

## Monomyth and Other Mythological Archetypes

### INTRODUCTION (Based on Carl G. Jung's and Joseph Campbell's work.)

The happy ending of a fairy tale and myth is the overcoming of the tragedy of man, whose life must end in deterioration and death. Myths show the conquest of the spirit. Myth is based on the idea that all matter rises from the mystical energy to which it must return. In this energy man finds eternal life; thus man overcomes death. In different faiths this energy has different names:

- Hindus call it Shakti
- Sioux Indians call it wakan tanka
- Christians and the Jewish call it the one God

Other key mythological beliefs include:

- *transformation* – belief that gods can change their forms, both physically and spiritually or socially; belief in the essential change of personality, or regeneration
- *prophecy* – assumes that there is a universal plan or design in man; assumes a supernatural force; belief that gods speak through the mouths of priests or mediums
- *alter ego* – belief in man's dual nature, good and evil, body and soul; revealed in the gods' ability to transform self like Cupid or the Prince

### MYTHOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES

Throughout the ages and in various cultures widely separated by space and time, the same mythological archetypes are noted in myths, religions, legends, fairy tales and folklore. Carl Jung, the famous 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist and Joseph Campbell have categorized them as follows –

#### The Monomyth

Often referred to as the hero's journey, the monomyth was described by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's work has been consciously applied by a wide variety of modern writers and artists (*Wikipedia*).

☀ Traditionally, the mythological hero has a magical birth, as a child is exceptionally gifted, often refuses the call of duty, yet must leave home and face grave dangers, gains supernatural assistance to overcome his supreme ordeal, achieves his quest despite overwhelming odds, and is able to return home to help his fellow man and regain his rightful place.

♣ The hero is ready for a change when he hears his call for adventure, archetypally represented by a herald such as –

- a frog
- a deer

- an old man
- a babbling brook

– or the call for adventure may be a simple blunder that brings the individual into contact with magic mystery or a crisis.

♣ The hero's journey takes him through the unfamiliar world, the world of adulthood, which is represented archetypally by –

- a distant land
- an underground kingdom
- a lofty mountain
- a secret island
- a knight sea journey
- a wonder journey
- abduction
- the whale's belly
- forests

– and in his trials, the hero receives supernatural aid, which can take many archetypal forms, sometimes paradoxical, including –

- an old man, like the hermit or the wizard
- a helpful hag or fairy godmother in European folklore; Mary in Christianity; the thread of Ariadne as guiding power in Greek myth
- an ogre, representing seduction and danger
- Sleeping Beauty in sleep, representing childhood
- King and Queen, representing good parent images
- a witch, representing evil mother
- the slaying of a dragon, representing the overcoming of the father

♣ The hero he is able to defeat or conciliate the dangers that guard this passage archetypally through –

- brother battle
- dragon battle
- charm and cleverness
- offering

– or he is slain, descending into death –

– or he is dismembered and crucified by these dangers.

♣ The hero of a myth can be rewarded with

- father reconciliation – the ability to be on an equal basis with a father figure, to assume the role of man and husband, and see the father as a wise old man instead of as a dragon figure
- sacred marriage – total mastery of life, for woman is life and the hero its knower and master
- divinity or immortality (sainthood, or Jesus-like stature) – a condition known as apotheosis

- elixir theft through cleverness – hero brings a boon to man, such as Prometheus giving fire, Jason and the Golden Fleece, or knowledge, or maturity

### The Initiate

Often a young male, this is the mythological hero who faces the trial of proving himself or herself. In order to do this, he or she must experience the journey revealed by the monomyth. Psychologically, this is also the process by which we gain adulthood and maturity. (Lancelot, David)

### The Initiation

This refers to the initiate's journey and the rituals by which the initiate changes his or her status. It involves the transition of the hero from one state to another, from one identity to another. At birth, one comes into the world belonging to another. At manhood, or maturity, one belongs to society. The mythological hero's quest and journey psychologically represent a rebirth; his or her killing of an animal represents gaining adult knowledge, facing the adult world. The initiate knows he or she is becoming a man or woman. This represents a departure from innocence.

