Common Archetypes-- Descriptions and Examples

Definition: Archetypes are common patterns seen in most stories across all cultures and time periods. Because they are so common, they are thought to be an element of the humanity—something that is a part of our own understanding of people and the world. We know them; we enjoy what they bring to stories; and we want more stories with them. They can be character-types, a plot, an image, a theme, or a setting.

Purpose: Archetypes do help shape stories and affect the plot. They can add conflict and tension to the story, thus leading the main character to change or learn something in some way and play a role in delivering the author's message and purpose.

Character	Description and purpose	Examples
Archetype		
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.	 Frank (Sausage Party) Frodo Harry Potter Luke Skywalker Shrek Superman Frank (Sausage Party) Frodo
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	ZootopiaHerculesCaptain AmericaLion King
The Initiates	The Initiates are young heroes or heroines who must go through some training and ceremony before undertaking their quest.	KatnissMulanHunger Games
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.	- Obi Wan - Alfred - Melvin - Yoda - Mr. Miyagi
Guardian	Tests the hero's courage and worthiness to begin the journey	 Qui Gon Jin Ben Kenobi Bruce Almighty
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.	 Darth Vader/Luke Finding Nemo Stepbrothers Starwars Madagascar 2
Hunting Group of Companions	These are loyal companions willing to face hardship and ordeal in order to stay together.	Ghost BustersLord of the RingsAvatar

Loyal Retainers	The Retainer's duty is to reflect the nobility and power of the hero.	 Catching Fire Hunger Games Harry Potter Star Wars Twilight Apes Clone Troopers Spider Man Uncle Ben
Friendly Beast	An animal companion showing that nature is on the side of the hero	- Chewbacca - Maurice - Life of Pi - Donkey - Ted - The Friendly giant
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.	 Emperor Palpative Vader Batman Dark Knight Rises Macbeth Creed
Character Archetype	Description and purpose	
The Devil Figure	This character is evil incarnate. They seek to kill, torture, and destroy. The hero and others may have to fight or destroy this figure. Sometimes they win and sometimes they lose depending on the author's purpose.	- Emperor Palpative - Dr. Doom - Chuckie - Devil - Ursula - Apollo Creed
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.	Darth VaderMaleficentSnapePlankton
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.	- Rancor - Indomanious Rex (Jurassic World) - Voldemort
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.	- Marley & Me - Moana's Grandma - Bambi's Mother

		- The Sacrifice of the Spartans in 300
The Outcast	A character banished from a social group for some real or imagined crime against his fellow man, usually destined to wander form place to place.	- Shrek - The Ugly Duckling - Star Wars - Rudolph
The Platonic Ideal	A woman who is a source of inspiration to the hero, who has an intellectual rather than physical attraction to her	Moana GrandmaRioPopeye
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.	Princess Leia (RIP)Fiona (Shrek)ShrekRapunzel
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 andhips symbolic of her childbearing capacities and comfort.	 Yoda Hippie Ladies from Mad Max The Gaurdlands
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	PadmeKatherine (The Vampire Diaries)Ursula
White Goddess	Good, beautiful maiden, usually blond, may make an ideal marriage partner; often has religious or intellectual overtones.	ElsaCinderellaThe White Queen(Alice in Wonderland)
The Unfaithful Wife	A woman married to a man she sees as dull or distant and is attracted to more virile or interesting men.	Curley's WifeAmanda in GTA5TemptationTalladega
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	 Romeo & Juliet Batman & Cat woman Fiddle ford (Gravity Falls) Fault in Our Stars
The Wise Fool	This character is considered foolish by most means, but somehow still carries some innocent wisdom about the world and teaches others about things they may not realize.	Jar Sar BihusForrest Gump
Character Archetype	Description and purpose	Examples
The tragic hero	evokes pity from the audience as her undergoes a change in fortune, from a positive situation in the beginning of the story,	 Jay Gatsby from F. Scott FitzGerald's

