

## Common Archetypes and Symbols in Literature

### SITUATION ARCHETYPES

1. **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.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **The Task** – This refers to a possibly superhuman feat that must be accomplished in order to fulfill the ultimate goal.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **The Journey** – The journey sends the hero in search for some truth of information necessary to restore fertility, justice, and/or harmony to the kingdom. The journey includes the series of trials and tribulations the hero faces along the way. Usually the hero descends into a real or psychological hell and is forced to discover the blackest truths, quite often concerning his faults. Once the hero is at this lowest level, he must accept personal responsibility to return to the world of the living.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **The Initiation** – This situation refers to a moment, usually psychological, in which an individual comes into maturity. He or she gains a new awareness into the nature of circumstances and problems and understands his or her responsibility for trying to resolve the dilemma. Typically, a hero receives a calling, a message or signal that he or she must make sacrifices and become responsible for getting involved in the problem. Often a hero will deny and question the calling and ultimately, in the initiation, will accept responsibility.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

5. **The Ritual** – Not to be confused with the initiation, the ritual refers to an organized ceremony that involves honored members of a given community and an Initiate. This situation officially brings the young man or woman into the realm of the community's adult world.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

6. **The Fall** – Not to be confused with the awareness in the initiation, this archetype describes a descent in action from a higher to a lower state of being, an experience which might involve defilement, moral imperfection, and/or loss of innocence. This fall is often accompanied by expulsion from a kind of paradise as penalty for disobedience and/or moral transgression.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

7. **Death and Rebirth** – The most common of all situational archetypes, this motif grows out of the parallel between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. It refers to those situations in which someone or something, concrete and/or metaphysical dies, yet is accompanied by some sign of birth or rebirth.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

8. **Nature vs. Mechanistic World** – Expressed in its simplest form, this refers to situations which suggest that nature is good whereas the forces of technology are bad.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Battle Between Good and Evil** – These situations pit obvious forces which represent good and evil against one another. Typically, good ultimately triumphs over evil despite great odds.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

10. **The Unhealable Wound** – This wound, physical or psychological, cannot be healed fully. This would also indicate a loss of innocence or purity. Often the wounds' pain drives the sufferer to desperate measures of madness.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. The Magic Weapon** – Sometimes connected with the task, this refers to a skilled individual hero's ability to use a piece of technology in order to combat evil, continue a journey, or to prove his or her identity as a chosen individual.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Father-Son Conflict** – Tension often results from separation during childhood or from an external source when the individuals meet as men and where the mentor often has a higher place in the affections of the hero than the natural parent. Sometimes the conflict is resolved in atonement.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity** – Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding intuitively as opposed to those supposedly in charge.

**Example** \_\_\_\_\_

## Character Archetypes

### 1. The Innocent

Motto: Free to be you and me

Core desire: to get to paradise

Goal: to be happy

Greatest fear: to be punished for doing something bad or wrong

Strategy: to do things right

Weakness: boring for all their naive innocence

Talent: faith and optimism

The Innocent is also known as: Utopian, traditionalist, naive, mystic, saint, romantic, dreamer.

### 2. The Orphan/Regular Guy or Gal

Motto: All men and women are created equal

Core Desire: connecting with others

Goal: to belong

Greatest fear: to be left out or to stand out from the crowd

Strategy: develop ordinary solid virtues, be down to earth, the common touch

The Regular Person is also known as: The good old boy, everyman, the person next door, the realist, the working stiff, the solid citizen, the good neighbor, the silent majority.

### 3. The Hero

Motto: Where there's a will, there's a way

Core desire: to prove one's worth through courageous acts

Goal: expert mastery in a way that improves the world

Greatest fear: weakness, vulnerability, being a "chicken"

Strategy: to be as strong and competent as possible

Weakness: arrogance, always needing another battle to fight

Talent: competence and courage

The Hero is also known as: The warrior, crusader, rescuer, superhero, the soldier, dragon slayer, the winner and the team player.

Weakness: losing one's own self in an effort to blend in or for the sake of superficial relationships

Talent: realism, empathy, lack of pretense

### 4. The Caregiver

Motto: Love your neighbour as yourself

Core desire: to protect and care for others

Goal: to help others

Greatest fear: selfishness and ingratitude

Strategy: doing things for others

Weakness: martyrdom and being exploited

Talent: compassion, generosity

The Caregiver is also known as: The saint, altruist, parent, helper, supporter.

