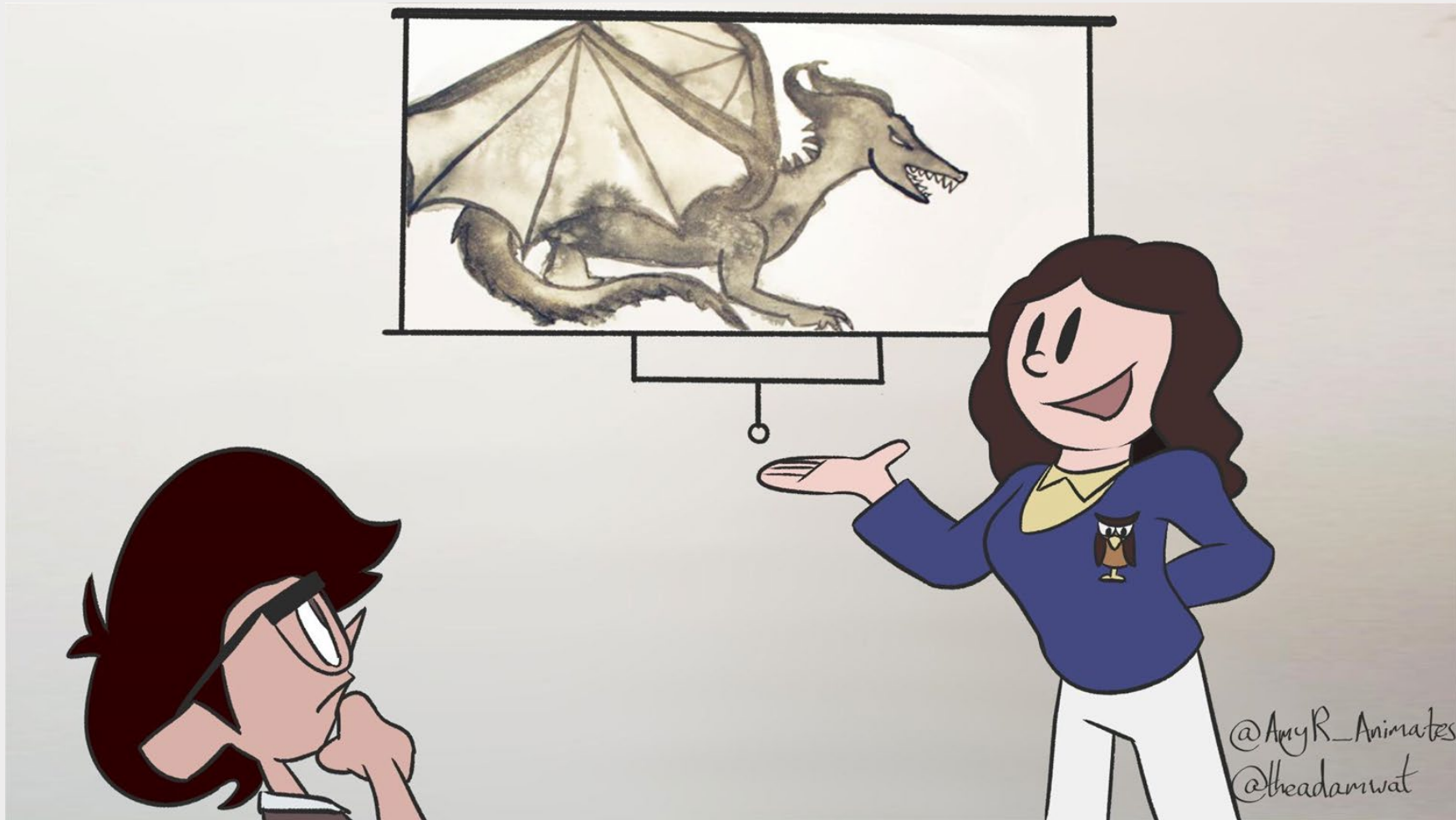
Stage ii) The CALL TO ADVENTURE

Stage iii) The hero is reluctant at first (REFUSAL OF THE CALL)

Stage iv) The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman (MEETING WITH THE MENTOR(S))

Stage v) The hero passes the first threshold (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD)

Stage vi) The hero encounters tests and helpers (TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES)

**Stage vii) The hero reaches the inmost cave
(APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE)**

Stage viii) The hero endures the supreme ORDEAL

Stage ix) The hero seizes the sword (SEIZING THE SWORD, REWARD)