	to a negative situation at its conclusion. The story will conclude with the downfall, and sometimes the death, of the tragic hero. The cause of the downfall is the result of a tragic flaw on the part of the hero, referred to by Aristotle as the harmatia	"The Great Gatsby." - Willy Loman from Arthur Miller's "Death of Salesman." - King Lear, Macbeth, and Romeo Montague - Achilles - Darth Vader - Romeo & Juliet
the villain	embodies everything that hero opposes, making him or her the opposite of the hero. For this reason, the villain is often referred to as the antagonist, in contrast to the protagonist. The villain's values and characteristics include selfishness, greed, and ambition. The villain is often working directly against the hero's cause, hoping that the hero will fail in his or her quest.	- Darth Vader from "Star Wars" - "The Wicked Witch of the West from "The Wizard of Oz." - Lord Voldemort from Harry Potter Series - Cinderella's Stepsisters and Stepsisters - Sauron from "The Lord of the rings" - Joker (Batman) - Ursula
The fool	archetypal character known for ignorance and stupidity, often present in the story to provide comic relief. The fool is sometimes also known as the village idiot. The fool is a source of laughter for the other characters and for the audience or reader, but can also elicit pity when the plot of the story calls for it. In Shakespearean drama, the fool often functions as method by which the author can cut through the pretensions of the other characters and get down to the truth of the matter.	- Donkey (Sherk) - Kevin Hart - Jar Jar Binks - R2D2
Gentle Giant:	This character is usually of large physical size but lacks intelligence.	- The Iron Giant, Frankenstein's Monster - Alphonse Eric and Armstrong from Full Metal Alchemist (There are many Gentle Giants in Anime/Manga Series) - Hagrid - Big Friendly Giant - Sully (Monsters Inc)

The Everyman	The core desire of the Everyman is to connect with others, so that they can fit in and belong as one of the crowd. By contrast, their worst fear is to stand out from the crowd, put on airs or be rejected. They achieve belonging by developing ordinary, solid virtues and by demonstrating the common touch, allowing the Everyman to blend in with everyone else. Everyman has to be careful not to submerge their own character in their desire to blend in, to give it up for superficial and transient connections or become part of a lynch mob against those who are different	- - - -	Great Gatsby Clark Kent Peter Parker Scott Pilgrim Joe Martin from the popular serial drama All My Children [14] Rick Grimes in The Walking Dead.
The Innocent	Characters representing the innocent archetype are often women or children. These character archetypes are pure in every way. Though often surrounded by dark circumstances, the innocent archetype somehow has not become jaded by the corruption and evil of others. These character archetypes aren't stupid: they're just so morally good that the badness of others cannot seem to mar them.	-	Lucie from Dicken's A Tale of Two Cities Tiny Tim from Dicken's A Christmas Carol. Prim from Suzanne Collin's The Hunger Games Series.
Romantic and Visionary, ful	More character archetypes: n, Expressive, Dramatic, Self-Absorbed, Temperamental, Il of passion, creativity and intensity, spontaneous, loving, loves ontrolling emotions, takes things to extremes, unaware of	-	Self Centered Singer of Korn
boundaries Beast : physically unattractive but with humanity or physically attractive but without humanity, a representation of the primitive past of man		- -	Beauty & The Beast Iron Giant Toby
•	ack, the "go to" person, the solver of problems, may be , competitive, stubborn, aggressive, status seeking, can be	-	The Godfather
Career Criminal: commits crime with high stakes, smart, suspicious, may be highly skilled, plans carefully, may move often, can be charming, feels like an outcast, creates his own morality		-	The Lion King
, , ,	or in spirit, loves adventures, seeking play and playmates, n, salvation, believes in good vs. evil	-	The fast and the Furious
Clown/Joker: Uses humor to cope and avoid tough emotions/intimacy, Serves as happy distraction, makes others happy by joking around/diffusing the tension, may be sad inwardly- does not show this to outsiders, thinks he is helping people by relieving stress. (Note: a more pure form of this archetype is the Jester – always lighthearted and joking but he/she is always pure of heart and truly caring for others like Kramer in Seinfeld.)		-	Inside Out Grown Ups
depressed about his or her	typically a disabled person who is either bad—bitter or disability and letting it get the worst of him/her. Or good—ming their disability, finding success despite it.	-	Impractical Jokers

Enabler: Maintains group balance by rescuing the irresponsible one and smoothing things over. Often faces a dilemma: if he/she does not bail the irresponsible one out of a bad/dangerous situation, the irresponsible one could do serious harm to self or others. May be contributing to the irresponsible behavior by continuing to rescue and cover upbut believe that they are simply being helpful.

