Archetypes Found in Film & Literature

Colors

Red: blood, sacrifice, passion, disorder
Green: growth, hope, fertility, the supernatural
Blue: positive, secure tranquil spiritual, pure
Black: darkness, chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, wisdom, evil, melancholy
White: light, purity, innocence, timelessness [negative: death, terror, supernatural]
Yellow: enlightenment, wisdom
Orange: balance, creativity, pride, ambition, cruelty, ferocity, luxury
Pink: romance, love, sensuality, emotions
Purple: royalty, imperial power, pride, justice, intuition, wisdom, truth, expression
Gold: Divine light, illumination, self-worth/value
Silver: moon, magic, the Goddess, psychic nature, emotions, intuition

Numbers

0: nothingness, the void
1: the beginning, the sum of all possibilities
2: duality, diversity, balance
3: Triad overcoming duality in that it contains a beginning, middle, and end
5: Eternity, transformation, humanity
6: balance harmony, health, time, feminine power, marriage and evolution
7: universal sacred number, perfect order
8: regeneration and achievement of a spiritual goal, eternity and infinity
9: the whole, completion, the incorruptible, attainment and fulfillment
10: law of heaven and earth, balance, unity

Seasons

Spring: rebirth
Summer: youth, recklessness, romance
Fall: maturity, wisdom
Winter: Death

Animals

Deer: Innocence, wisdom
Boar: bravery, strength, challenge
Fox: Cunning, wily
Goat: Devil
Bear: bravery, strength
Bird: fire, purity, spirit, communication
Lion: majesty, strength, ferocity, cruelty, courage
Serpent: energy and pure force, evil, corruption, sensuality, destruction

Nature

Rainbow: connection between heaven and earth
Lightening: spiritual enlightenment, revelation
Ice/snow: death, rigidity
Water: birth-earth-resurrection cycle;
Garden: paradise, innocence, unspoiled beauty
Sea/ocean: mother of all life; death and/or rebirth; timelessness, eternity
Sun: creative energy, thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision (male principal)
Rising sun: birth, creation, enlightenment
Setting sun: death
Rivers: death and rebirth; flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of life
Desert: spiritual void, death, hopelessness
Tree: embodiment of life; point of three realms (heaven, earth, waters)
Forest: mystery, transformation, creative energy
Rose: heavenly perfection and earthly passion; time and eternity, life and death
Cave: forbidden secret place; place of initiation

Architecture

Bridge: transition between life and death; danger in the path of psychological or spiritual development
Door: barrier through which the initiate must have the key to pass; opportunity or transition
Window: the way our own consciousness looks out and interprets the world
Gate: entry to a new life

SITUATION ARCHETYPES

The Quest—This motif describes the search for someone or some talisman 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.

The Task—To save the kingdom, to win the fair lady, to identify himself so that he may resume his rightful position, the hero must perform some nearly superhuman deed. NOT THE SAME AS THE QUEST—A FUNCTION OF THE ULTIMATE GOAL, THE RESTORATION OF ORDER. In many myths and stories, the hero must complete multiple Tasks before completing the Quest.

The Journey—The journey sends the hero in search for some truth or information necessary to restore fertility to the kingdom. Usually the hero descends into a real or psychological hell and is forced to discover the blackest truths, quite often concerning his own faults. Once the hero is at this lowest point, he must accept personal responsibility to return to the world of the living.

The Initiation—This archetype usually takes the form of an initiation into adult life. The adolescent comes into his/her maturity with new awareness (and problems) along with new hope for the community. This awakening is often the climax of the story.

The Fall—This archetype describes a descent from a higher to a lower state of being. The experience involves a defilement and/or loss of innocence and bliss. The fall is often accompanied by expulsion from a kind of paradise as penalty for disobedience and moral transgression.

Battle between Good and Evil—The battle between two primal forces. Mankind shows eternal optimism in the continual portrayal of good triumphing over evil despite great odds.

The Ritual—The actual ceremony the initiate experiences will mark is rite of passage into another state. The importance of ritual rites cannot be over stressed as they provide clear sign posts for the character’s role in society as well as our own position in the world.

