

Hero's Journey Analysis – "Groundhog Day"

Step 1 Ordinary World

PHIL CONNORS (Bill Murray) talking to a bluescreen. Empty gestures. He's not real.

Giving weather forecast. Tells us about Groundhog tradition. Clearly not looking forward to it.

Soon as it's clear he's off. 2.44

Larry doesn't like him.

Phil doesn't want to stay in Punxatawney any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Rita is standing in front of the blue screen.
She's really fun.

You should stay on and enjoy some of the other festivities. This is sort of a CALL TO ADVENTURE – but not primary one. It's heralding the call.

No. I'll be here for the 5. Sort of a refusal. Because ultimately the decision is going to be taken out of his hands. So we're making it clear early on that if the decision was his he wouldn't be doing it.

3.40

They're driving out of town.

Says he's going to be leaving for a bigger network.
Arrogant, ambitious – his LACK.

Rita thinks Groundhog Day is a nice story.
You are "New" aren't you.
CONTRAST – the cynic and the romantic.

Look in the mirror and see what you look like.
He makes fun of her.

She likes blood sausage. He doesn't.

They arrive 6:10

He says he can't stay in this flea pit.
She's booked him into a B&B.
Good to create some distance between them.

She asks him to come to dinner
No thanks. I've seen Larry eat.

Did he actually call himself the talent?

7:39

6:00 I've got you Babe comes on the radio (for the first time)

Expect hazardous travel – big blizzard coming

He's ignoring these warnings

Punxtawney Phil – same name as the Groundhog Day.

Come down for breakfast – series of interactions we're going to see repeated.

Will there be an early spring

Woman asks about the weather

No espresso.

Will you be checking out today?

Chance of departure today? 100%

We're setting him up.

Ned Ryerson comes up

Friend from school

Case Western High

Bing

Tries to sell him life insurance

So good to see you

What you doing for dinner

Something else

He steps into a puddle of water

12:00

He comes to the park

Polka music

Everyone else is bouncing

He's oblivious

Where you been, Phil

Missing all the fun

They're hicks, Rita

He thinks he's better than these people

That he has nothing to learn, nothing to gain

13:05

He does his intro of Punxatawney Phil

13:56
 Isn't he cute
 Phil clearly doesn't' think he is

He sees a shadow – six more weeks of winter.

Phil gives a sarcastic take
 Refuses to redo it
 Prima Donnas

They're driving in snow
 The blizzard we're not supposed to get
 He's been saying this is not going to happen
 In the first report
 Then to the woman in the B&B

Step 2 CALL TO ADVENTURE

The blizzard could be considered a CALL TO ADVENTURE

Step 3 Refusal of the Call

Phil gets out of the car
 Talks to the patrolman
 Don't you listen to the weather
 I make the weather
 You've got the moisture on your head
 Phil is out of his element
 Freezing cold in his shirt – no jacket

This could be considered a REFUSAL

17:01
 He wants a phone line – can't get one
 Don't you have one for emergencies or celebrities
 He's both
 A celebrity in an emergency
 Gets whacked by a sign

Step 4 – Meeting with the Mentor

In the bar – 17:30
 Going to the Groundhog dinner
 No?
 No going home to read Hustler
 Freezing cold

Rita is effectively a MENTOR to him
 It's her influence that is going to change him

Step 5 – Crossing the threshold

Next morning
I've got you Babe

So the universe wants to keep him there
He doesn't have any choice

18:20
Phil thinks they've got it wrong
Playing yesterday's tape

When he looks out
It's exactly the same
What the hell

Same guy comes up to him
Didn't we do this yesterday?
What day is this?
Feb 2 Groundhog Day

Come down to breakfast again
Same questions from the woman
Coffee? I'll have a double.

Checking out today?
Chance of departure: 80% 75-80.

It's Groundhog Day
Still just once a year isn't it.

21:06 Ned comes up again

Steps into water again

Arrives at Gobbler's Knob again

I need someone to give me a good hard slap
She slaps him.

Can I be serious with you for a minute
I'm having a problem
I'm feeling weird

It's Groundhog Day ... again.

The guy says exactly the same thing again
He leaves

Same cold shower

When long distance lines repaired (did this at 17 – wipes
that out of the equation)

He snaps a pencil
 Watches the clock

25:06
 I've got you Babe
 Pencil is whole again

Skips breakfast

Ignores Ned
 Steps in puddle again

He tells Rita he has to talk
 When you get finished, come and meet me in the diner
 Prima Donnas

So he's forced to cross the threshold
 We've had a series of scenes to prove that he's crossed
 that threshold

Now, finally he's accepted he's in the special world

Step 6 Tests, Allies and Enemies

Rita and phil in the diner 26:50
 Again, typically there is the WATERHOLE scene
 People drop plates

I'm reliving the same day over and over
 This is the third time
 She doesn't get it

I'm not going back to Pittsburgh
 Because of the blizzard

Has his head examined
 28:00
 By Harold Ramis
 Here we have a literal TEST

Sees a psychiatrist
 I think we should meet again
 How's tomorrow for you (there is no tomorrow)
 And another literal TEST

In the bar – another Waterhole
 With some new ALLIES – people who he previously described
 as morons
 I was in the Virgin Islands once
 That was a good day
 Why couldn't I get that day over and over

Glass half full, half empty
29:50

What would you do if you were in the same place and
nothing you did mattered?
That is their life.