### The Wise Old Man

A father figure who represents knowledge, reflection, insight, cleverness, wisdom, age, he is the traditional leader. He helps the hero to conquer obstacles. (Odysseus, Moses, King Arthur)

### The Clever Fast Wit Who Overcomes Tremendous Odds With Cunning (Odysseus, Hermes)

### The Man of Strength

Physically gifted and stupid, he overcomes overwhelming odds through god-given power. (Sampson, Hercules)

### The Scapegoat

Behind it lies the idea that an individual or community can rid itself of guilt by magically transferring it to another being or blaming another person or group for one's own shortcomings. Historically, this deep-seated psychological behavior has led to discrimination. In mythology, the hero becomes a willing sacrifice and offers himself as the scapegoat to save his community from the evil that threatens it.

### The Femme Fatale

She represents man's weakness and woman's control over him. A paradoxical entity, she can also be a necessary teacher. (Delilah, Calypso, Circe, the Green Knight's Lady)

### The Earth Goddess

Spirit of earth and life, she is the archetype of the mother figure, merciful, forgiving, loving, nourishing. Her symbols are caves, wells, water, garden, eggs, grain, roses, lilies, cows.

### The Woman's Savior

He is the man transformed by a woman's love. (Knight, Prince, Heathcliff)

### The Promised Land

A sort of utopia or paradise that represents happiness and the unattainable.

### **The Chosen People**

The belief that a group of people are chosen to be the gods' / God's instruments and lead the way.

## Joseph Campbell's Structure of the Heroic Journey

### SEPARATION/DEPARTURE:

1. The Call to Adventure: This may be a simple blunder that brings the individual into contact with magic, mystery, or a crisis. Sometimes a herald, such as a frog, an old man or a deer, will call or lure the hero to adventure. There may be three or four calls to adventure, but they will always signify that destiny has summoned the hero.

2. Refusal of the Call: In some stories the hero ignores or refuses the call until some greater pressure urges him to action. In other stories the hero (or heroine) is prevented from answering the call by imprisonment or enchantment.

3. Supernatural Aid: For those who answer the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure who provides the adventurer with an amulet or other aid. The protective figure is often an old man or woman, or it may be a virgin, a wizard, a hermit, etc. The hero may receive an object, wise advice, or a glimpse into the future, depending on the story.

4. Crossing the First Threshold: As the hero proceeds on his journey, he must enter a region which is outside of "civilization," mysterious, unfamiliar, and full of danger. There may be a watcher at the boundary to this area which the hero must trick, bribe, or conquer in order to pass.

5. The Belly of the Whale: The hero passes through a severe trial which often symbolizes rebirth. He may be swallowed by a whale, and elephant, or other monster, may visit the underworld, a tomb, a temple or cave. The place is beyond the confines of this physical world and by enduring it and surviving it the hero shows that he is selfless and, to some degree, superhuman.

### THE STAGE OF TRIALS & VICTORIES OF INITIATION:

1. The Road of Trials: Here the hero must survive a succession of trials, tests, or ordeals. He is often aided by the supernatural helper he met earlier or by an amulet, spell or piece of advice received from that helper. The task often seems impossible.

2. The Meeting with the Goddess: This is the ultimate adventure, which takes place at the ends of the earth, the center of the universe, the tabernacle of the temple,

or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart. The goddess may be beautiful or horrible, but she represents the totality of what can be known, that which seems unattainable. It may be that a symbol, such as a ring, a well or a golden bowl, represent the goddess in the aspect of the myth. If the adventurer is a female, the goddess will be a god, and may take the form of an animal.

3. Temptation/The Woman as Temptress: One of the ways in which the hero is superior is that he can withstand the temptations, or weaknesses, of the flesh. By conquering, fooling, or ignoring the woman as temptress, the hero demonstrates this. The temptress may be a sorceress or a siren: she is not necessarily human.

4. Atonement with the Father: Here the hero meets the requirements of a powerful male god, king, or ogre. The father-figure may be good or evil.

5. Apotheosis: This is the full initiation into the superhuman life of an experience hero. Two things, usually representing male and female or good and evil, are joined together in, through, or by the hero. The hero or something he values is made whole and transcends mere human existence through the experience.

