ARCHETYPES

images, symbols, characters, patterns, and settings that happen in all kinds of literature to create unity
What are common characteristics of archetypes?

- Build commonality with all humanity
- Can be subconscious
- Universal, understood by everyone
- Recurring, change with modern times, relate to the past in order to find meaning in a contemporary world
- Literature may change, but the archetypes generally don’t
ARCHETYPAL CHARACTERS
THE HERO

- portrayed as “larger than life”
- outstanding qualities and abilities
- embodies the ideals of his/her culture and society
- self-sacrificial
- will endure separation and hardship for his/her people
- must pay a price to achieve goal
- must go from “ordinary world” into the “unknown”; comes back changed
- must return and spread new knowledge, but does not have to stay
THE ANTI-HERO

• reluctant to consider self capable of accomplishing goal
• might be selfish, addicted, corrupt, sullen, or disaffected
• believes “the ends justify the means”
• typically transforms into a fuller, happier, or more complete person because of struggles
• can sometimes die at the end, even while overcoming
THE VILLAIN

• the “bad guy”
• tends to have a negative effect on others
• Usually involved in or devoted to wickedness or crime
• Constitutes an important evil agency in the plot
THE WISE OLD MAN
Super smart philosopher with sound judgment
Sometimes bearded
THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

• usually a beautiful young woman placed in a dire predicament by a villain or monster
• needs the hero to rescue her
THE SHREW

- a woman who is excessively unpleasant
- prone to temper tantrums, emotional and psychological warfare, and abuse
- will go to extreme measures to get her way
- dominates her relationships, especially the one with her weaker willed husband
THE INNOCENT

• promised that life need not be hard
• naïve/inexperienced person exposed to the evil in the world
• usually moves from innocence to experience and knowledge
THE HELPFUL ANIMAL

• any animal that helps the hero
• can be a sidekick that offers reason to the hero when he gets stuck and can’t figure his way out
ALTER-EGO OR DOUBLE

Split or opposite personalities within one individual
EARTH MOTHER

provider: protecting, nurturing, sheltering, nourishing female character
THE TEMPTRESS through her power and/or beauty, can render a strong man weak and a wise man foolish.
OPPOSITES OR COMPLEMENTARY PAIRS

Two opposing individuals who, if combined, would make one balanced and “complete” individual.
SCAPEGOAT OR SACRIFICIAL VICTIM

One who suffers or is blamed unjustly so others may escape blame or punishment.
THE TRICKSTER
a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphomorphic animal who plays tricks or disobeys normal rules and behavior
THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE
A woman married to a man she sees as dull or distant while being attracted to a more virile and interesting man
THE WICKED STEPMOTHER

- Persecutes the child left behind after the father dies, leading to conflict
- Serves to support the **motif** of glorified motherhood and the **theme** that nonmaternal women are dangerous
THE GARDEN
carefully planned and kept, restricted to certain vegetation, represents order
THE FOREST/ COUNTRYSIDE

• Habitat of Mother Nature who keeps control
• Fertility
• Those who enter often lose their way
• Opposite of the garden
THE TREE
Represents life and knowledge
MOUNTAINS/PEAKS

• Highest peak is place to “see” far
• Place to gain great insight
THE CAVE

- Deep down where the character self-reflects
- At the extreme may signify death
WATER
Cleansing, renewal, rebirth, baptism

The river: boundaries and passage of time

The sea: chaos and infinity

The fountain: purification and new life
ISLANDS

• small worlds unto themselves
• represent isolation
ARCHETYPAL SYMBOLS
THE SUN

- consciousness (thinking, enlightenment, wisdom)
- Passage of time and life
  - Rising sun: birth; creation; enlightenment
  - Setting sun: death
COLORS

Red: blood, sacrifice, violent passion, disorder
Green: growth, sensation, hope, fertility
Blue: highly positive, truth, religious feeling, spiritual purity, security
White: light, purity, innocence, supernatural
Black: chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, evil
THE CIRCLE
Wholeness, completion, unity
Passage of time
SERPENT

- Snake or worm
- Usually symbol of evil, corruption, sensuality, mystery
- Sometimes symbol of energy and wisdom
NUMBERS (Western Culture)

*Three*: light; spiritual awareness and unity (The holy Trinity); the male principle

*Four*: associated with the circle; life cycle; four seasons; female principle, earth, nature; four elements (earth, air, fire, water)

*Seven*: the most potent of all symbolic numbers – signifies the union of three and four; the perfect order

*Twelve*: The completed heavenly cycle

*Thirteen*: Betrayal, death, negativity; except in Native American culture where the number is sacred
LIGHT VS. DARKNESS

• Light usually suggests hope, renewal, or intellectual illumination
• Darkness implies the unknown, ignorance or despair
DESERT VS. WATER

• Desert appears as death or lack of life
• Water appears as birth or rebirth
SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION
A god or supernatural/mysterious figure who intervenes for or sometimes against the hero.
FIRE VS. ICE

- Fire can represent light, life, rebirth OR destruction and damnation
- Ice represents ignorance, darkness, sterility
ARCHETYPAL SITUATIONS
THE QUEST: GET SOMETHING!
The search for some important person or thing, which, when found and brought back, will restore goodness and life.
THE TASK: DO SOMETHING!

- to save the kingdom
- to win the fair lady
- to identify himself so he may reassume his rightful position
- ...the hero must perform a superhuman deed
THE JOURNEY: LEARN SOMETHING!
The hero searches for some truth or information necessary to restore goodness to the kingdom.
THE FALL

• Descent from a higher to a lower state of being
• Involves a loss of innocence
ARCHETYPAL THEMES AND MOTIFS
EVE VS. MARY

This motif represents the dichotomy (split) in the view of women.

Eve is held responsible for the fall of Man, and as a result, is the original archetypal temptress. She is viewed as sexualized, disobedient, and untrustworthy.

Mary gave virgin birth to Christ, and thereby, saved mankind, represents the innocent and earth mother. She is viewed as pure, obedient, and loyal.

The dichotomy exists when society tries to fit women into one category or the other: Eve or Mary.
HEAVEN VS. HELL

Heaven: the sky and mountain tops, housing the gods; a place of peace

Hell: the depths of the earth, containing the evil force that inhabits this universe; a place of punishment
FORBIDDEN LOVE/STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

• a pair of lovers opposed by outside forces
• originally means the pairing is being "thwarted by a malign star" or that the stars are working against the relationship
RAGS TO RICHES/TRANSFORMATION

When someone rises from poverty to wealth, or sometimes from obscurity to fame.
GUILT AND REDEMPTION

- When a character feels bad and wants to atone for real or perceived sin
- Requires some kind of heroic act or sacrifice
LOVE CONQUERS ALL.
After all the hardships, for good or bad, love will triumph.
PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL.

- Excessive pride, or hubris, is an offense that will eventually be punished.
WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND. Wrongdoing will be returned one way or another; good deeds will be rewarded.