Stage x) THE ROAD BACK

Stage xi) RESURRECTION

Stage xii) RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR
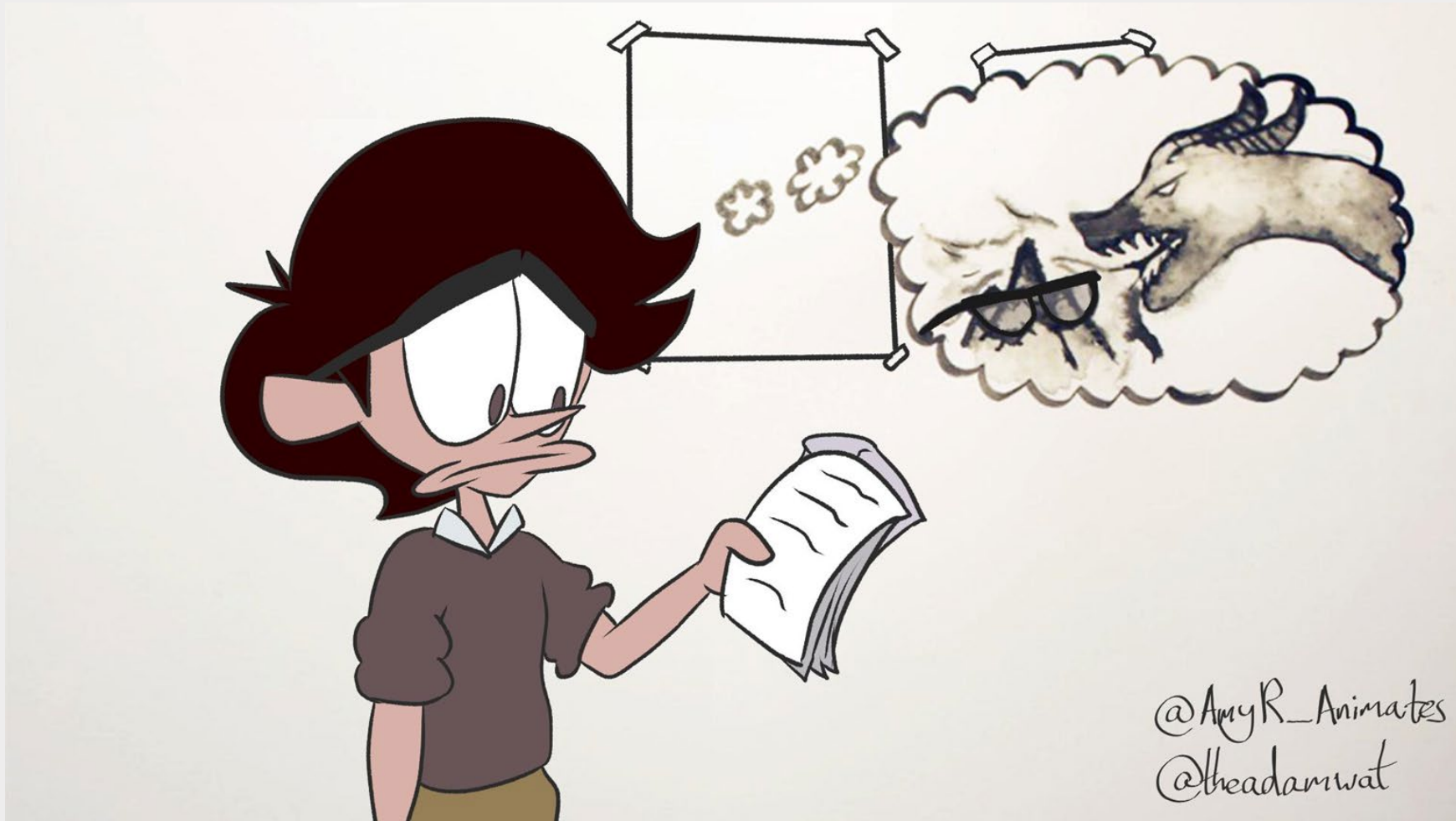
i) The hero is introduced in the ORDINARY WORLD

ii) The CALL TO ADVENTURE

iii) The hero is reluctant at first (REFUSAL OF THE CALL)

iv) The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman (MEETING WITH THE MENTOR)

v) The hero passes the first threshold (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD)

vi) The hero encounters tests and helpers (TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES)

vii) The hero reaches the innermost cave (APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE)