Father: Source of authority and protection, powerful, strict, often inducing fear, protects loved ones fiercely, wants to win, can be an activist, very physical, motivated by survival, can be career focused, sometimes fails to think things through

Feminist: the female cause is her cause. Masculine side is just as strong as her feminine side, intuitive, instinctual, task oriented, can be seen as cold, self-sufficient and goal oriented, can be boastful

Femme Fatale: Seductive, charming, loves being in control, loves the thrill of the chase, often provokes jealousy, has star quality, fashion conscious

Flamboyant/Show Off: Extrovert. Likes to be the center of attention, extreme need to display intelligence, talent or body, often deeply insecure, overcompensating for a deep need to be loved/connection, can be dramatic and easily upset, flaky

Fool: still a little boy or girl inside, seeks to play/find a playmate, wandering off in confusion and faulty directions, creates chaos for others, cares for children, takes risks, avoids commitments and responsibility, fears boredom, loves freedom, can be charming

God or Goddess: All powerful, source of magic, can provoke fear, awe, humility, the great mother, or Mother Earth

Guy's Guy: masculine in an exaggerated way, rugged, tough, fearful of weakness, adventurous and aggressive, worldly, sexually experienced, ambitious, need to win, risk taker, may have rocky relationships with women

Imposter/Pretender: take advantage of situations, intelligent, verbal, delights in deceiving people, looking for the weakness to exploit it, may make a career out of deception, makes his own rules, rationalizes his life choices

Investigator/thinker – Withdrawn, Intense, Cerebral, Perceptive, Innovative, Secretive, and Isolated, Can become obsessed/highly focused on a goal. Finding what is hidden/unknown brings creative joy.

Irresponsible – avoids commitment, dedicated to the moment, to his freedom, fears being chained down to a schedule, can turn to drugs and alcohol, lives life on her own terms, discounts societal rules, selfish, narcissistic, creates chaos by acting on own desires, destabilizes the group

King: Ruler, Sees the big picture (often avoiding the details), cares for the whole village, can be authoritative, lacking emotion, can be an addict, craves self-esteem and self-respect, confident, strategist, needs a kingdom, can be controlling, fear provoking, stoic, unable to express emotions

Loner – isolates, struggles to connect with others / socially inept, avoids conflict, invested in his rich inner world only, fears the world, usually intelligent, reliable and loyal trusted few, can have large imagination, feels alien to others.

Loyalist: Strong ability to support others, bonds and stays, can lack self-worth, doubts abilities, tends to isolate when not with specific loved ones, big hearted, can get behind a cause

- Arizona from Greys Anatomy
- Joe (Family guy)
- Hangover
- Mean Girls
- Interstellar (Cooper)
- God Father
- New York
- Fifty Shades of Grey
- High School Musical
- Iron Man
- Huck Finn
- Dark Knight
- Fairy God-Mother
- Son of God
- James Bond
- Mark Walberg
- The Emperor
- Thor
- Batman
- Taken
- Harley Quinn
- 50 first dates
- The king in Mulan
- Zohan
- Napoleon
 Dynamite
- Dexter

Magician or Shaman: Offers an elixir, explains the mysteries of life, may provoke fear in others, spiritual, powerful, often loves to be alone/dislikes the spotlight

The virgin: innocence, desire, purity, often searches to be rescued, inexperienced and naive, often self-confident, playful, takes risks, may want to party and have fun, can be sexy and child-like

Manipulator: charming, intelligent, ability to read the needs of others and use the information, sly, deceitful, crafty, may appear attractive at first or on the surface, ability to pull others in, can play the role of the backstabber

Narcissist – self-absorbed, inability to see the needs of others, draws the attention back to himself, often a show off, low self-esteem, lacks empathy for others, needs to be admired, will express his grandiose sense of self, often politicians or religious leaders due to ready, admiring audience

Peacemaker: Tries to be the force of peace, dislikes conflict, Easygoing, Self-Effacing, Receptive, Reassuring, Agreeable, and Complacent

Perfectionist/Conformist: needs precision, pressures others to reach for the best, hard on themselves/others, can be rigid, purposeful finds it painful to live outside society's expectations, cares deeply what others think, anxious, can be a team player, finds meaning and stability in rules/regulations

Pessimist/Depressive: glass half empty point of view, pulls others down, self-absorbed, Debbie downer, will offer disapproval, why try attitude, will take no risks, spreads doubt, defeat, confusion

Psychopath – no conscience, amoral, inability to feel or care for others, no sense of guilt or consequences, can be source of fear, easily bored, motivated by money, impulsive, irresponsible, no sense of belonging, no strong emotions, rationalizes his behavior

Queen: Ruler, willing to sacrifice herself for the greater good, can be stoic, has masculine qualities, can be the bringer of harsh truth, stands up for beliefs, protective, loyal, wants to keep order, strong, can be boastful

The Robot/Intellectual – Hides in their knowledge, intelligence trumps feelings, may struggle socially, low communication skills, high abilities, strength can lie in their objectivity

Scaredy Cat/Fearful: worrier, anxious, brings fear/panic to others, hides from life and new experiences, the member of the group who will bring up what might go wrong in any scenario

Trickster: trouble maker, liar, rascal agent that pushes us toward change, self-absorbed, can be entertaining or charming

Troubled Teen – hates rules, defies authority, can be depressed, self-centered and angry, loyal to fellow criminals, feels above the law, vulnerable (cults and drugs)

Upside Down Hero/Anti-Hero – motivated by base or lower nature drives. Driven by pursuit for power, sex, money, control. Need to fill his/her appetite is big and often all that matters. Can be selfish, anti-social, power-hungry, and materialistic. An Anti-hero is useful in storytelling, by examining the dark side of an anti-hero the audience may be able to explore/come to terms with their own shadow side.

