

The Four Feathers



Title: The Four Feathers

Year: 2002

Run time: 125 min.

Directed by: Shekhar Kapur

Screenplay by: Michael Schiffer & Hossein Amini (Based on: A.E.W. Mason)

Music by: James Horner

Cinematography: Robert Richardson

Starring

Heath Ledger, Kate Hudson, Wes Bentley, Djimon Hounsou, Michael Sheen, Alek Wek, Kris Marshall

Produced by: Paramount / Miramax

If we ignore the time and place in the film, we would find a similar story in those described in ancient mythology. In these movies, however, the Hero is more human and we feel more identified with him.

At the beginning the Hero is capable and worthy, (an outstanding student in a military academy) happy (devoted to the woman of his dreams) and sociable (he has five loyal friends). He is a young man with a promising future as he feels accepted by the society. Nothing seems to cloud his clear day. But...

In a certain moment, something happens in his life greater than his own strength. He is asked to fight a war, but he refuses! He is in an important crossroads and then, he chooses his own road instead of that followed by his friends.

He is punished for his rebellion and everyone despises him. His father does not want to see him anymore, his friends feel betrayed by him, he is called a coward and they give him four feathers (a symbol of cowardice). One of the feathers is given by his own fiancée. Now, he is alone. He has denied all his convictions and now, he is naked.

Convictions are important for the individual. He always identifies himself with what he thinks and feels, although weaknesses are often hidden behind them.

Generally, man reflects his environment because, as a mirror, he does not need to develop something from himself or feel bad because of that. Like a mirror, he is always covered by

mediocrity. The poet writes: "Liberty needs fearlessness and virtue".

The ironic element in the movies is how the Hero finds the courage to refuse to do what others expected. However, he sees himself as a coward as he frightens war! This fact motivates him to know himself and his own strength to make him grow stronger.

Often, during an inner crisis, the warrior within is born. Buda asserts: "suffering is the vehicle of conscience". An inner crisis is capable of destruction or can develop a new element inside. But, is the will enough to take action?

Action is paramount. The hero in the movies could survive with the stigma of cowardice only. However, he does not give up, he wants to do things, he wants to do something, he wants to reveal his own truth.

It is only possible if there is adventure and risk. The hero starts searching for the truth and starts his own journey, his personal adventure. He goes to the war alone without any protection. He has no weapons and lacks the dominant ideology of the society (to the service of the queen) He is destined to meet someone who will be with him in this journey. Someone who understands him since the beginning, someone who knows he is not a coward, and someone who is more than a friend as he saves his life and contributes with his growth.

He is put to the test many times, and in deadly conditions. The last minute he manages to survive because he has a strong will to live.

His life is saved for the first time because, in a difficult moment, he was able to show compassion, respect and kindness to a slave. A man has all these feelings (under difficult conditions) when the true Love is awoken within. Love does not need to be fed from outside, it is an inner driving force to help others. Love has two elements: sacrifice and redemption.

This is what motivates the hero not his cowardice. It was only an excuse. Fear is part of every human being, and it will never be eradicated. Fear uses different masks to deceive and only the one with a courageous soul can recognize it and face it. The main weapon to confront fear is love. This is precisely what happens in the movies. The love for others is what makes the hero go through the tests and be a winner at the end. He puts himself in danger without being forced.

At the beginning, he tries to save his friends and the British army from the enemy. But, he fails because of the arrogance of his friend who sent the first feather. However, his sacrifice is not in vain. Now, he is strong and his fear is under control. He knows that something new has born inside him.

Next, the final and most difficult test comes. The descending to the Hades is a test that, according to Campbell, author of "Psychology of the Hero", appears in all mythologies. As many other heroes, Orpheus decided to descend for his love to Eurydice, and Hercules, who also descended to the Hades to rescue Alcestis, his friend's wife. Hades is the unconscious in a psychological interpretation. Mortals cannot descend voluntarily. How to deal with the monster of selfishness hidden within? Just a few can be like Saint George who killed his dragon, it is, his shadow.



In the movies, the hero goes into a prison-hell voluntarily moved by love to save his last friend. In hell, he will lose his personality. Help from outside arrives when his selfishness and arrogance vanish and he feels hopeless. Once again, he will have to fight to show his love for life. His fear is gone as he has nothing to lose and nothing to fear. He owns everything, and nobody can take it away from him, not even death.