viii) The hero endures the supreme ORDEAL

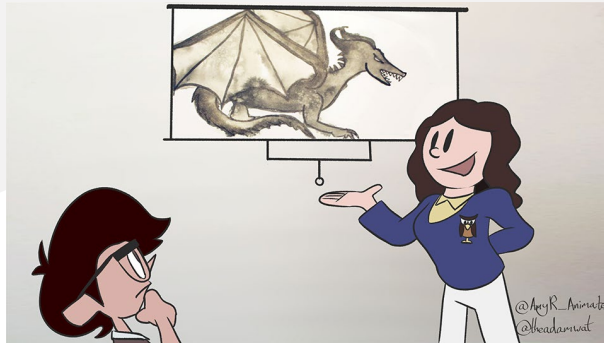ix) The hero seizes the sword (SEIZING THE SWORD, REWARD)

x) THE ROAD BACK

xi) RESURRECTION

xii) RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR

i) The hero is introduced in the ORDINARY WORLD

ii) The CALL TO ADVENTURE

iv) The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman (MEETING WITH THE MENTOR)

iii) The hero is reluctant at first (REFUSAL OF THE CALL)
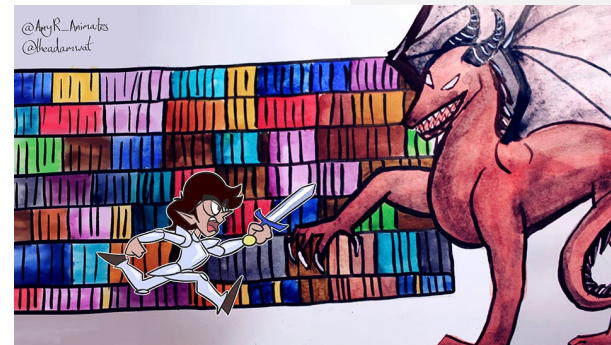
v) The hero passes the first threshold (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD)
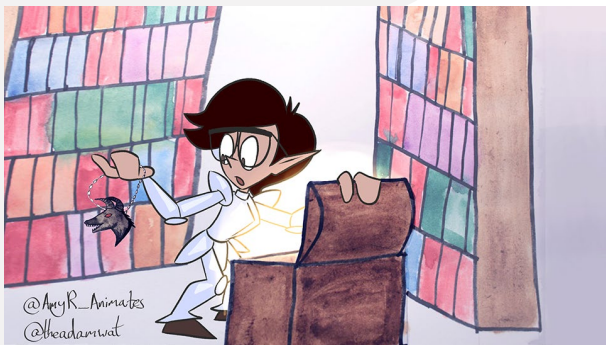
vi) The hero encounters tests and helpers (TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES)

vii) The hero reaches the innermost cave (APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE)

viii) The hero endures the supreme ORDEAL

ix) The hero seizes the sword (SEIZING THE SWORD, REWARD)
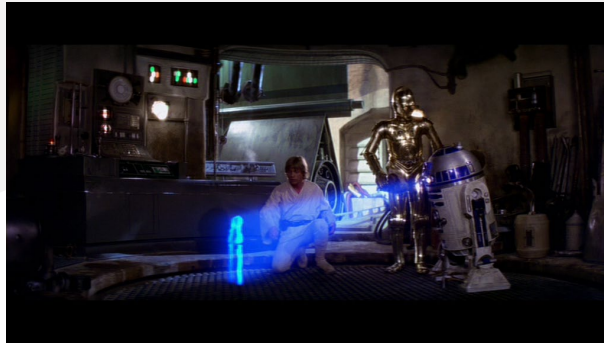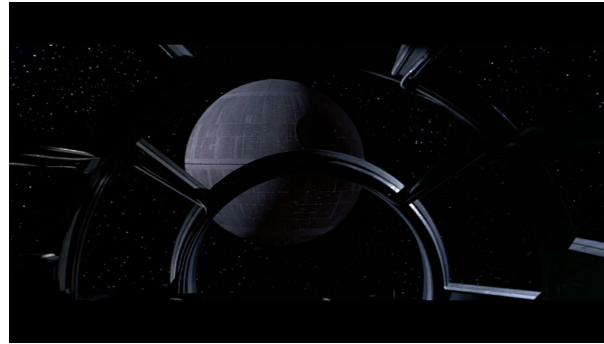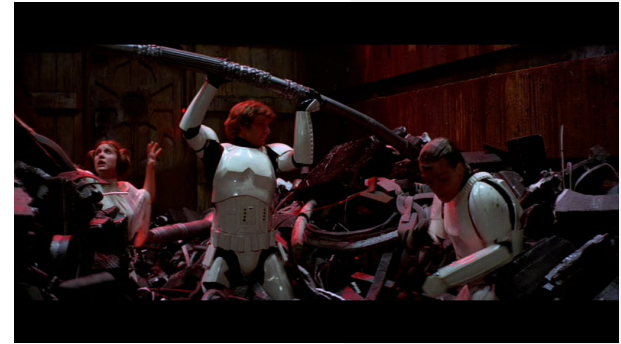
x) THE ROAD BACK
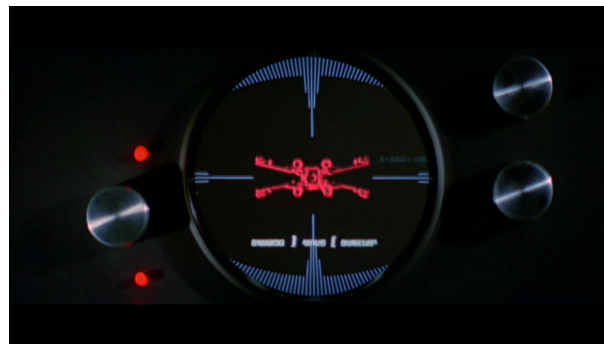
xi) RESURRECTION

