ARCHETYPES
OBJECTIVES FOR THIS LESSON:

- I can discuss the importance of archetypes within literature and culture.
- I can identify and analyze archetypes and use them to discern meaning in literature.
What Is An Archetype?

- **Archetypes** are recurring patterns (plot structures, symbols, character types, themes) that occur in mythology, religion, and stories across cultures and time periods.
What Is An Archetype?

- They embody universal meanings and basic human experiences and can evoke unconscious responses in a reader.
- They help us to understand common traits we share with others outside our own culture and to interpret situations and characters that might be quite different from ourselves otherwise.
Character Archetypes

The Hero

- Man/woman with great strength and courage
- Known for having honorable purposes
- Willing to risk life for the good of all
- Variations of the hero figure include the “orphaned” hero
- Often leaves the familiar to enter a new, unfamiliar, challenging world, and then returns to his/her “ordinary” world
- Return to “ordinary” world often leads to destructive change
Character Archetypes

**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.
Character Archetypes

**The Innocent:** trusts in faith and optimism, has exceptionally high ideals and aspirations, and a belief in hard work and doing the right thing.
Character Archetypes

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.
Character Archetypes

The Terrible Mother/The Woman as Temptress: A woman to whom the protagonist is attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall.
Character Archetypes

• **The Stepmother**: A surrogate mother who represents the evil side of motherhood.
Character Archetypes

**The Damsel in Distress:** A vulnerable woman who must be rescued by the hero; often used as a way to trap the hero
Character Archetypes

**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
Character Archetypes

The Spiritual Earth Mother/The Good Mother: symbolic of abundance and fertility; offers spiritual/emotional nourishment.
Character Archetypes

The Soul Mate: incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillment
Character Archetypes

**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.
Character Archetypes

**Nature Helpers:**
Characters (animals or plants usually) that assist or guide the protagonist.
Character Archetypes

**Jester/Fool/Trickster:** trick others to get them to do what s/he wants – they can be both virtuous and nefarious. Provides comic relief.
Character Archetypes

**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.
Character Archetypes

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.
Character Archetypes

**Serpent**: a helper and representative of evil.
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.
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

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
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Rivers**: death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle; incarnations of deities.
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

The Whirlpool: symbolizes the destructive power of nature and fate
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

The Underworld: a place of death; represents an encounter with the dark side of the self
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**The Threshold**: gateway to the new world; the hero must enter it to change and grow
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**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
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Garden**: paradise; innocence; unspoiled beauty (especially feminine); fertility; new birth; hope
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Tree:** inexhaustible life due to its growth, proliferation, and generative and regenerative processes; wisdom
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Caves and Tunnels:** rebirth, passage, death of the old life
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Fountain**: rebirth, renewal, life
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**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
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Desert**: spiritual aridity, death, nihilism, hopelessness
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Fire**: both protective and destructive; symbolizes human knowledge and industry
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Circle (sphere):** Wholeness, unity, perfection, eternity
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**Egg (oval):** The mystery of life and the forces of generation
Archetypal Settings and Symbols

**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)
Color Archetypes

Red: blood, sacrifice, passion; disorder; violence
Color Archetypes

- **Green**: *in a positive context* — growth; sensation; hope; fertility; *in a negative context* — death and decay
Color Archetypes

- **Blue:** highly positive – associated with truth, religious feeling, security, spiritual purity
Color Archetypes

**Black**: chaos, mystery, the unknown; death; evil; the unconscious
Color Archetypes

**White**: positive aspects – light, purity, innocence; negative aspects – death, terror, the supernatural
Color Archetypes

**Brown:** neutralizing, earth, hearth, home, outdoors, reliability, comfort, simplicity
Color Archetypes

**Orange**: concentration, psychic energy, balance, enthusiasm, demanding attention, vibrant, warmth, encouragement
Color Archetypes

**Pink**: true love, friendship, attraction, romance, spiritual awakening, togetherness
Color Archetypes

**Purple**: magical forces, power over obstacles, royalty, nobility, spirituality, ceremony, transformation, wisdom
Color Archetypes

**Yellow:** joy, happiness, optimism, imagination, hope, sunshine
Color Archetypes

**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)
Number Archetypes

**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
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
Situational Archetypes

**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.
Situational Archetypes

**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)
Situational Archetypes

**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
Situational Archetypes

The Ritual:
Ceremonies that mark the rite of passage into another state.

- Sacrificial
- Initiation
- Coming of Age
Situational Archetypes

- **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.
Situational Archetypes

**Death/Rebirth:**
- Can be literal or physical
- Signifies an ending or a beginning