

# Archetypes

Carl Jung first applied the term archetype to literature. He recognized that there were universal patterns in all stories and mythologies regardless of culture or historical period and hypothesized that part of the human mind contained a collective unconscious shared by all members of the human species, a sort of universal, primal memory. Joseph Campbell took Jung's ideas and applied them to world mythologies. In *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, among other works, he refined the concept of hero and the hero's journey—George Lucas used Campbell's writings to formulate the Star Wars saga. Recognizing archetypal patterns in literature brings patterns we all unconsciously respond to in similar ways to a conscious level.

The term **archetype** can be applied to:

- An image
- A theme
- A symbol
- An idea
- A character type
- A plot pattern

**Archetypes** can be expressed in

- Myths
- Dreams
- Literature
- Religions
- Fantasies
- Folklore

## Heroic Archetypes:

1. Hero as warrior (Odysseus): A near god-like hero faces physical challenges and external enemies
2. Hero as lover (Prince Charming): A pure love motivate hero to complete his quest
3. Hero as Scapegoat (Jesus): Hero suffers for the sake of others
4. Transcendent Hero: The hero of tragedy whose fatal flaw brings about his downfall, but not without achieving some kind of transforming realization or wisdom (Greek and Shakespearean tragedies—Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth, etc.)
5. Romantic/Gothic Hero: Hero/lover with a decidedly dark side (Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*)
6. Proto-Feminist Hero: Female heroes (*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin)
7. Apocalyptic Hero: Hero who faces the possible destruction of society
8. Anti-Hero: A non-hero, given the vocation of failure, frequently humorous (Homer Simpson)
9. Defiant Anti-hero: Opposer of society's definition of heroism/goodness. (*Heart of Darkness*)
10. Unbalanced Hero: The Protagonist who has (or must pretend to have) mental or emotional deficiencies (*Hamlet*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*)
11. The Other—the Denied Hero: The protagonist whose status or essential otherness makes heroism possible (*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan)
12. The Superheroic: Exaggerates the normal proportions of humanity; frequently has divine or supernatural origins. In some sense, the superhero is one apart, someone who does not quite belong, but who is nonetheless needed by society. (Mythological heroes, Superman)

## Types of Archetypal Journeys

1. The quest for identity
2. The epic journey to find the promised land/to found the good city
3. The quest for vengeance
4. The warrior's journey to save his people
5. The search for love (to rescue the princess/damsel in distress)
6. The journey in search of knowledge
7. The tragic quest: penance or self-denial
8. The fool's errand
9. The quest to rid the land of danger
10. The grail quest (the quest for human perfection)

## Stages of a Hero's Journey

- Stage 1: Departure:** The hero is called to adventure, although he is reluctant to accept.
- Stage 2: Initiation:** The hero crosses a threshold into a new, more dangerous world, gaining a more mature perspective.
- Stage 3: The Road of Trials:** The hero is given supernatural aid, endures tests of strength, resourcefulness, and endurance.
- Stage 4: The Innermost Cave:** The hero descends into the innermost cave, an underworld, or some other place of great trial. Sometimes this place can be within the hero's own mind. Because of this trial, the hero is reborn in some way—physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Through this experience, the hero changes internally.
- Stage 5: Return and Reintegration with Society:** The hero uses his new wisdom to restore fertility and order to the land

## Characteristics of the Hero's Journey

- The hero is naïve and inexperienced
- The hero meets monsters or monstrous men
- The hero has a strange, wise being as a mentor
- The hero yearns for the beautiful lady who is sometimes his guide or inspiration
- The hero must go on a journey, learn a lesson, change in some way, and return home
- The hero often crosses a body of water or travels on a bridge.
- The hero is born and raised in a rural setting away from cities
- The origin of the hero is mysterious or the hero loses his/her parents at a young age, being raised by animals or a wise guardian
- The hero returns to the land of his/her birth in disguise or as an unknown
- The hero is special, one of a kind. He/she might represent a whole nation or culture
- The hero struggles for something valuable and important
- The hero has help from divine or supernatural forces
- The hero has a guide or guides
- The hero goes through a rite of passage or initiation, an event that marks a change from an immature to a more mature understanding of the world
- The hero undergoes some type of ritual or ceremony after his/her initiation
- The hero has a loyal band of companions
- The hero makes a stirring speech to his/her companions
- The hero engages in tests or contests of strength (physical and/or mental) and shows pride in his/her excellence
- The hero suffers an unhealable wound, sometimes an emotional or spiritual wound from which the hero never completely recovers.

## Situational Archetypes

Archetype	Description	Example
The Quest	What the Hero must accomplish in order to bring fertility back to the wasteland, usually a search for some talisman, which will restore peace, order, and normalcy to a troubled land.	
The Task	The nearly superhuman feat(s) the Hero must perform in order to accomplish his quest.	
The Journey	The journey sends the Hero in search of some truth that will help save his kingdom.	
The Initiation	The adolescent comes into his maturity with new awareness and problems.	
The Ritual	The actual ceremonies the Initiate experiences that will mark his rite of passage into another state. A clear sign of the character's role in his society	
The Fall	The descent from a higher to a lower state of being usually as a punishment for transgression. It also involves the loss of innocence.	
Death and Rebirth	The most common of all situational archetypes, this motif grows out of a parallel between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. Thus morning and springtime represent birth, youth, or rebirth, while evening and winter suggest old age or death.	
Battle between Good and Evil	Obviously, a battle between two primal forces. Mankind shows eternal optimism in the continual portrayal of good triumphing over evil despite great odds.	
The Unhealable Wound	Either a physical or psychological wound that cannot be fully healed. The wound symbolizes a loss of innocence.	