xii) RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR

The hero's journey – a learning design resource

Calling Students to Adventure

Using the hero's journey as a tool for curriculum planning and reviewing course design

THE HERO'S JOURNEY   CREDITS & FURTHER READING

Introduction

"Is your course like a journey, a parable, a game, a museum, a romance, a concerto, an Aristotelian tragedy, an obstacle course, one or all or some of the above?"*

The 'student experience' and the 'student journey' are at the forefront of contemporary Higher Education, which is much more seen as an individually transformational endeavour than the simple collection of knowledge it once was. In this context it has become more and more important to consider the role and agency of students as part of learning and teaching planning, rather than just focus on content that is to be mysteriously transmitted. We suggest that it is worth considering the framework provided by the hero's journey, a model coming out of scriptwriting, as a guiding principle behind planning new and reflecting on old learning and teaching design. In so doing, educators can provide a fresh look at their courses and modules and truly put the individual student front and centre of their own learning journey, by casting them in the role of hero. The somewhat simple formula of the hero who encounters many obstacles on their journey, and returns to the ordinary world transformed, and often with some kind of magical boon, can easily be read as the student who encounters many obstacles and tests on their journey through university (but more specifically through subject knowledge/content/skills), and (hopefully) returns to the ordinary world (or the 'real world' outside of the realm of academia) transformed, with the 'magical' boon of subject knowledge and relevant skills to their chosen discipline.

https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/hero/

A heroic walk around campus?
(Currently in development)

1

2

3

4

5

C.0.201
Commercial Catering
512 m²

C.0.P.08
Commercial Catering Plant
99 m²

C.0.SL.03
Step Lift 03
3 m²

Fire shutter

C.0.C.04
Circulation
21 m²

C.0.103F
Learning Commons 3
38 m²

C.0.103E
Learning Commons 3
45 m²

C.0.C.05
Circulation
11 m²

C.0.C.06
Circulation
8 m²

C.0.P.01
Plant
25 m²

C.0.S.03
Store

C.0.SL.04
Step Lift 04

C.0.P.02
Plant
11 m²

C.0.038.02
Stairs 02

Storage

C.0.103D
Riser
4 m²

C.0.103D
Learning Commons
43 m²

C.0.C.07
Lobby
31 m²

C.0.S.04
Store
5 m²

C.0.R.05A
El Riser
3 m²

C.0.R.05
Mech. riser
11 m²

C.0.C.01
Draught Lobby A
40 m²

C.0.103B
Learning Commons 1
258 m²

C.0.C.02
Circulation
198 m²

C.0.C.03
Circulation
85 m²

RFID gates

Type A

Type B
12 m²

Type A

Type B
10 m²

Type A

Type B

C.0.315
Student Admin: Open Plan Office A

C.0.103A
Learning Commons 1
201 m²

C.0.103C
Learning Commons 1
141 m²

C.0.C.09
Circulation
38 m²

C.0.C.08
Circulation
50 m²

C.0.302
Student Admin: Reception
23 m²

Type B

C.0.307
Student Admin: Reception

Type C

C.0.312
Type A

C.0.104
Book Return

C.0.SL.02
Step Lift 02
2 m²

C.0.102
Learning Commons 2
47 m²

C.0.C.16
Circulation
14 m²

"Owl's Nest"

