



CRITICAL VIEWING GUIDE

STAR WARS AND THE HERO'S JOURNEY

EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

It is a dark time for the Rebellion. Although the Death Star has been destroyed, Imperial troops have driven the Rebel forces from their hidden base and pursued them across the galaxy. Evading the dreaded Imperial Starfleet, a group of freedom fighters led by Luke Skywalker has established a new secret base on the remote ice world of Hoth. The evil lord Darth Vader, obsessed with finding young Skywalker, has dispatched thousands of remote probes into the far reaches of space...

Characters and Locations

Yoda: The 900 year-year-old Jedi Master residing on the planet Dagobah who teaches Luke the ways of the Force.

Lando Calrissian: Old friend of Han Solo's who is the administrator of Cloud City, a tibanna gas mining facility located above the planet Bespin.

Boba Fett: Mysterious and notorious bounty hunter who is hoping to win the reward posted by Jabba the Hutt for returning Han Solo to him.

Hoth: In ice planet serving as the new rebel base.

Dagobah: A densely vegetated world that is home to Jedi Master Yoda.

Cloud City: Mining colony that floats high above the planet Bespin.

Mythic Elements

As you view the film, look for examples of each of the following mythic elements:

1. The Dark Road of Trials
2. The Hunt
3. Into the Belly of the Beast
4. The Mystical Marriage
5. The Sacred Grove
6. Sacrifice
7. Betrayal
8. Temptation

Critical Viewing Questions

Having carefully watched the film, answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. By placing the new Rebel base on an ice world, what is Lucas symbolically telling us about Luke's journey to becoming a hero?
2. A "dagoba" is a Buddhist stupa, or shrine to which religious pilgrimages are made. By naming Yoda's world "Dagobah," what is Lucas suggesting about the relationship between Luke and Yoda?
3. In mythology, if someone is "consumed" or swallowed, they are suffering a symbolic death. Once that person is "resurrected" and re-enters the real world, there is a change, a transformation. What "consumes" Leia and Han in the asteroid field? How are they different when they re-emerge? On Dagobah, Luke is "consumed" by entering the tree-cave. What does he learn about himself while there?
4. When Luke arrives on Cloud City, he "descends to the underworld." How does Lucas suggest visually that this is indeed a hell-like setting?
5. While in the underworld, a hero will face temptations that will decide the course of his future. What temptation does Luke face while confronting Vader? How is Luke changed once he escapes the "underworld" of Cloud City?
6. Luke tries to seduce Luke to submitting to the Dark Side of the Force. All heroes are tempted at some point in their journey. What temptation do you face in your own life? What makes those things appealing? What dangers are associated with them?