6. Receiving the Ultimate Boon: Because the hero is superior, he receives a very valuable reward, often one that is more valuable spiritually than physically.

#### **THE RETURN & REINTEGRATION WITH SOCIETY:**

1. Refusal of the Return: Here the hero, who must return to the human world with his boon or trophy, may refuse the responsibility, temporarily, through doubt in his own ability, love of the realm of the gods, enchantment, etc.

2. The Magical Flight: If the hero has the permission of the gods to return, he has their aid, and the return is easy. If not, it is a chase or a difficult journey, in which magic plays an important role. The human aspect of the hero may be revealed here through error or weaknesses, and his strengths usually allow him to prevail.

3. Rescue from Without: The hero who is in trouble or is unwilling to return may be rescued by a god, a human, or an animal.

4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold: The realm of the gods is different from that of men. Once the hero returns, he may have difficulty communicating with humans, adjusting to changes, setting things right, or convincing people of the value of his quest.

5. Master of Two Worlds: The hero accepts the differences between the human and magical worlds and becomes godlike or very powerful.

6. Freedom to Live: The hero lives or enables others to live happily ever after.

## What's An Archetype?

Background: The word "archetype" was coined by Carl Jung, who theorized that humans have a collective unconscious, "deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity.... a kind of readiness to reproduce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas...." This shared memory of experiences has resulted in a resonance of the concepts of hero and heroine that transcends time, place and culture. Jung called these recurring personalities archetypes, from the Greek word *archetypos*, meaning "first of its kind."

**ARCHETYPE:** An original model or pattern from which other later copies are made, especially a character, an action, or situation that seems to represent common patterns of human life. Often, archetypes include a symbol, a theme, a setting, or a character that some critics think have a common meaning in an entire culture, or even the entire human race. These images have particular emotional resonance and power. Archetypes recur in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore, fairy tales, dreams, artwork, and religious rituals. Using the comparative anthropological work of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, the psychologist Carl Jung theorized that the archetype originates in the **collective unconscious** of mankind, i.e., the shared experiences of a race or culture, such as birth, death, love, family life, and struggles to survive and grow up. These would be expressed in the subconscious of an individual who would recreate them in myths, dreams, and literature. Examples of archetypes found cross-culturally include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) *Recurring symbolic situations* (such as the orphaned prince or the lost chieftain's son raised ignorant of his heritage until he is rediscovered by his parents, or the damsel in distress rescued from a hideous monster by a handsome young man who later marries the girl. Also, the long journey, the difficult quest or search, the catalog of difficult tasks, the pursuit of revenge, the descent into the underworld, redemptive rituals, fertility rites, the great flood, the End of the World),

(2) *Recurring characters* (such as witches as ugly crones who cannibalize children, lame blacksmiths of preternatural skill, womanizing Don Juans, the hunted man, the *femme fatale*, the snob, the social climber, the wise old man as mentor or teacher, star-crossed lovers; the caring mother-figure, the helpless-little old lady, the stern father-figure, the guilt-ridden figure searching for redemption, the braggart, the young star-crossed lovers, the bully, the villain in black, the oracle or prophet, the mad scientist, the underdog who emerges victorious, the mourning widow or women in lamentation),

(3) *Symbolic colors* (green as a symbol for life, vegetation, or summer; blue as a symbol for water or tranquility; white or black as a symbol of purity; or red as a symbol of blood, fire, or passion) and so on.

(4) *Recurring images* (such as blood, water, pregnancy, ashes, cleanness, dirtiness, caverns, **phallic symbols**, **ynic symbols**, the ruined tower, the rose, the lion, the snake, the eagle, the hanged man, the dying god that rises again, the feast or banquet, the fall from a great height).

The study of these archetypes in literature is known as **archetypal criticism** or **mythic criticism**. Archetypes are also called **universal symbols**. Contrast with **private symbol**.

So, basically:

An archetype is an original or fundamental imaginative pattern that is repeated through the ages. For example, in Star Wars, you've got:

- \*the evil villain (Darth Maul, Darth Vader, the Emperor)
- \*the damsel in distress (Princess Leia)
- \*the hero (Hans Solo, Luke Skywalker)
- \*the sage or wise man (Yoda, the Jedi Counsel)

# Archetypes and Symbols

## 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 celebrates 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 mountains 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. Haven 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.