C.0.S.02
Store
33 m²

C.0.301
Student Admin: Changemakers
79 m²

C.0.315
Student Admin: Call Centre
113 m²

C.0.St.01
Stairs 01
34 m²

C.0.St.01A
Fire-fighting Lobby
4 m²

RFID gates

Fire shutter

C.0.R.01A
El Riser
3 m²

C.0.S.01
Store
6 m²

C.0.R.07
Mech. riser
21 m²

C.0.C.10
Circulation
65 m²

C.0.102B
Learning Commons 2
199 m²

C.0.R.01
Mech. riser
14 m²

C.0.C.11
Draught Lobby B
8 m²

C.0.401C
Learning Commons 4
23 m²

C.0.SL.05
Step Lift 05
2 m²

C.0.402
Student Admin: Open Plan Office B
249 m²

C.0.403
Type C

C.0.404
Type C

C.0.401B
Bookstock
468 m²

C.0.405
Type D
38 m²

C.0.R.08
Mech. riser
18 m²

Neue Square

Creative Hub

20

14

Waterside Place

28

10

③

DT ②

Francis Crick Hall

Learning Hub

④

6 2 ① ②

⑤

3

*

Student Village

40

Margaret Bondfield Hall

Avon

3

Margaret Bondfield Hall

Village Way

ar Park 4

3

De___ Wa

John Clare Hall

Charles Bradlaugh Hall

24

John Clare Hall

Charles Bradlaugh Hall

40

20

Senate Walk

60

24

Sen

Town Houses

The Sunley Hotel

apre Square

Town Houses

3

Waterside Campus.
(University Drive, NN1 5PH)

The safer route home for students.

Becket's Park

Bedford Road

Becket's Bridge

Nene Square

Creative Hub

Waterside Place

Learning Hub

Francis Crick Hall

Student Village

Margaret Bondfield Hall

Car Park 4

John Clare Hall

Charles Bradlaugh Hall

Town Houses

The Sunley Hotel

Delapre Square

Town Houses

Town 12 Houses

Car Park 3

The Post Office

The Engine Shed

Car Park 2

The Energy Centre

Senate Drive

Senate Walk

Senate

Senate Square

Park Avenue

Energy Way

Car Park 1

Avon

Nunn Mills Road

University Bridge

University Drive

Riverside Meadows

Riverside Path

Electric Avenue

Sports Science

Sports Hall

The Pavilion

MUGA

Pavilion Walk

All weather pitch

ICLT

Logistics Hub

Public footpath to Delapre Abbey

Village Way

Engineers Walk

Student Weekend Parking (£1 per day)

A walk from the Logistics Hub to the Creative Hub is 0.5 miles via the footpaths, taking on average 10 minutes.

Key

- Bus stop (Uno 18 & 19)
- Bus stop (Uno 20)
- Bus route (Uno 18, 19 & 20)
- Shared cycleway and footpath
- Riverside Walk
- DT Disabled Taxi drop off
- T Taxi drop off
- DO Short Term drop off
- 12 Cycle parking (number of bikes)
- 12 Covered cycle parking (number of bikes)
- 2 Electric vehicle charging Point (no of bays)
- 2 Disabled parking (no of bays)
- Showers
- Cycle CoNNect
- Vehicle access
- * Student Information Desk
- * Senate Reception
- Student Weekend Parking (£1 per day)
- Visitors parking

A heroic walk around campus

- Participants are given a map which contains locations, and clues as to what they are looking for.

