

KEY CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

General Knowledge About Characters to Boost Perceptive Interpretations

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STORIES AIM TO EVOKE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

All stories aim to evoke an emotional response in the reader:

- “make ’em laugh,
- make ’em cry.”
 - Therefore, all the structural and linguistic elements are designed to evoke an emotional response
 - It is often agreed that the protagonist is the pillar of stories
 - And at their core, all storytelling springs from the same source: desire—
 - the desire to experience love,
 - to overcome fear (even the terror of death),
 - to understand the meaning of it all (whatever “it” may be)
 - or simply to escape the ordinariness of real life
 - and experience places and thrills that only the imagination can provide.
 - It’s not an intellectual longing, or stories would be made from philosophical treatises.
 - It’s a deep, gut-based desire for
 - a heightened sense of order,
 - of connection,
 - of adventure,
 - of love
 - or hate
 - or hilarity
 - or passion—
 - of power over the mysteries of life.



PERCEPTIVE ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING CHARACTERS

A key way to be able to write a perceptive and detailed analysis of a story or even write your own great story, is to reflect your knowledge and view of human behaviour in your writing.

- One method of doing this is by appreciating the role psychology plays in stories.
 - This is what psychologist Maria Konnikova has to say about psychology and literature:
 - *'Some of the best psychologists are novelists'; they are people who write fiction, create characters and who have to really delve into the psyche of the human beings around them because they are the people who observe their books so keenly and this is how their books survive- they have to be true to life* (YouTube, 2017).
 - There is clearly a close relationship between psychology and literature.
 - Psychology deals with the study of observable patterns of human behavior.
 - Writers are interested in the processes by which minds are formed and writers' works exhibit how human beings behave in dealing with their problems and environment.

INTRODUCTION TO CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

In the early 20th century, Carl Gustav Jung theorised what he called, 'The Collective Unconscious'; a deep layer of 'repressed content' in the human psyche that does not derive from personal experience but is inborn; in other words it is material or information that exists from birth and inhabits the unconscious parts of our minds.

Furthermore, he named it the 'collective' unconscious because he believed this material is not unique to individuals but, according to him, is common to all human beings, all over the globe in all cultures.


This theory says that there are archaic, universal images, concepts and patterns that all humans instinctively recognize.

So, what is this mysterious forgotten and repressed material, that Jung called the contents of the collective unconscious?

When thinking of the unconscious mind, it can be helpful to compare the mind to an iceberg. Everything above the water represents conscious awareness while everything below the water represents the unconscious. Freud believed that many of our feelings, desires, fears and emotions are repressed or held out of awareness, which Jung calls 'the gathering place of forgotten and repressed contents' and so we are not aware of its effects on us (Jung, Hull and Fordham, 2014)..

Additionally, the term "archetype", in ancient Greek, means original pattern. Therefore, the term archetype is used to identify the contents of the collective unconscious, which Jung believed were the fundamental psychological patterns within a person; they are recognisable patterns of traits and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals; they are roles a person may play in society, essential ways of interacting with others.





Archetypes provide a powerful way to understand patterns of our minds and are integral to classic myths and becoming ever more popular in modern storytelling.

If we are to believe Jung and Joseph Campbell's theory of the Hero's Journey, stories and myths are an intrinsic part of human development. They are a teaching tool, a way to warn each other of dangers and the simplest method of examining human behavior to better understand one another; Jung identified 12 universal mythic character archetypes (although there may really be hundreds of archetypes available), that reside within our collective unconscious and have become popular as a method of creating recognisable characters in stories



UNDERSTANDING CHARACTERS: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL GOALS

All protagonists have 2 goals:

- an external goal
 - which represents
- an internal goal
 - Generally, the external goals can be classified as the following:
 - Win, for example money, a trophy, a crown, etc
 - Stop
 - Retrieve
 - Escape
 - Revenge
 - Deliver
 - Maintain
 - The character's external goals represent one or more of the following internal goals
 - Positive relationships
 - Self-acceptance (positive evaluation of oneself and one's life)
 - Personal growth
 - Environmental mastery (the capacity to effectively manage one's life and the surrounding environment)
 - Autonomy
 - Purpose in life

THE HERO ARCHETYPE

The Hero is superior to the reader and produces admiration.

- Although they're not perfect, they're confident about their skills and take action without hesitation.
 - They have no ambivalence, no self-doubts.
 - We may not identify with them, but we fantasize about being them.
 - Or perhaps the audience can relate to a Hero's
 - idiosyncrasies,
 - quirks,
 - vices
 - and deepest fears,
 - while wanting to emulate his admirable qualities.
 - They give us a taste of who we could really be.
 - Examples include superheroes, such as



- Superman
- Spiderman (whose alter-egos are Average Joes),
- Indiana Jones,
- James Bond,
- and Sherlock Holmes.