## 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 E, envy
- D. White (light) - purity, peace, innocence, goodness, spirit, morality, creative force, the direction East, spiritual thought
- E. Orange - fire, pride, ambition, egotism, 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

## 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, light, 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

## SITUATION ARCHETYPES

1. The Quest - This motif describes the search for someone or some toteman 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.
2. The Task - This refers to a possibly superhuman feat that must be accomplished in order to fulfill the ultimate goal.
3. The Journey - The journey sends the hero in search for some truth or 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.
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 problems. Often a hero will deny and question the calling and ultimately, in the initiation, will accept responsibility.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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 wound's pain drives the sufferer to desperate measures of madness.
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.
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.
13. Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity - Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding intuitively as opposed to those supposedly in charge.



# Archetypes and Symbols

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  - 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. Lake - mystery, depth, unconscious
- 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

## 10. 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

## CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

1. The Hero - In its simplest form, this character is the one ultimately who may fulfill a necessary task and who will restore fertility, harmony, and/or justice to a community. The hero character is the one who typically experiences an initiation, who goes the community's ritual (s), et cetera. Often he or she will embody characteristics of YOUNG PERSON FROM THE PROVINCES, INITIATE, INNATE WISDOM, PUPIL, and SON.
2. Young Person from the Provinces - This hero is taken away as an infant or youth and raised by strangers. He or she later returns home as a stranger and able to recognize new problems and new solutions.
3. The Initiates - These are young heroes who, prior to the quest, must endure some training and ritual. They are usually innocent at this stage.
4. Mentors - These individuals serve as teachers or counselors to the initiates. Sometimes they work as role

models and often serve as father or mother figure. They teach by example the skills necessary to survive the journey and quest.

5. **Hunting Group of Companions** - These loyal companions are willing to face any number of perils in order to be together.
6. **Loyal Retainers** - These individuals are like the noble sidekicks to the hero. Their duty is to protect the hero. Often the retainer reflects the hero's nobility.
7. **Friendly Beast** - These animals assist the hero and reflect that nature is on the hero's side.
8. **The Devil Figure** - This character represents evil incarnate. He or she may offer worldly goods, fame, or knowledge to the protagonist in exchange for possession of the soul or integrity. This figure's main aim is to oppose the hero in his or her quest.
9. **The Evil Figure with the Ultimately Good Heart** - This redeemable devil figure (or servant to the devil figure) is saved by the hero's nobility or good heart.
10. **The Scapegoat** - An animal or more usually a human whose death, often in a public ceremony, excuses some taint or sin that has been visited upon the community. This death often makes theme more powerful force to the hero.
11. **The Outcast** - This figure is banished from a community for some crime (real or imagined). The outcast is usually destined to become a wanderer.
12. **The Earth Mother** - This character is symbolic of fulfillment, abundance, and fertility; offers spiritual and emotional nourishment to those who she contacts; often depicted in earth colors, with large breasts and hips.
13. **The Temptress** - Characterized by sensuous beauty, she is one whose physical attraction may bring about the hero's downfall.
14. **The Platonic Ideal** - This source of inspiration often is a physical and spiritual ideal for whom the hero has an intellectual rather than physical attraction.
15. **The Unfaithful Wife** - This woman, married to a man she sees as dull or distant, is attracted to a more virile or interesting man.
16. **The Damsel in Distress** - This vulnerable woman must be rescued by the hero. She also may be used as a trap, by an evil figure, to ensnare the hero.
17. **The Star-Crossed Lovers** - These two character are engaged in a love affair that is fated to end in tragedy for one or both due to the disapproval of society, friends, family, or the gods.
18. **The Creature of Nightmare** - This monster, physical or abstract, is summoned from the deepest, darkest parts of the human psyche to threaten the lives of the hero/heroine. Often it is a perversion or desecration of the human body.

Compliments to Lisa Lawrence, English Teacher at Jenks High School, Jenks, Oklahoma