- Each clue solved provides a passcode, which, when entered into the website, unlocks that stage of the journey.
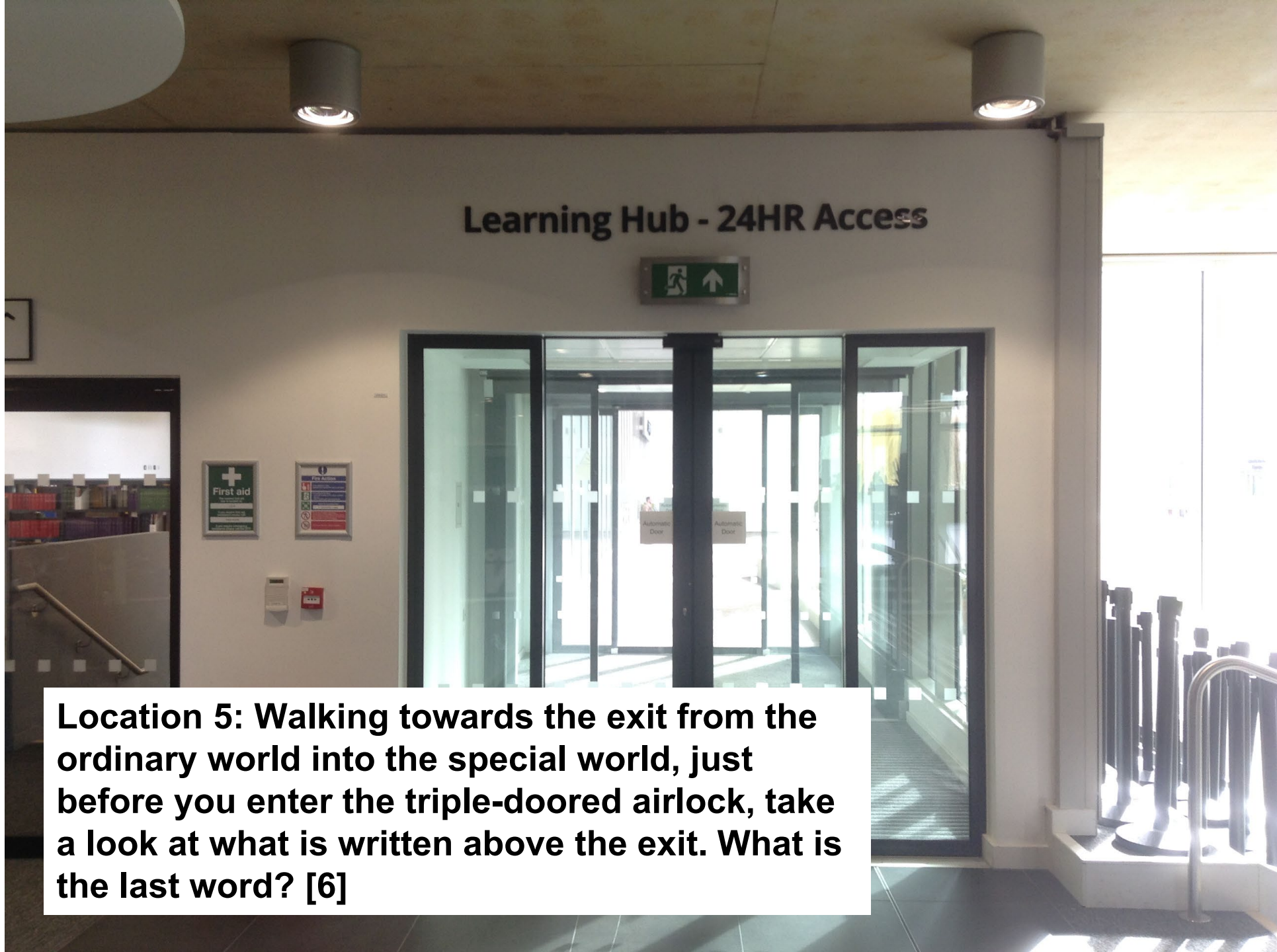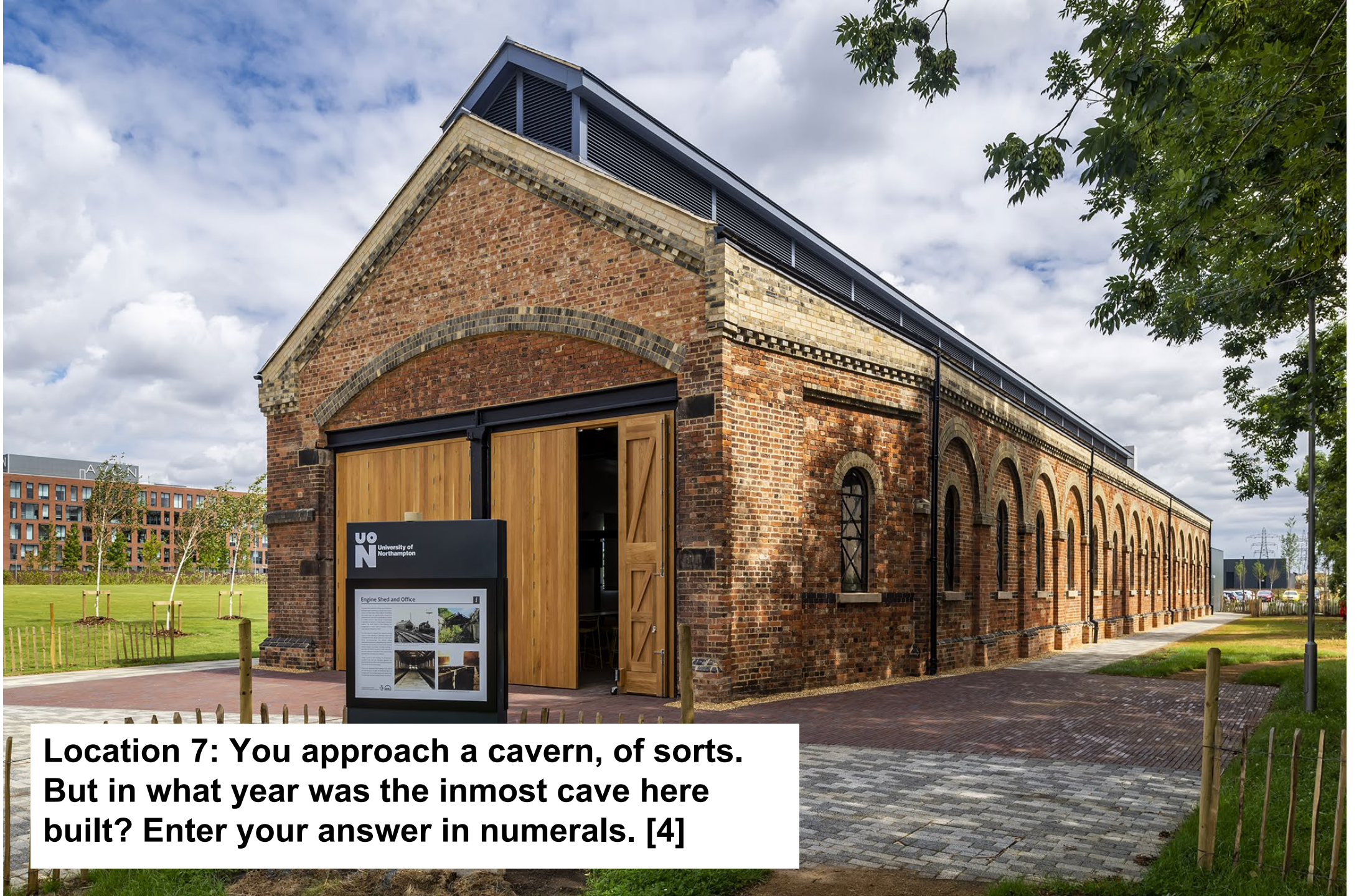
Learning Hub - 24HR Access