Phil drives them
30:21

No consequences
We could do whatever we want

He drives over a mailbox
Police in pursuit
32:01

Don't drive on the railroad tracks
Heads toward a train
Swerves off at the last minute
(He's saving this for later – he's not to push that far
yet)

Arrested
33:40
In jail

I've got you Babe

Yes!!!
Suddenly it's fun

Step 7 The Approach

So he now sees an upside

He's now pre-empting their questions
Police not looking for me?

Hold my room for me

Punches Ned
Watches someone walk in the puddle
Steps over it

In the diner
He's eating like a pig
35:37

My years are not advancing as fast I'd like

He's smoking
I don't worry about anything any more

She recites poetry
Unwept,
Sir Walter Scott

I know you're egocentric
It's your defining characteristic
A reminder of his character failing

Coming?
Thought you didn't like this town
No, it's starting to grow on me.

He chats up a girl
Again, the Approach is often about courtship
But instead of courting Rita
It's Nancy
This is a dalliance
This isn't the real deal

37:30
Nancy Taylor
What high school?
Who was your English teacher? Mrs Walsh.

Next day
38:08
He sees the girl at Gobblers Know
He uses the information
How are you?

Fireside scene
39:23
He's putting the moves on her
But he calls her Rita

One night stand?
I've loved you, I've always loved you
Will you be my wife?
She accepts his offer

This is a contrast with Rita
Who won't fall for the same lines
She is a more discerning Threshold Guardian

40:13
He predicts a bunch of actions
Armoured truck arrives
He steals a bag of money

So again
 He has a special power
 But it's all about the self

Cinema
 He arrives as a cowboy with another woman
 Nancy walks past
 Not a great scene but it tells us he's over with Nancy

Step 8 The Ordeal

He's practised his powers during the Approach
 Now he's going after the Inmost Cave – Rita

You could view this as either another APPROACH phase

42:30
 If you only had one day to live, Rita, what would you do

What do you want?
 What sort of men do you like?
 Come and have a coffee?

She says what she wants
 Seeing anyone?
 Too personal

What he wants is someone like her
 LOVE THIS SCENE
 Me, me, me

This is a man we're talking about right?
 He plays an instrument
 I am really close on this one

He pulls the distributor cap off the truck
 Van won't start

45:08
 She orders a drink

Replay
 This time he orders a drink
 The same as hers
 Makes him think of Rome

What shall we drink to?
 Groundhog
 World peace

Replay again
 46
 This time it's to world peace

Amen

No white chocolate
People place too much emphasis on careers
In five years I want to be in the mountains

She studied 19th Century French poetry
He laughs
What a waste of time

He starts reciting French poetry
You speak French
Oui

Making a snowman
I hope that one day I could do this with my own children

Throwing snowballs
They lie in the snow

Dancing in the gazebo
49:30
You think you know me well, but you don't know me, plays
on the soundtrack.

She says she's amazed
50:21

Perfect Day
You couldn't have planned a day like this
You could but it would take a lot of work

Come in
I'll show you this one thing

This is very definitely an ORDEAL coming up

He kisses her
I don't think we should do this
Perfect end to a perfect day
A little fast for me
French poetry
Ice cream – Rocky Road
Tired
We can see each other tomorrow
No, it's got to be tonight
Let's not spoil it
I can't say with you
I love you – you don't even know me

52:36
Did you call up my friends

Is this what love is for you?
 I could never love you, Phil, because you could never
 love anyone but yourself

Slap 53:06

The snowman scene
 Now he's a bit manic
 The magic has gone

Slap
 Slap
 54:11

He's reached the point where he needs to change
 Very typical for the Ordeal phase
 The hero wants something
 They can't get it until they change
 He hasn't changed at all up to this point
 He has a special power
 But he's been using it solely for himself
 He's about the SELF and not about the TRIBE

SHOW THIS SCENE

He's died now

Phil, you look terrible.
 55:01

The clock turns over
 Crash

Now he's really low
 The fun has gone

He watches Jeopardy
 He knows all the answers

56:17
 You're hypocrites
 I'll give you a prediction
 Cold, grey, last for the rest of your life