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. Thus, morning and springtime represent birth, youth or rebirth; evening and winter suggest old age or death.

Unhealable Wound—This wound is either physical or psychological and cannot be healed fully. This wound also indicates a loss of innocence. These wounds always ache and often drive the sufferer to desperate measures.
SYMBOLIC ARCHETYPES

The Magic Weapon—This symbolizes the extraordinary quality of the hero because no one else can wield the weapon or use it to its full potential. It is usually given by a mentor figure. (Excalibur, Thor’s hammer)

Nature Versus the Mechanistic World—Nature is good while science, technology, and society are often evil.

Light versus Darkness—Light usually suggests hope renewal, or intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.

Water verses Desert—Because water is necessary to life and growth, it commonly appears as a birth or rebirth symbol. Water is used in baptismal services, which solemnize spiritual births. Similarly, the appearance of rain in a work of literature can suggest a character’s spiritual birth.

Innate Wisdom versus 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 of the journey.

Fire versus Ice—Fire represents knowledge, light, life, and rebirth, while ice, like desert represents ignorance, darkness, sterility, and death. When humans began to control fire, they began to control their environment and their lives.

Heaven versus Hell—Man has traditionally associated parts of the universe not accessible to him with the dwelling place of the primordial forces that govern his world. The skies and mountain tops house his gods; the bowels of the earth contain the diabolic forces that inhabit his universe.

Haven versus 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.

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

The Hero—According the Lord Raglan in *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* contends that this archetype is so well defined that the life of the protagonist can be clearly divided into a series of well-marked adventures which strongly suggest a ritualistic pattern. Raglan finds that the circumstances around his conception are unusual, and at birth and at birth some attempt is made to kill him. He is, however, spirited away and reared by foster parents. Almost nothing is know about his childhood, but upon reaching manhood he returns to his future kingdom. After a victory over the king or a wild beast, he marries a princess, becomes king, reigns uneventfully, but later loses favor with the gods. He is then driven from city after which he meets a mysterious death, often at the top of a hill. His body is not buried, but nevertheless, he has one or more holy sepulchers.

The Young Man from the Provinces — This hero is spirited away as a young man and reared by strangers. He later returns to his home and heritage where he is a stranger who sees new problems and new solutions.

The Initiate—These are young heroes or heroines who, prior to their quest, must endure some training and ceremony. They are usually innocent and often wear white.

The Mentor—A figure who serves as a teacher or counselor to the initiate. Sometimes he or she work as a role model and serve as a father or mother figure.

Mentor-Pupil Relationship—The mentor teaches by example the skills necessary to survive the quest.
**Father-Son Conflict**—Tensions often result from separation during childhood or from an external source when the individuals meet as men. Sometimes the mentor will be held in higher esteem for the hero than the natural parent.

**The Hunting Group of Companions**—Loyal companions willing to face any number of perils in order to be together.

**The Loyal Retainer**—This individual is a servant who is heroic. His duty is to protect the hero and reflect the nobility of the hero. Examples:

**The Outcast**—A figure who is banished from a social group for some crime (real or imagined) against his fellow man. Sometimes the outcast can rise above his circumstance and become a hero or an assistant to the hero.

**The Devil Figure**—Evil incarnate, this character offers worldly goods, fame or knowledge to the protagonist in exchange for possession of the soul.

**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 Evil Figure with the Ultimately Good Heart**—A redeemable devil figure saved by the nobility or love of the hero.

**The Scapegoat**—An animal or more usually a human whose death in a public ceremony expiates some taint or sin that has been visited upon a community. Their death often makes them a more powerful force in the society than when they lived.

**Star-Crossed Lovers**—These two characters are engaged in a love affair that is fated to end tragically for one or both due to the disapproval of their society, friends, or family, or some tragic situation.

**The Temptress**—Characterized by sensuous beauty, this woman is one to whom the protagonist is physically attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall.

**The Platonic Ideal**—this woman is a source of inspiration and a spiritual ideal, for whom the protagonist or author has an intellectual or spiritual connection to rather than a physical attraction.

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

**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.

**The Damsel in Distress**—The vulnerable woman who must be rescued by the hero. She is often used as bait to trap the unsuspecting hero.