- Tahana
- Now you see me
- American Pie
- Rules Don't Apply
- 40 year old virgin
- Deadpool
- Snow white hunts man
- Step-mom in tangeled
- Enders Game
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- Woody
- The Hobbit
- Mr. Burns (The Simpsons)
- 2012
- Frozen
- The queen In Alice in Wonderland
- Olive (Ant Farm)
- I, Robert
- The Cat in Secret Life of Pets
- Joker
- Spiderman
- Batman
- Bart Simpson
- Iron-Man
- Dead-Pool

Wild One/Flamboyant/Rebel: Cares little what others think, walks to the beat of their own drum, often likes to shock/display their different/offbeat world view, against the grain of society	- Elsa - Muppet Movie
Wizard/Psychic : eccentric, possesses knowledge about hidden secrets of the earth, often sought out when transformation is needed. The Psychic may possess knowledge of other worlds or of the future	- Dumble door - Harry Potter
Woman's Man: loves women above all else, women love him and are drawn to his inspirational, passionate qualities, smooth talker motivated by love and belonging yet may have trouble committing, searching for impossible ideal, can be irresponsible/flighty, sensual and erotic, can be seen as a dreamer, chivalrous and gentle, driven by experiences	- Twilight
Vampire: Uses people for his/her needs. Passionate, sometimes romantic, experiences life in a heightened way, strong emotions, self-absorbed, can be dominating and secretive	- Edward Cullen - Twilight
Victim: "poor me" mentality, believes they will always suffer, looks for evidence that life is working against them	- Patch Adams - Igor
Zombie/Monster: half human or not human at all, provokes fear, panic, sometimes has human qualities/elements	- Walking Dead -

PLOT Archetypes	Descriptions	Examples
The Quest	The epic journey to find the identity, promised land/to find the good city/Knowledge/or Human Perfection	 Legend of Zelda Skyrim Lord of the Rings Maze Runner
Vengeance	The quest for vengeance	 Underworld Big Hero 6 Hunger Games
Overcoming the Monster	The warrior's journey to save his people/overcoming the monster or villain, often involving The search for love (to rescue the princess/damsel in distress)	MonsterHouseHerculesBeowulf

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Rags to Riches	i a hero who seems quite commonplace, perhaps poor, downtrodden, and miserable but has the potential for greatness. The story shows how he manages to fulfill his potential and become someone of wealth, importance, success and happiness Or in which he becomes misguided or mislead, disillusioned, sometimes arrogant, losing sight of what is really important, what they had lost, or what is true and fails in the end, only to learn the hard way. They often don't achieve what they were originally looking for or find that it was not as fulfilling as they thought.		Aladdin Rapunzel Holes
Voyage and Return stories	features a hero who journeys to a strange world that at first seems strange but enchanting. Eventually, the hero comes to feel threatened and trapped in this world and must he must make a thrilling escape back to the safety of his home world. In some cases, the hero learns and grows as a result of his adventure. In others he does not, and consequently leaves behind in the other world his true love, or other opportunity for happiness.	1 1 1	Alice in Wonderland Pocahontas Odyssey
Comedy or Romantic Comedy	The story takes place in a community where the relationships between people (and by implication true love and understanding) are under the shadow of confusion, uncertainty, and frustration. Sometimes this is caused by an oppressive or self-centered person, sometimes by the hero acting in such a way, or sometimes through no one's fault. The confusion worsens until it reaches a crisis. The truth comes out, perceptions are changed, and the relationships are healed in love and understanding (and typically marriage for the hero).	-	Frozen
Tragedy Rebirth	Tragedy, along with Comedy, is usually defined by its ending, which makes these two unlike the other basic plots, a tragedy is a story in which the Story Goal is not achieved (outcome=failure) and the hero does not resolve his inner conflict happily (judgement=bad). Rebirth stories show a hero (often a heroine) who is trapped in a living death by a dark power or villain until she is freed by	-	
Mystery	another character's loving act. a story in which an outsider to some horrendous event or drama (such as a murder) tries to discover the truth of what happened. Often what is being investigated in a Mystery is a story based on one of the other plots.	- -	Scooby Doo Saw
Rebellion Against 'The One'	a hero who rebels against the all-powerful entity that controls the world until he is forced to surrender to that power or until he overcomes it and restores the world.	-	Lord of the Rings Wizards of Waverly Place Lightning Theif

