

**English 10H**  
***Archetypes in Literature***

The term "archetype" has its origins in ancient Greek. The root words are *archein*, which means "original or old"; and *typos*, which means "pattern, model or type." The combined meaning is an "original pattern" of which all other similar persons, objects, or concepts are derived, copied, modeled, or emulated.

The psychologist, Carl Jung, used the concept of archetype in his theory of the human psyche. He believed that universal, mythic ideas—archetypes—reside within the collective unconscious of people all over the world. Archetypes represent fundamental human motifs of our experience as we evolved; consequentially, they evoke deep emotions.

Certain characters, plots, settings, and images show up over and over in stories from all over the world and in all time periods. These archetypes have special symbolic meanings. Archetypes represent universal symbols of bigger ideas, just like a baby represents youth and innocence.

**I. Symbolic Archetypes**

<b>Image/Symbol</b>	<b>Description</b>
Light vs. Darkness	Light usually suggests hope, renewal, or intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.
Innate Wisdom vs. Educated Stupidity	Some characters exhibit wisdom and understanding of situations instinctively as opposed to those supposedly in charge. Loyal retainers often exhibit this wisdom as they accompany the hero on the journey.
Supernatural Intervention	Spiritual beings intervene on the side of the hero or sometimes against him.
Fire and Ice	Fire represents knowledge, light, life, and rebirth, while ice, like the desert, represents ignorance, darkness, sterility, and death. Fire is ambiguously both protective and destructive.
Nature vs. Mechanistic World	Nature is good while technology is evil.
The Threshold	Gateway to a new world which the hero must enter to change and grow
The Underworld	A place of death or metaphorically an encounter with the dark side of the self. Entering an underworld is a form of facing a fear of death.
Haven vs. Wilderness	Places of safety contrast sharply against a dangerous wilderness or the unknown. Heroes are often sheltered for a time to regain health and resources.
Water vs. Desert	Because Water is necessary to life and growth, it commonly appears as a birth symbol, as baptism symbolizes a spiritual birth, cleansing or purification. Rain, rivers, oceans, etc. also function the same way. The Desert suggests the opposite.
Heaven vs. Hell	Man has traditionally associated parts of the universe not accessible to him with the dwelling places of the primordial forces that govern his world. The skies and mountaintops house his gods, the bowels of the earth contain diabolic forces.
The Crossroads	A place or time of decision when a realization is made and change or penance results
The Maze	A puzzling dilemma or great uncertainty, search for the dangerous monster inside of oneself, or a journey into the heart of darkness
The Castle	A strong place of safety which holds treasure or princess, may be enchanted or bewitched
The Tower	A strong place of evil, representing the isolation of self.

The Magic Weapon	The weapon the hero needs in order to complete his quest.
The Whirlpool	Symbolizes the destructive power of nature or fate.
Fog	Symbolizes uncertainty.
Colors	Red: blood, sacrifice, passion, disorder, anger, violence.
	Green: growth, hope, fertility, jealousy, envy.
	Blue: highly positive, security, tranquility, spiritual purity, peace, serenity.
	Black: darkness, chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, evil, melancholy.
	White: light, purity, innocence, timelessness, God-like Holiness.
	Yellow: enlightenment, wisdom.
Numbers	3—The Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mind/Body/Spirit;</li> <li>• Birth/Life/Death.</li> </ul>
	4—Mankind (four limbs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life/Day cycle (birth, childhood, adulthood, death; morning, afternoon, evening, night);</li> <li>• Four seasons;</li> <li>• Four elements.</li> </ul>
	7—The most potent of all symbolic numbers signifying the union of three and four, the completion of a cycle, perfect order, perfect number, religious symbol. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divinity (3) + Mankind (4) = relationship between man and God.</li> <li>• Seven deadly sins (Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, Pride)</li> <li>• Seven cardinal virtues (Chastity, Temperance, Charity, Diligence, Forgiveness, Kindness, Humility).</li> <li>• Seven days to create the world.</li> <li>• Seven colors of the rainbow.</li> <li>• Seven gifts of Holy Spirit.</li> </ul>
Celestial Bodies	The Sun (masculine) is both the giver and destroyer of life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East☿West; Life☿Death</li> </ul>
	The Moon (feminine) marks the passage of time and controls the course of human events. Seedtime, harvest, etc. are all determined more by the phases of the moon than the progress of the sun, due to the fact that the moon “changes.”
Masculine Images	Columns, towers, boats, trees, swords, guns, etc.
Feminine Images	Bodies of water, caves, doorways, windows. Caves can ambiguously represent the womb (source of life, entrance into the world) and the grave; often represents the entrance to the underworld as well as unexplored regions of the human soul.
Nature	Air – activity, creativity, breath, light, freedom (liberty), movement. Ascent – height, transcendence, inward journey, increasing intensity. Center – thought, unity, timelessness, paradise, creator, infinity. Descent – unconscious, potentialities of being, animal nature. Earth – passive, feminine, receptive, solid. Fire – the ability to transform, love, life, health, control, sun, God, passion, spiritual energy, regeneration. Lake – mystery, depth, unconscious. Moon – change, transition.

