

ARCHETYPES OVERVIEW

What is an archetype? It is a literary term that originates from the philosopher Carl Jung's idea of **recurring patterns of situations, character patterns and symbols** existing **universally** and instinctively in all cultures.

Situational Archetypes

Quests: This motif describes the search for someone or some object which, when found and brought back, will restore fertility to a wasted land or spiritual or emotional barrenness.

Tasks: To save the kingdom, to win the fair lady, to identify himself so that he may reassume his rightful position, the hero must perform some nearly superhuman deed.

Initiations: This usually takes the form of an initiation into life, that is, the depiction of an adolescent coming into maturity and adulthood with all the attendant problems and responsibilities that this process involves. An awakening awareness, or an increased perception of the world and the people in it usually form the climax of this situation.

Journeys: Usually combined with any or all of the foregoing situational archetypes, the journey is used to send the hero in search of information or some intellectual truth. A common employment of the journey archetype is the descent into a form of "hell".

Falls: This archetype describes a descent from a higher to a lower state of being. The experience involves spiritual defilement and/or a loss of innocence and bliss. The fall is also usually accompanied by expulsion from a kind of paradise as penalty for disobedience and transgression.

Death & Resurrections: The most common of all situational archetypes, this motif grows out of the parallel between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. Morning and springtime represent birth or youth; evening and winter suggest old age or death. {Tess from *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is emotionally satisfied when she works as a dairy maid on a farm where lush vegetation prevail, but when she loses all, she is employed on a farm that is barren and vegetation is scant.

Nature vs. Mechanistic World: Nature is good while technology and society are often evil.

Battle between Good and Evil: Obviously, this is the battle between two primal forces, easily found in cartoons, Westerns, and horrors.

The Unhealable Wound: This wound is either physical or psychological and cannot be healed fully. This would also indicate a loss of innocence. These wounds always ache and often drive the sufferer to desperate measures.

Ritual: The actual ceremonies that initiate experiences that will mark his rite of passage into another state.

Character Archetypes:

Pure Hero: This archetype is so well defined that the life of the hero can be clearly divided into a series of well-marked adventures: 1) hero's mother is usually a virgin, 2) the circumstances of his conception are unusual, at birth some attempt is made to kill him, he is spirited away and reared by guardians, reader knows little of his kingdom, but upon reaching manhood, he returns to his future kingdom. He then marries a princess, becomes king. Sometimes he loses favor with the gods, is driven from the kingdom, and meets a mysterious death.

Young Man from the Provinces Hero: This hero is spirited away as a young man and raised by strangers. He later returns to his home and heritage where he is a stranger who can see new problems and new solutions.

Initiates Heroes: These are young heroes/heroines who, prior to their quest, must endure some training and ceremony; they are usually innocent and often wear white.

Mentors: These individuals serve as teachers or counselors to the initiates. Sometimes they work as role models and often serve as a father/mother figure.

Hunting Group of Companions: Loyal companions willing to face any number of perils in order to be together.

Loyal Retainers: These individuals are somewhat like servants who are heroic themselves. Their duty is to protect the hero and reflect the nobility of the hero.

Friendly Beast: Animal/Fantasy character which befriends man.

Scapegoat: An animal or more usually a human whose death in a public ceremony expiates some taint or sin that has been visited upon a community.

Outcast: A figure who is banished from a social group for some crime against his fellow man. The outcast is usually destined to become a wanderer from place to place.

Devil Figure: Evil incarnate, this character offers worldly goods, fame, or knowledge to the protagonist in exchange for possession of soul.

Creature of Nightmare: A monster usually summoned from the deepest, darkest part of the human psyche to threaten the hero/heroine.

Evil Figure with Ultimately Good Heart: This is a redeemable devil figure saved by the nobility (or love) of the hero. {Scrooge in Christmas Carol}

Earthmother: This character, symbolic of fruition & abundance & fertility, traditionally offers spiritual and emotional nourishment to those with whom she comes in contact.

Temptress: Characterized by sensuous beauty, this woman is one to whom the protagonist is physically attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall.

Platonic Ideal: This woman is a source of inspiration and a spiritual ideal, for whom the protagonist or author has an intellectual rather than a physical attraction.

Damsel in Distress: The vulnerable woman who must be rescued by the hero. She is often used as a way to ensnare the hero. {Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty}

Unfaithful Wife: A woman, who is married to a man she sees as dull and unimaginative, is physically attracted to a more viril and desirable man.

Symbolic Archetypes

Light vs. Darkness: Light usually suggest hope, renewal, or intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance or despair.

Water vs. Desert: Water represent life and growth; the aridity of the desert is often associated with spiritual sterility and desiccation.

Heaven vs. Hell: The skies and mountain tops house man's gods; the bowels of the earth contain the diabolic forces that inhabit his universe.

Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity: Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding of situations instinctively as opposed to those supposedly in charge. A hero often needs the guidance of innate wisdom.

Haven vs. Wilderness: Places of safety contrast sharply against the dangerous wilderness.

Supernatural Intervention: The gods intervene on the side of the hero or sometimes against him.

Magic Weapon: This symbolizes the extraordinary quality of the hero because no one else can wield the weapon or use it to its full potential. It is usually given by a mentor figure.

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