## **5. The Explorer**

**Motto:** Don't fence me in

**Core desire:** the freedom to find out who you are through exploring the world

**Goal:** to experience a better, more authentic, more fulfilling life

**Biggest fear:** getting trapped, conformity, and inner emptiness

**Strategy:** journey, seeking out and experiencing new things, escape from boredom

**Weakness:** aimless wandering, becoming a misfit

**Talent:** autonomy, ambition, being true to one's soul

The explorer is also known as: The seeker, iconoclast, wanderer, individualist, pilgrim.

## **6. The Rebel**

**Motto:** Rules are made to be broken

**Core desire:** revenge or revolution

**Goal:** to overturn what isn't working

**Greatest fear:** to be powerless or ineffectual

**Strategy:** disrupt, destroy, or shock

**Weakness:** crossing over to the dark side, crime

**Talent:** outrageousness, radical freedom

The Outlaw is also known as: The rebel, revolutionary, wild man, the misfit, or iconoclast.

## **7. The Lover**

**Motto:** You're the only one

**Core desire:** intimacy and experience

**Goal:** being in a relationship with the people, work and surroundings they love

**Greatest fear:** being alone, a wallflower, unwanted, unloved

**Strategy:** to become more and more physically and emotionally attractive

**Weakness:** outward-directed desire to please others at risk of losing own identity

**Talent:** passion, gratitude, appreciation, and commitment

The Lover is also known as: The partner, friend, intimate, enthusiast, sensualist, spouse, team-builder.

## **8. The Creator**

**Motto:** If you can imagine it, it can be done

**Core desire:** to create things of enduring value

**Goal:** to realize a vision

**Greatest fear:** mediocre vision or execution

**Strategy:** develop artistic control and skill

**Task:** to create culture, express own vision

**Weakness:** perfectionism, bad solutions

**Talent:** creativity and imagination

### **9. The Jester**

**Motto:** You only live once

**Core desire:** to live in the moment with full enjoyment

**Goal:** to have a great time and lighten up the world

**Greatest fear:** being bored or boring others

**Strategy:** play, make jokes, be funny

**Weakness:** frivolity, wasting time

**Talent:** joy

The Jester is also known as: The fool, trickster, joker, practical joker or comedian.

### **10. The Sage**

**Motto:** The truth will set you free

**Core desire:** to find the truth.

**Goal:** to use intelligence and analysis to understand the world.

**Biggest fear:** being duped, misled—or ignorance.

**Strategy:** seeking out information and knowledge; self-reflection and understanding thought processes.

**Weakness:** can study details forever and never act.

**Talent:** wisdom, intelligence.

The Sage is also known as: The expert, scholar, detective, advisor, thinker, philosopher, academic, researcher, thinker, planner, professional, mentor, teacher, contemplative.

### **11. The Magician**

**Motto:** I make things happen.

**Core desire:** understanding the fundamental laws of the universe

**Goal:** to make dreams come true

**Greatest fear:** unintended negative consequences

**Strategy:** develop a vision and live by it

**Weakness:** becoming manipulative

**Talent:** finding win-win solutions

The Magician is also known as: The visionary, catalyst, inventor, charismatic leader, shaman, healer, medicine man.

### **12. The Ruler**

**Motto:** Power isn't everything, it's the only thing.

**Core desire:** control

**Goal:** create a prosperous, successful family or community

**Strategy:** exercise power

**Greatest fear:** chaos, being overthrown

**Weakness:** being authoritarian, unable to delegate

**Talent:** responsibility, leadership

The Ruler is also known as: The boss, leader, aristocrat, king, queen, politician, role model, manager or administrator.

## SYMBOLIC ARCHETYPES

1. **Light vs. Darkness** – Light usually suggests hope, renewal, OR intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.
2. **Water vs. Desert** – Because water is necessary to life and growth, it commonly appears as a birth or rebirth symbol. Water is used in baptism services, which solemnizes spiritual births. Similarly, the appearance of rain in a work of literature can suggest a character's spiritual birth.
3. **Heaven vs. Hell** – Humanity has traditionally associated parts of the universe not accessible to it with the dwelling places of the primordial forces that govern its world. The skies and mountaintops house its gods; the bowels of the earth contain the diabolic forces that inhabit its universe.
4. **Haven vs. Wilderness** – Places of safety contrast sharply against the dangerous wilderness. Heroes are often sheltered for a time to regain health and resources.
5. **Supernatural Intervention** – The gods intervene on the side of the hero or sometimes against him.
6. **Fire vs. Ice** – Fire represents knowledge, light, life, and rebirth while ice like desert represents ignorance, darkness, sterility, and death.