Knocks the clock radio off
 Punches it
 Throws it onto the ground
 57

More death

Blah, blah, blah

No way this winter is ever going to end
 He's got to be stopped
 57:46

There's something wrong with Phil
 There are a lot of things really wrong with Phil

Phil steals the groundhog
 Drives off
 59:23

Punches through a locked gate
 1:00:00

He drives over the edge into the quarry
 Phil?
 Explosion
 The death of Phil

THE VERY DEFINITION OF ORDEAL

Wakes again
 Comes down to breakfast in his pajamas

Takes the toaster up
 Sticks it in the bath

Walks in front of a truck

Jumps off a tower

She sees him dead
 1:03:00
 He was a great guy
 I really really liked him a lot

So he's suffered death a hundred times over

Step 9 The Reward

Having suffered death
 He's changed

1:03:20
 He's alive in the diner
 Says he's a God.
 He's immortal

He does have a special view of things now
 Vogler talks about this

I want you to believe in me

Phil knows everything about everyone

Nancy makes a noise like a chipmunk
Guys going to drop some plates

I know all about you
He's more honest here
Not putting on an act any more

I told you I wake up here everyday
And it's always going to be February 2nd
And there's nothing I can do about it

Gives her a note of what he's going to stay

She's going to stay with him for the rest of the day

They are on the bed

THIS IS a CLASSIC REWARD

Throwing cards into the hat
Games – again very typical

I am a jerk

It's not a curse
It's been a really nice day for me

Maybe we could do it again some time

She was waiting for midnight
It's 3:02 am
He reads poetry
As she rests on him

Now he's changed but he's still trapped.
He puts a blanket over her

The kindest, sweetest, prettiest person I've ever met

The first time I saw you, something happened to me
I knew that I wanted to hold you as hard as I could

1:09

I don't deserve someone like you
But if I ever could
I swear I would love you for the rest of my life
Good night, Rita

Step 10 The Road Home

I've got you Babe
 1:10:29
 He's alone

He's changed but he's still here
 He's still trapped in the town
 He has further to travel
 A classic reminder – the Road home

Step 11 THE RESURRECTION

He gives money to the homeless guy

Takes coffee and pastries to the crew
 He's smiling
 In contrast with his earlier form

Better shot over here
 Let me give you a hand with the heavy stuff

He hears piano
 Goes for piano lessons
 1:12:37

Scales

He embraces the guy at the B&B
 Brings some cheer into his life

Plays piano again
 1:13
 It's hurting her ears

He carves an ice sculpture

Now he's playing reasonably well.
 Teacher is now impressed.

Ned Ryerson
 Hugs him
 I have missed you so much
 I got to get going

He sees a homeless guy
 He passed away
 I want to see his chart
 Sometimes people just die
 Not today

He takes him for dinner
 1:16

So the guy comes back to life – classic resurrection

Finds him dead again.
Some times people just die

Now everyone is around him for the broadcast.
Nice speech, Phil.
You touched me.

I got to go.
She wants a coffee
But he says he has errands to run
Complete turnaround
Instead of him hitting on her
He is the one who is resisting

He stops a kid falling out of a tree.
You have never thanked me

Flat tyre helps old ladies

Stops a guy from choking on his steak

Another Resurrection

1:20

Step 12 – SHARE THE ELIXIR

Go to the party – it's like the feast
Bringing the elixir back to the tribe

Phil
I think he's already in there

PARTY

Phil is playing the piano
He sees her

He starts playing something gentle
His piano teacher is watching

Brilliant
Everyone claps
Isn't he good
He's my student
I'm so proud

He dances with her

Ladies he helped with the tyre
Who are they?
Don't know. Been hitting on me all night.
Everyone thanks him

Hang on to him dear
He's a real find

What did you do today
Same old, same old

Helped the people with the wedding
Sharing the elixir
She doesn't understand

Dr Connors
Thanks for fixing his back

Charity auction
What am I bid
Nancy and Doris bidding

Rita bids \$339.78
Sold

She comes and claims her prize

Larry goes up
Nancy not interested
2 bits to the old lady
Larry is still where he was - contrast

Ned Ryerson comes up
New insurance agent

Phil, this is the best day of my life
Where are we going?
Let's not spoil it
Just gives it a little edge - not all sweetness and light
We don't like Ned
Don't want him to be part of the new world

He sculpts her out of the ice
I know your face so well
I could have done it with my eyes closed

No matter what happens tomorrow
I love you
I'm happy too
She accepts it now because it's real

Next morning

Clock switches over
1:30:00

I've got you Babe
Oh, please not again

So they surprise us

She reaches across him
She's real
She's still there
Something is different

Today is tomorrow

They didn't do the deed
But they're about to

1:33:09
Let's live here

What a day this has been – song
There's a smile on my face