

ARCHETYPES LIST

Pre-AP English

Archetypes are recurring patterns (plot structures, symbols, character types, themes) that occur in mythology, religion, and stories across cultures and time periods. They embody universal meanings and basic human experiences and can evoke unconscious responses in a reader. They also help people understand common traits they share with others outside our own culture and to interpret situations and characters that might be quite different from themselves otherwise.

Archetypal Settings and Symbols

- **The Sun:** (masculine) both the giver and destroyer of life creative energy; consciousness; passage of time and life. Rising sun: birth; creation; setting sun: death
- **The Moon:** (feminine) marks the passage of time and controls the course of human events. Seedtime, harvest, tides, etc.
- **The Shadow:** life instincts which exist as part of the unconscious mind and are composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses, desires, instincts and shortcomings. Often described as the darker side of the psyche, representing wildness, chaos and the unknown.
- **Water:** the mystery of creation; the life cycle (birth-death-resurrection); purification and redemption
- **The Sea:** the mother of all life; death and rebirth; the unconscious
- **Rivers:** death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle; incarnations of deities.
- **Fountain:** rebirth, renewal, life
- **The Whirlpool:** symbolizes the destructive power of nature and fate
- **The Underworld:** a place of death; represents an encounter with the dark side of the self
- **The Threshold:** gateway to the new world; the hero must enter it to change and grow
- **The Magic Weapon:** Symbolizes extraordinary quality of the hero; no one else can wield the weapon or use it to its full potential; usually given to the hero by the mentor figure
- **Garden:** paradise; innocence; unspoiled beauty (especially feminine); fertility; new birth; hope
- **Tree:** inexhaustible life due to its growth, proliferation, and generative and regenerative processes; wisdom
- **Caves and Tunnels:** rebirth, passage, death of the old life
- **Islands:** remoteness from society and the island's isolation from all other societies; helps insulate people from other cultures so that their culture remains true to itself; blocks outside influences
- **Desert:** spiritual aridity, death, nihilism, hopelessness
- **Fire:** both protective and destructive; symbolizes human knowledge and industry
- **Circle (sphere):** Wholeness, unity, perfection, eternity
- **Egg (oval):** The mystery of life and the forces of generation
- **Triangle (pyramid):** The Christian Trinity; stages of life; hardship
- **Yin-yang:** the union of the opposite forces of the yin (female principle, darkness, passivity, the unconscious) and the yang (masculine principle, light, activity, the conscious mind)

Situational Archetypes

- **The Quest:** the search for someone or something that will restore peace/normalcy to a troubled land/people
- **The Journey:** the hero's path; represents the journey of life
- **The Task:** a superhuman deed that must be performed to save the kingdom, win the fair lady, or identify the hero so that he may assume his rightful position
- **Supernatural Intervention:** The gods intervene on the side of the hero (or, sometimes, against him)
- **Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity:** Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding of situations instinctively as opposed to those supposedly in charge (often demonstrated by Loyal Retainers)
- **The Fall:** a descent from a higher to a lower state of being, from innocence and bliss to loss – often accompanied by an expulsion from paradise
- **The Battle between Good and Evil:** Does this one really require a definition? – Shows man's eternal optimism in the continual portrayal of good triumphing over evil despite great odds
- **The Ritual:** Ceremonies that mark the rite of passage into another state. These include: sacrificial, initiation, and coming of age rites
- **Sleep/The Void:** loss of personal awareness and sense of self. Healing and true peace or loss of self can be achieved in this state.
- **Death/Rebirth:** Can be literal or physical; signifies an ending or a beginning

Color Archetypes

- **Red**: blood, sacrifice, violent passion; disorder
- **Green**: *in a positive context* – growth; sensation; hope; fertility; *in a negative context* – death and decay
- **Blue**: highly positive – associated with truth, religious feeling, security, spiritual purity
- **Black**: chaos, mystery, the unknown; death; evil; the unconscious
- **White**: *positive aspects* – light, purity, innocence; *negative aspects* – death, terror, the supernatural
- **Brown**: neutralizing, earth, hearth, home, outdoors, reliability, comfort, simplicity
- **Orange**: concentration, psychic energy, balance, enthusiasm, demanding attention, vibrant, warmth, encouragement
- **Pink**: true love, friendship, attraction, romance, spiritual awakening, togetherness
- **Purple**: magical forces, power over obstacles, royalty, nobility, spirituality, ceremony, transformation, wisdom
- **Yellow**: joy, happiness, optimism, imagination, hope, sunshine
- **Gold**: greatness, value, wealth

Number Archetypes

- **One (1)**: ultimate unity; identity; equality; existence; general harmony, peace, and tranquility
- **Two (2)**: contrasts; diversity; inequality; division; separation; disorder; confusion; change
- **Three (3)**: light; spiritual awareness and unity (cf. The Holy Trinity); the male principle; completeness; divinity; soul of the world
- **Four (4)**: associated with the circle, life cycle, four seasons; female principle; earth, nature; four elements (earth, air, fire, water)
- **Five (5)**: divine grace
- **Six (6)**: evil connotations, devil; ambivalence; totals of labor; luck, chance
- **Seven (7)**: the most potent of all symbolic numbers – signifying the union of *three* and *four*, the completion of a cycle, perfect order.
- **Twelve (12)**: 12 months of the solar year

Character Archetypes

- **The Hero**: Man/woman with great strength & courage; known for having honorable purposes; willing to risk life for the good of all; often leaves the familiar to enter a new, unfamiliar, challenging world, and then returns to his/her “ordinary” world
- **Loner or Outcast**: a character who is separated from society due to an impairment or an advantage that sets him apart from others.
- **Underdog**: Characters who are usually in the wrong place at the wrong time, but who usually win something of value in the end.
- **The Innocent**: trusts in faith and optimism, has exceptionally high ideals and aspirations, and a belief in hard work and doing the right thing
- **The Villain**: the male or female personification of evil. The antagonist who truly personifies evil. The villain's malice is limitless and rarely is the villain reformed.
- **The Terrible Mother/The Woman as Temptress**: A woman to whom the protagonist is attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall
- **The Stepmother**: A surrogate mother who represents the evil side of motherhood.
- **The Damsel in Distress**: A vulnerable woman who must be rescued by the hero; often used to trap the hero
- **The Wise One/The Mentor/The Sage**: the savior, the redeemer, the guru – represents knowledge, insight, and wisdom; serves as a teacher or counselor to the hero
- **The Spiritual Earth Mother/The Good Mother**: symbolic of abundance and fertility; offers spiritual/emotional nourishment
- **The Soul Mate**: incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillment
- **Loyal Retainers**: Individuals somewhat like servants who are heroic themselves; duty is to protect the hero and reflect his/her nobility
- **Ill-fated (“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
- **Nature Helpers**: Characters (animals or plants usually) that assist or guide the protagonist
- **Jester/Fool/Trickster**: trick others to get them to do what s/he wants – they can be both virtuous and nefarious. Provides comic relief.
- **Scapegoat/Sacrificial Victim**: 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 Giant/Monster/Ogre**: a character who is lonely (because they are shunned), with uncontrolled rage or strength or violence, and a lot of times they fall in love with and protect a beautiful woman. Sometimes monsters must be outwitted by heroes
- **Serpent**: a helper and representative of evil.