### 7. Colors

- a. **Black** (darkness) – chaos, mystery, the unknown, before existence, death, the unconscious, evil
- b. **Red** – blood, sacrifice; violent passion, disorder, sunrise, birth, fire, emotion, wounds, death, sentiment, mother, Mars, the note C, anger, excitement, heat, physical stimulation
- c. **Green** – hope, growth, envy, Earth, fertility, sensation, vegetation, death, water, nature, sympathy, adaptability, growth, Jupiter and Venus, the note G, envy
- d. **White** (light) – purity, peace, innocence, goodness, Spirit, morality, creative force, the direction East, spiritual thought
- e. **Orange** – fire, pride, ambition, egoism, Venus, the note D
- f. **Blue** – clear sky, the day, the sea, height, depth, heaven, religious feeling, devotion, innocence, truth, spirituality, Jupiter, the note F, physical soothing and cooling
- g. **Violet** – water, nostalgia, memory, advanced spirituality, Neptune, the note B
- h. **Gold** – Majesty, sun, wealth, corn (life dependency), truth
- i. **Silver** – Moon, wealth

### 8. Numbers:

- a. **Three** – the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost); Mind, Body, Spirit, Birth, Life, Death
- b. **Four** – Mankind (four limbs), four elements, four seasons
- c. **Six** – devil, evil
- d. **Seven** – Divinity (3) + Mankind (4) = relationship between man and God, seven deadly sins, seven days of week, seven days to create the world, seven stages of civilization, seven colors of the rainbow, seven gifts of Holy Spirit.

### 9. Shapes:

- a. **Oval** – woman, passivity
- b. **Triangle** – communication, between heaven and earth, fire, the number 3, trinity, aspiration, movement upward, return to origins, sight, light
- c. **Square** – pluralism, earth, firmness, stability, construction, material solidity, the number four
- d. **Rectangle** – the most rational, most secure
- e. **Cross** – the Tree of life, axis of the world, struggle, martyrdom, orientation in space

f. **Circle** – Heaven, intellect, thought, sun, the number two, unity, perfection, eternity, oneness, celestial realm, hearing/sound

g. **Spiral** – the evolution of the universe, orbit, growth, deepening, cosmic motion, relationship between unity and multiplicity, macrocosm, breath, spirit, water

**10. Nature:**

a. **Air** – activity, creativity, breath, light, freedom (liberty), movement

b. **Ascent** – height, transcendence, inward journey, increasing intensity

c. **Center** – thought, unity, timelessness, spacelessness, paradise, creator, infinity

d. **Descent** – unconscious, potentialities of being, animal nature

e. **Duality** – Yin-Yang, opposites, complements, positive-negative, male-female, life-death

f. **Earth** – passive, feminine, receptive, solid

g. **Fire** – the ability to transform, love, life, health, control, sun, God, passion, spiritual energy, regeneration

h. **Bodies of water:** Lake – mystery, depth, unconscious; sea or ocean – lost, can't return home

i. **Crescent moon** – change, transition

j. **Mountain** – height, mass, loftiness, center of the world, ambition, goals

k. **Valley** – depression, low-points, evil, unknown

l. **Sun** – Hero, son of Heaven, knowledge, the Divine eye, fire, life force, creative-guiding force, brightness, splendor, active awakening, healing, resurrection, ultimate wholeness

m. **Water** – passive, feminine

n. **Rivers/Streams** – life force, life cycle

o. **Stars** – guidance

p. **Wind** – Holy Spirit, life, messenger

q. **Ice/Snow** – coldness, barrenness

r. **Clouds/Mist** – mystery, sacred

s. **Rain** – life giver

t. **Steam** – transformation to the Holy Spirit

u. **Cave** – feminine

v. **Lightning** – intuition, inspiration

w. **Tree** – where we learn, tree of life, tree of knowledge

x. **Forest** – evil, lost, fear

**11. Objects:**

a. **Feathers** – lightness, speed

b. **Shadow** – our dark side, evil, devil

c. **Masks** – concealment

d. **Boats/Rafts** – safe passage

e. **Bridge** – change, transformation

f. **Right hand** – rectitude, correctness

g. **Left hand** – deviousness

h. **Feet** – stability, freedom

i. **Skeleton** – mortality

j. **Heart** – love, emotions

k. **Hourglass** – the passage of time

**Seasons--**

\*Spring--new life, birth, new beginnings; infancy or childhood

\*Summer--full of life, learning; adulthood (young to mid-life)

\*Fall--dying, decay, beginning of the end;

\*Winter--death, an ending to life or a part or period of a life