## Character Archetypes

Archetype	Description	Example
The Hero	The Hero is a protagonist whose life is a series of well-marked adventures. The circumstances of his birth are unusual, and he is raised by a guardian. He will have to leave his kingdom, only to return to it upon reaching manhood. Characterized by courage, strength, and honor, the hero will endure hardship, even risk his life for the good of all. Leaves the familiar to enter an unfamiliar and challenging world.	
Young Man from the Provinces	The Hero returns to his home and heritage where he is a stranger who can see new problems and new solutions	
The Initiates	The Initiates are young heroes or heroines who must go through some training and ceremony before undertaking their quest.	
Mentor	The Mentor is an older, wiser teacher to the initiates. He often serves as a father or mother figure. He gives the hero gifts (weapons, food, magic, information), serves as a role model or as hero's conscience.	
Mentor - Pupil Relationship	In this relationship, the Mentor teaches the Hero/pupil the necessary skills for surviving the quest.	
The Threshold Guardian	Tests the hero's courage and worthiness to begin the journey	
Father - Son Conflict	In this relationship, the tension is built due to separation from childhood or some other source when the two meet as men.	
Hunting Group of Companions	These are loyal companions willing to face hardship and ordeal in order to stay together.	
Loyal Retainers	The Retainer's duty is to reflect the nobility and power of the hero.	
Friendly Beast	An animal companion showing that nature is on the side of the hero	
The Shadow	A worthy opponent with whom the hero must struggle in a fight to the end. Must be destroyed or neutralized. Psychologically can represent the darker side of the hero's own psyche.	
The Devil Figure	This character is evil incarnate.	
The Evil Figure with Ultimately Good Heart	A devil figure with the potential to be good. This person is usually saved by the love of the hero.	

The Creature of Nightmare	A monster usually summoned from the deepest, darkest part of the human psyche to threaten the lives of the hero/heroine. Often it is a perversion or desecration of the human body.	
The Scapegoat	An animal, or more usually a human, whose death in a public ceremony expiates some taint or sin of a community. They are often more powerful in death than in life.	
The Outcast	A character banished from a social group for some real or imagined crime against his fellow man, usually destined to wander from place to place.	
The Platonic Ideal	A woman who is a source of inspiration to the hero, who has an intellectual rather than physical attraction to her	
Damsel in Distress	A vulnerable woman who needs to be rescued by the hero. She is often used as a trap to ensnare the unsuspecting hero.	
The Earth Mother	Symbolic of fruition, abundance, and fertility, this character traditionally offers spiritual and emotional nourishment to those with whom she comes in contact. Often depicted in earth colors, has large breasts and hips symbolic of her childbearing capacities.	
The Temptress or Black Goddess	Characterized by sensuous beauty, this woman is one to whom the protagonist is physically attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall. May appear as a witch or vampire	
White Goddess	Good, beautiful maiden, usually blond, may make an ideal marriage partner; often has religious or intellectual overtones.	
The Unfaithful Wife	A woman married to a man she sees as dull or distant and is attracted to more virile or interesting men.	
Star-Crossed Lovers	Two characters engaged in a love affair fated to end tragically for one or both due to the disapproval of society, friends, family, or some tragic situation.	

## Symbolic Archetypes

Archetype	Description	Example
Light vs. Darkness	Light usually suggests hope, renewal, or intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.	
Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity	Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding of situations instinctively as opposed to those supposedly in charge. Loyal retainers often exhibit this wisdom as they accompany the hero on the journey.	
Supernatural Intervention	Spiritual beings intervene on the side of the hero or sometimes against him.	
Fire and Ice	Fire represents knowledge, light, life, and rebirth, while ice, like the desert, represents ignorance, darkness, sterility, and death.	
Nature vs. Mechanistic World	Nature is good while technology is evil.	
The Threshold	Gateway to a new world which the hero must enter to change and grow	
The Underworld	A place of death or metaphorically an encounter with the dark side of the self. Entering an underworld is a form of facing a fear of death.	
Haven vs. Wilderness	Places of safety contrast sharply against a dangerous wilderness. Heroes are often sheltered for a time to regain health and resources	
Water vs. Desert	Because Water is necessary to life and growth, it commonly appears as a birth symbol, as baptism symbolizes a spiritual birth. Rain, rivers, oceans, etc. also function the same way. The Desert suggests the opposite.	
Heaven vs. Hell	Man has traditionally associated parts of the universe not accessible to him with the dwelling places of the primordial forces that govern his world. The skies and mountaintops house his gods, the bowels of the earth contain diabolic forces.	
The Crossroads	A place or time of decision when a realization is made and change or penance results	
The Maze	A puzzling dilemma or great uncertainty, search for the dangerous monster inside of oneself, or a journey into the heart of darkness	
The Castle	A strong place of safety which holds treasure or princess, may be enchanted or bewitched	

The Tower	A strong place of evil, represents the isolation of self	
The Magic Weapon	The weapon the hero needs in order to complete his quest.	
The Whirlpool	Symbolizes the destructive power of nature or fate.	
Fog	Symbolizes uncertainty.	
Colors	<p>Red: blood, sacrifice, passion, disorder</p> <p>Green: growth, hope, fertility</p> <p>Blue: highly positive, security, tranquility, spiritual purity</p> <p>Black: darkness, chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, wisdom, evil, melancholy</p> <p>White: light, purity, innocence, timelessness (negatives: death, horror, supernatural)</p> <p>Yellow: enlightenment, wisdom</p>	
Numbers	<p>3—light, spiritual awareness, unity (holy trinity), male principle</p> <p>4—associated with the circle, life cycle, four seasons, female principle, earth, nature, elements</p> <p>7—the most potent of all symbolic numbers signifying the union of three and four, the completion of a cycle, perfect order, perfect number, religious symbol</p>	