Automatic Door   Automatic Door

Location 5: Walking towards the exit from the ordinary world into the special world, just before you enter the triple-doored airlock, take a look at what is written above the exit. What is the last word? [6]

Location 7: You approach a cavern, of sorts. But in what year was the inmost cave here built? Enter your answer in numerals. [4]

Battle of Northampton 1460

On 10 July 1460, the Battle of Northampton was fought between the Houses of York (led by Warwick the Kingmaker) and Lancaster (led by King Henry VI and Humphry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham) in the fields between Delapré Abbey and Hardingstone.

It was the first time the massed armies of York and Lancaster had faced each other in battle and the first time massed artillery was used. The battle was unique in the conflict as it was the only time that a fortified encampment was attacked during the Wars of the Roses, the last time protracted negotiations preceded a battle and the only time a whole army was excommunicated during a war.

The Battle was preceded by a large scale skirmish on the outskirts of Northampton and during an assault, part of the town was burnt down.

King Henry VI was captured and in its immediate aftermath, Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York first laid claim to the throne of England. It was the beginning of the war of succession that ended bloodily at Towton
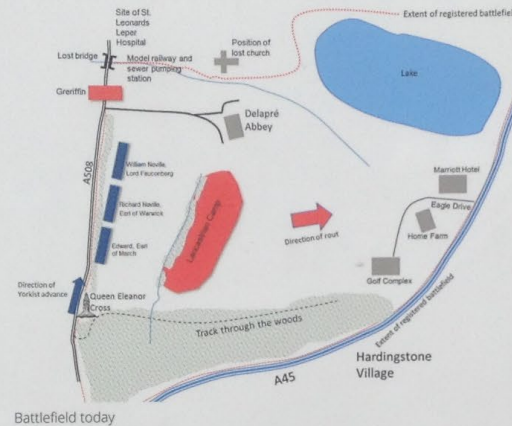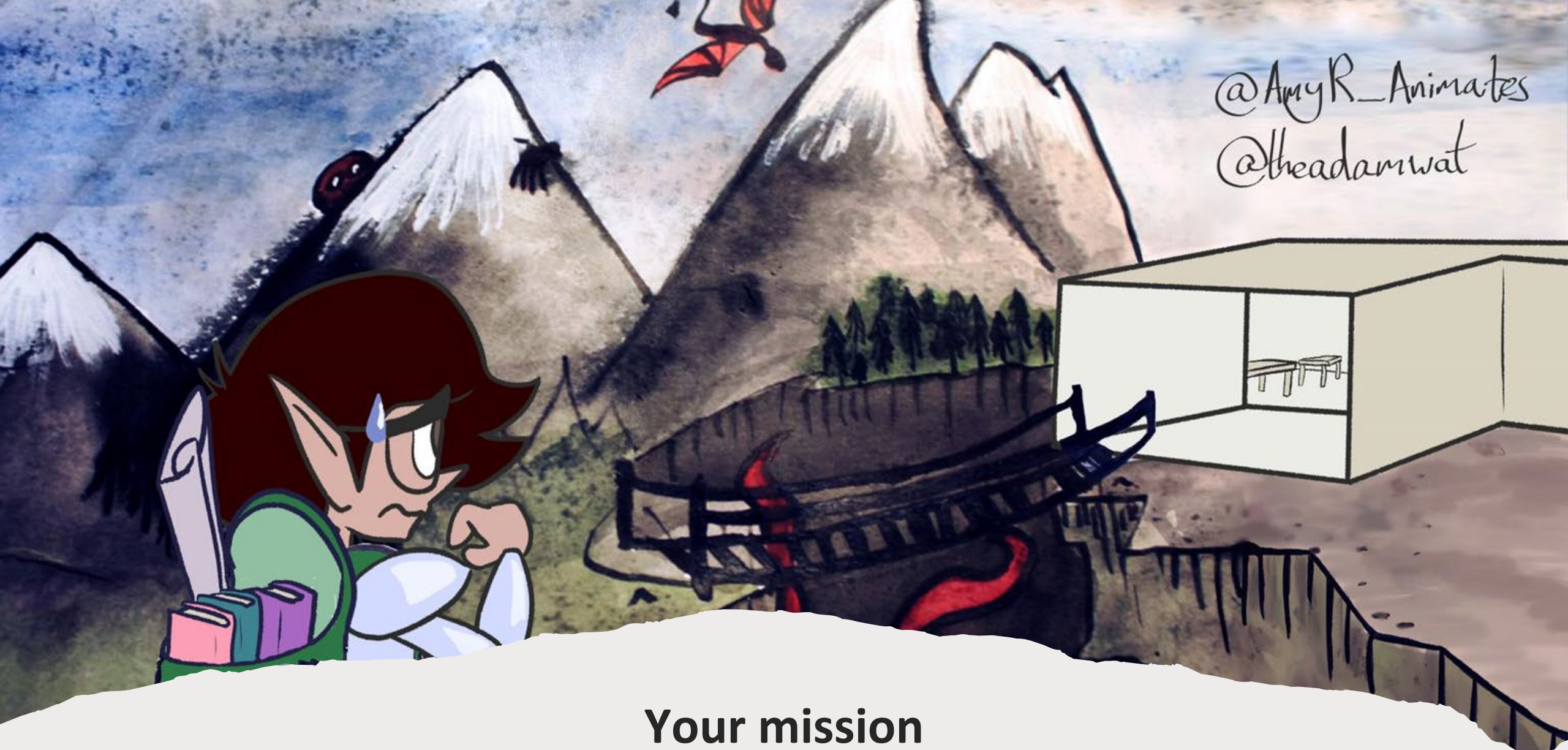
Battlefield today

Battlefield re-enactment

...ball in England, found on the battlefield

Location 8: As you continue along your journey, past a herb garden and, later, a metal horse, you can almost hear the ancient battle cries, hoofbeats and clashing of weapons. An ordeal took place here, but in what year? Enter your answer in numerals. [4]

Your mission
Persuading students to accept the call to adventure

Motivation

Motivating reluctant heroes

"There is no such thing as an unmotivated student: all students not in a coma want to do something. Our task is to maximize the chances that what they want to do is to achieve the intended learning outcomes, and any unintended but desirable outcomes.

Motivating reluctant heroes

"The best sort of motivation arises from intrinsic interest, fascination, call it what you will, but, unfortunately, that occurs well down the track, when the student already knows a lot about the topic and … is already involved in it. Our problem as teachers is getting students to engage in learning before they have reached that stage."

Motivation

Motivating reluctant heroes

Two factors make students (or anyone, come to

that) want to learn something:

- It has to be important; it must have some value

  to the learner.

- The learner needs to expect success when

  engaging the learning task."

(Biggs & Tang, Teaching for Quality Learning at University, 4th Edition, pp.34-5)

Your mission

Consider the following questions:

1. What motivates characters in stories to accept the call to adventure, and to journey from their ordinary world into the unknown special world? Can you group these into positive and negative motivations?

Your mission

Consider the following questions:

2. What strategies can we put in at the course design stage to positively motivate students to accept the call to adventure? I.e., how do we present the call to adventure to try and tap into students' "intrinsic interest, fascination, call it what you will"?

Your mission

Consider the following questions:

3. What strategies do we have for dealing with students who refuse the call? What might we design into our courses to help up to find these students, so as to help address their motivational deficits as early as possible?

Your mission

Consider the following questions:

4. Once motivated, how do we retain that motivation throughout the journey? And what kinds of thing might cause it to be lost?