

Archetypes in Literature and Art

Archetype:

—noun

1.

the original pattern or model from which all things of the same kind are copied or on which they are based; a model or first form; prototype.

2.

(in Jungian psychology) a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, image, etc., universally present in individual psyches.

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES LIST:

The Hero: The hero archetype is so well defined that the life of the protagonist can be clearly divided into a series of well-marked adventures, which strongly suggest a ritualistic pattern.

- The hero or heroine

- o is inexperienced and gullible
- o meets monsters or monstrous men
- o has a strange wise being as a teacher
- o is born and raised in a rural setting away from cities
- o has an origin that is mysterious or loses his or her parents at a young age, being raised by animals or a wise guardian
- o returns to the land of his or her birth in disguise or as an unknown
- o is tested to determine strength, persistence, and fortitude
- o faces danger and suffers pain or sorrow
- o wins what he or she fights for/wants

The 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.

The 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.

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

The Earth Mother: Symbolic of fruition, abundance, and fertility; this character offers spiritual and emotional nourishment to those with whom she comes in contact.

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

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

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

The Star Crossed Lovers: A young man and woman enter an ill-fated love affair which ends tragically in the death of either or both of the lovers.

The Quest: This motif describes the search for someone or some talisman which, when found and brought back, will restore fertility to a wasted land, the desolation of which is mirrored by a leader's illness and disability.

- The quest to know who you are
- The quest to find knowledge
- The quest to find the promised land or to build a beautiful city
- The warrior's quest to save the people
- The quest to get revenge
- The quest to rid the land of some danger
- The quest for fame and fortune
- The fool's quest (a clown, simple-minded person, or silly person saves the land or the princess because of his or her own innocence or foolishness)
- The search for love (to rescue the princess)
- The grail quest (the search for perfection or spiritual nourishment)

The Task: To save the kingdom, to win the fair lady, to identify him so that he may re-assume his rightful position, the Hero must perform some nearly superhuman deeds.

The Initiation: 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 forms the climax of this archetypal situation (e.g. Holden Caulfield, Huckleberry Finn, Kunte Kinte, Stephen Dedalus, Eugene Gant, Okonkwo, The boy in "The Bear" (Faulkner)).

The Journey: 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 hell.

The Fall: 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 moral transgression.

ARCHETYPAL SETTING ELEMENTS:

The threshold: a gateway to a new world the hero must enter to change and to grow

The underworld: the place where the hero encounters fear or death

The wilderness (forest): the place where rules don't apply, and people and things run wild

The river: the place representing the flow of time

B. Borah AP Literature

The garden: the place of harmony with nature, innocence, union, imagination; sometimes the garden can be ruined or poisoned, or the hero has to leave it

The wasteland: the opposite of the garden; the place of loneliness, desolation, despair; the place where there is no growth

The desert: the place of purity, reflection, solitude, the lonely quest for meaning

The crossroads: the place of suffering and decision

The maze or labyrinth: represents a puzzling dilemma or great uncertainty; sometimes represents the search for a monster within the self

The castle: the strong place of safety; holds the treasure or the princess; may be bewitched or enchanted; may represent home or some other safe place

The tower: the strong place where evil resides or where the self is locked away from society and fellowship

The winding stair: the long and difficult way into the unknown

The sun: Death at end of day and rebirth at dawn

The seasons: Birth in spring, life in summer, decline in fall, death in winter, rebirth in spring