	<p>Mountain – height, mass, loftiness, center of the world, ambition, goals.</p> <p>Valley – depression, low-points, evil, unknown.</p> <p>Sun – Hero, son of Heaven, knowledge, the Divine eye, fire, life force, creative-guiding force, brightness, splendor, active awakening, healing, resurrection, ultimate wholeness.</p> <p>Water – passive, feminine.</p> <p>Rivers/Streams – life force, life cycle.</p> <p>Stars – guidance.</p> <p>Wind – Holy Spirit, life, messenger.</p> <p>Ice/Snow – coldness, barrenness.</p> <p>Clouds/Mist – mystery, sacred.</p> <p>Rain – life giver, tears.</p> <p>Lightning – intuition, inspiration.</p> <p>Tree – where we learn, tree of life, tree of knowledge.</p> <p>Forest – evil, lost, fear.</p>
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## II. Situational Archetypes

Archetype	Description
The Quest	What the Hero must accomplish in order to bring fertility back to the wasteland, usually a search for some talisman, which will restore peace, order, and normalcy to a troubled land.
The Task	The nearly superhuman feat(s) the Hero must perform in order to accomplish his quest.
The Journey	The journey sends the Hero in search of some truth that will help save his kingdom.
The Initiation	The adolescent comes into his maturity with new awareness and problems.
The Ritual	The actual ceremonies the Initiate experiences that will mark his rite of passage into another state. A clear sign of the character's role in his society
The Fall	The descent from a higher to a lower state of being usually as a punishment for transgression. It also involves the loss of innocence.
Death and Rebirth	The most common of all situational archetypes, this motif grows out of a parallel between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. Thus morning and springtime represent birth, youth, or rebirth, while evening and winter suggest old age or death.
Battle between Good and Evil	Obviously, a battle between two primal forces. Mankind shows eternal optimism in the continual portrayal of good triumphing over evil despite great odds.
The Unhealable Wound	Either a physical or psychological wound that cannot be fully healed. The wound symbolizes a loss of innocence.

## III. Character Archetypes

Archetype	Description
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.
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.
The Initiates	The Initiates are young heroes or heroines who must go through some training and ceremony before undertaking their quest.
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.
Mentor - Pupil Relationship	In this relationship, the Mentor teaches the Hero/pupil the necessary skills for surviving the quest.
The Threshold Guardian	Tests the hero's courage and worthiness to begin the journey
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.
Hunting Group of Companions	These are loyal companions willing to face hardship and ordeal in order to stay together.
Loyal Retainers	The Retainer's duty is to reflect the nobility and power of the hero.
Friendly Beast	An animal companion showing that nature is on the side of the hero.
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.
The Devil Figure	This character is evil incarnate.
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.
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.
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.
The Outcast	A character banished from a social group for some real or imagined crime against his fellow man, usually destined to wander from place to place.
The Platonic Ideal	A woman who is a source of inspiration to the hero, who has an intellectual rather than physical attraction to her
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.
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 and hips symbolic of her childbearing capacities.
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
White Goddess	Good, beautiful maiden, usually blond, may make an ideal marriage partner; often has religious or intellectual overtones.

The Unfaithful Wife	A woman married to a man she sees as dull or distant and is attracted to more virile or interesting men.
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.