

## The Death of a Hero: the Ramifications of Secular Humanism on the Hero's Journey in *Doctor Who*

Science fiction is, as author David Layton points out, “the literature of our times” (7), and the BBC’s *Doctor Who* is one of the most popular works of science fiction television literature in the modern world. Its eponymous time-traveling alien adventurer is a well-known and much-loved hero for many throughout the United Kingdom and America. For over fifty years, the Doctor has regularly saved the world, explored a vast and wondrous universe, and inspired many to dream of life out among the stars. And, like all science fiction, *Doctor Who* is not just entertainment; it also functions as a cultural mirror, using each episode to explore the major theological and ethical issues of the world around it. The rising popularity of the Secular Humanist worldview in both countries thus has a major impact on *Doctor Who*, as the show begins to more thoroughly approach complex issues through the lens of the Humanist ideology espoused by its directors. This worldview change has significant negative consequences for the show, as it affects the titular character’s ability to follow the hero’s journey on his adventures. This excerpt from my Master’s thesis uses material on Humanism, religious statistics, academic essays on *Doctor Who*, multiple episodes of the show, and original research in the form of an interview with one of the show’s scriptwriters, to explore how Secular Humanist ideas influence the Doctor’s frequent divergence from the hero’s path, and how that ideology is turning a beloved defender of the Earth and wanderer in time and space into an anti-hero who damages everyone with whom he comes in contact.