

Motifs

Light vs. Darkness – Light usually suggests hope, renewal, OR intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.

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 solemnizes spiritual births. Similarly, the appearance of rain in a work of literature can suggest a character's spiritual birth.

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 mountaintops house its gods; the bowels of the earth contain the diabolic forces that inhabit its universe.

Haven vs. Wilderness – Places of safety contrast sharply against the dangerous wilderness. Heroes are often sheltered for a time to regain health and resources.

Supernatural Intervention – The gods intervene on the side of the hero or sometimes against him.

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, anger, excitement, heat, physical stimulation

C. Green – hope, growth, envy, Earth, fertility, sensation, vegetation, death, water, nature, sympathy, adaptability, growth, Jupiter and Venus, envy

D. White (light) – purity, peace, innocence, goodness, Spirit, morality, creative force, the direction East, spiritual thought

E. Orange – fire, pride, ambition, egoism, Venus

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

H. Gold – Majesty, sun, wealth, corn (life dependency), truth

I. Silver – Moon, wealth

Nature:

Air – activity, creativity, breath, light, freedom (liberty), movement

Fire – the ability to transform, love, life, health, control, sun, God, passion, spiritual energy, regeneration

Lake – mystery, depth, unconscious

Mountain – height, mass, loftiness, center of the world, ambition, goals, obstacles

Valley – depression, low-points, evil, unknown

Sun – Hero, son of Heaven, knowledge, the Divine eye, fire, life force, creative-guiding force, brightness, splendor, active awakening, healing, resurrection, ultimate wholeness

Water – feminine, return to the womb

Rivers/Streams – life force, life cycle; escape

Stars – guidance

Ice/Snow – coldness, barrenness

Clouds/Mist – mystery, sacred

Rain – life giver; purity

Cave – feminine, return to the womb

Lightning – intuition, inspiration

Forest – evil, lost, fear

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

These are characters that typically embody a certain kind of human experience. We study these archetypes as observable patterns in the literature which we read. Noting and understanding these archetypes enlightens the reader's understanding of the character and his/her role in the work. It should be understood that sometimes a character has many different aspects of these archetypes, and sometimes characters shift from one type of character to another.

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.

Young Person from the Provinces/Innocent – 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.

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.

Hunting Group of Companions /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.

Friendly Beast –These animals assist the hero and reflect that nature is on the hero's side.

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.

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.

The Scapegoat/Savior – 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 them a more powerful force to the hero.

The Outcast – This figure is banished from a community for some crime (real or imagined). The outcast is usually destined to become a wanderer.

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.

The Temptress/Femme Fatale – Characterized by sensuous beauty, she is one whose physical attraction may bring about the hero's downfall.

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.

The Unfaithful Wife – This woman, married to a man she sees as dull or distant, is attracted to a more virile or interesting man.

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.

The Star-Crossed Lovers – These two characters 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.

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.

HERO'S JOURNEY

Types of Archetypal Journeys

The quest for identity

The epic journey to find the Promised Land/to found the good city

The quest for vengeance

The warrior's journey to save his people

The search for love (to rescue the princess/damsel in distress)

The journey in search of knowledge

The tragic quest: penance or self-denial

The fool's errand

The quest to rid the land of danger

The grail quest (the quest for human perfection)

Stages of a Hero's Journey

Stage 1: Departure: The hero is called to adventure, although he is reluctant to accept.

Stage 2: Initiation: The hero crosses a threshold into a new, more dangerous world, gaining a more mature perspective.

Stage 3: The Road of Trials: The hero is given supernatural aid, endures tests of strength, resourcefulness, and endurance.

Stage 4: The Innermost Cave: The hero descends into the innermost cave, an underworld, or some other place of great trial. Sometimes this place can be within the hero's own mind. Because of this trial, the hero is reborn in some way—physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Through this experience, the hero changes internally.

Stage 5: Return and Reintegration with Society: The hero uses his new wisdom to restore fertility and order to the land

Characteristics of the Hero's Journey

The hero is naïve and inexperienced

The hero meets monsters or monstrous men

The hero has a strange, wise being as a mentor

The hero yearns for the beautiful lady who is sometimes his guide or inspiration

The hero must go on a journey, learn a lesson, change in some way, and return home

The hero often crosses a body of water or travels on a bridge.

The hero is born and raised in a rural setting away from cities

The origin of the hero is mysterious or the hero loses his/her parents at a young age, being raised by animals or a wise guardian

The hero returns to the land of his/her birth in disguise or as an unknown

The hero is special, one of a kind. He/she might represent a whole nation or culture

The hero struggles for something valuable and important

The hero has help from divine or supernatural forces

The hero has a guide or guides

The hero goes through a rite of passage or initiation, an event that marks a change from an immature to a more mature understanding of the world

The hero undergoes some type of ritual or ceremony after his/her initiation

The hero has a loyal band of companions

The hero makes a stirring speech to his/her companions

The hero engages in tests or contests of strength (physical and/or mental) and shows pride in his/her

excellence

The hero suffers an unhealable wound, sometimes an emotional or spiritual wound from which the hero never completely recovers.