Common Archetypal Motifs/Themes	Descriptions	Examples
Alienation and isolation-	Characters in the narrative are alone and withdrawn; They feel removed or rejected by society.	Forrest GumpShrekGreg Hefley(Diary of the Wimpy Kid)
Coming of age-	Characters in the narrative mature and develop as a result of the complications in the plot.	 Brave Carl (Walking Dead) Anaikan Skywalker Sand Lot
Disillusionment with life	Characters are distracted and disgusted by what they encounter in society, their friends or their family.	Harry PotterDoctor WhoCall Me CrazyConcussion
Good overcoming evil-	Characters become involved in a conflict wherein Good (exemplified by abstract concepts such as Honor, Truth, and Justice and personified by a hero) triumphs over Evil (exemplified by abstract concepts such as Shame, Corruption, and Unfairness and personified by a villain).	 Hercules Star Wars Horton Hears a Who Lord of the Ring Percy Jackson Star Wars Avengers
Honoring the historical past	Characters learn from the experiences of their culture and the advice of their elders.	 Karate Kid Night at the Museum Moana Creed
Loss of innocence-	Characters leave behind their child-like virtue and purity as a result of being exposed to the brutal reality of day to day living.	- Rio - Ride Along - Bella Swan - Harley Quinn - Joker - Fifty Shades of Grey
Power of love-	Characters rely on those whom they respect, revere, honor and cherish to resolve conflicts in a narrative.	 Snow White Elsa & Ana (Frozen) The Notebook The Great Gatsby Dear John
Power of nature-	Characters are exposed to the intense force of elements of the natural world.	- Life of Pi - The K - Narnia
Struggle with nature	Characters are involved in an external conflict with forces in the natural world.	- Tarzan - Wall-e

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Struggle with self- Survival of the fittest	Characters in a narrative must contend with personal internal feelings or demons that often contradict each other or conflict with what seems most appropriate. Weaker, less intelligent characters are less likely to endure than stronger, smarter characters.	 Beauty & the Beast Percy Jackson Fiona Rocky Maze Runner Man vs. Wild Hunger Games Divergent Battle Royal
The effect of scientific progress	Characters' actions and lives are impacted both positively and negatively by technological advances.	 Planet of the Apes Terminator Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs Brave New World Lazarus Effect
Tolerance of the atypical	Character's level of acceptance of differences in personal/mental/physical attributes or systems of beliefs/ideas/events in cultures or individuals	- Boo Radley - Lenny
(American) Theme and Plot Pattern	the American dream holds that anyone can rise through luck and pluck to become anything that he wants to be, romantic, idealistic, hero will be disillusioned	JoyGreat GatsbyLottery Ticket
Common Archetypal settings	Descriptions	Examples
Water:	birth-death-resurrection; creation; purification and redemption; fertility and growth.	- Finding Nemo - Moana
Sea/ocean:	the mother of all life; spiritual mystery; death and/or rebirth; timelessness and eternity.	Finding DoryCaptain MillerMoana
Rivers:	death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle	 Pocahontas Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron
Sun	(fire and sky are closely related): creative energy; thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision.Rising sun: birth, creation, enlightenment.Setting sun: death.	- Clash of Titans

Garden:	paradise, innocence, unspoiled beauty.	
Tree:	denotes life of the cosmos; growth; proliferation; symbol of immortality; phallic symbol.	- Epic - Avatar
Desert:	spiritual aridity; death; hopelessness.	
Creation:	All cultures believe the Cosmos was brought into existence by some Supernatural Being (or Beings).	
Common Archetypal colors	Descriptions	Examples
Red:	blood, sacrifice, passion; disorder.	
Green:	growth, hope, fertility.	
Blue:	highly positive; secure; tranquil; spiritual purity.	
Black:	darkness, chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, wisdom, evil, melancholy.	
White:	light, purity, innocence, timelessness; [negative: death, terror, supernatural]	
Yellow:	enlightenment, wisdom.	
Common Archetypal seasons	Descriptions	Examples
Spring -	rebirth; genre/comedy.	
Summer	life; genre/romance.	
Fall	death/dying; genre/tragedy.	
Winter	without life/death; genre/irony.	