WHAT CAUSES THE HERO TO TAKE ACTION?

According to Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*,

- “The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there is something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of society. The person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir. It's usually a cycle, a coming and a returning.”
 - The word hero is Greek, from a root that means "to protect and to serve" (incidentally the motto of the Los Angeles Police Department).
 - The Hero wants to make the world a better place. His or her underlying fear is failing to have what it takes to persevere and prevail.
 - A Hero is someone who is willing to sacrifice his own needs on behalf of others,
 - like a shepherd who will sacrifice to protect and serve his flock.
 - Armed with a particular set of skills and the sheer force of their will, the hero will conquer the enemy and carry the day.
 - This incredibly competent character will usually suffer a crisis of confidence at their lowest ebb — which they must overcome if they are to rise once more.
 - they may be ambitious and seek out challenges—think astronauts, racing drivers, or athletes—or they may be more reluctant Heroes who recognize an injustice or problem and simply rise to the occasion to do what needs to be done to remedy it.
 - Either way, the Hero is invigorated by challenge, feels outraged by injustice, and responds quickly and decisively to difficulty or opportunity

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE)

The Everyman is a classic allegorical figure who represents all of humanity; he is also known as

- the Average Joe,
- the Good old boy,
- the Person next door,
- the Regular Jane,



- the Common man,
- the Realist,
- the Working stiff,
- the Solid citizen,
- the Good neighbour
- and the Silent majority.
 - One of the most common ways for the focal character to start the story in order for the audience to identify with him is through the Everyman archetype.
 - The Everyman is equal to the reader.
 - This results in sympathy because we recognise ourselves in them, and thus identify with
 - them,
 - their desires,
 - and their needs.
 - These characters struggle to rise above their
 - doubts,
 - limitations,
 - and obstacles.
 - Alfred Hitchcock made a career out of these protagonists—
 - ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances.

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): NAMES

- Mr. Utterson in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*,
 - Edna the parlour maid and Eva Smith in *An Inspector Calls*,
 - Peter Parker, the *Spiderman*,
 - Alfred in *Propping Up The Line*,
 - Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*,
 - Rick Grimes in *The Walking Dead*,
 - Piggy (possibly, Ralph and Jack too) in *Lord of The Flies*,
 - And, perhaps, most fittingly, Thomas A. Anderson in *The Matrix*,
 - These are all typical Everyman archetypal characters.
 - Names are one of the first things we learn about characters, especially the Everyman.
-

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): FUNCTIONS OF NAMES: PART 1

Inspector Goole's final speech in *An Inspector Calls* talks about 'the millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths';

- what is his main point?
 - At first glance, it may be easy to see the Everyman as a boring plain Jane type of character but from another point of view, we can see the Everyman as a blank canvas that allows the audience to project their own consciousness into because ultimately, that is what authors really want us to do:
-



- to see ourselves in the character as if we are the ones living and experiencing the story; this is how we truly connect with the story's meaning.
 - One of the ways authors design the Everyman as a blank canvas is by constructing them with an ordinary name or even no name at all.
 - This technique has two effects;
 - on the one hand, it emphasises the Everyman's universality because it illustrates the idea that we are all the same;
 - on the other hand, it also highlights how we can lose our identity, particularly when trying to fit in.
 - The unnamed protagonist in Phillip Roth's book *Everyman* portrays one of humanity's greatest fears when he must face his mortality (death) alone both without the security of human connections or the belief in an afterlife as a result of living as an atheist and a materialist.

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): FUNCTIONS OF NAMES: PART 2

Another thing to consider is that the names authors choose for their Everyman characters often have double meanings;

- for example, in *An Inspector Calls*, 'Eva' could be a half-homophone for Eve the mother of humanity in the Abrahamic faiths,
- and 'Smith' denotes a person skilled in creating something, like a goldsmith or wordsmith;
 - so, on one hand, to kill Eva, the symbolic mother of humanity, as the Birlings have done indirectly, is to kill the whole of humanity,
 - and their inhumane treatment of Eva represents the author's view, the dehumanisation of the Everyman by capitalism.
 - However, on the other hand, the name 'Smith' suggests that it is the Everyman who has the ability and power to sculpt a better future,
 - first by recognising his shared humanity with the rest of the common population and then using that understanding to build strength in numbers to overturn injustice.
 - Since Mr. Birling represents capitalism, we can view the play as being about exposing the contempt capitalism has for humanity,
 - as represented by the Everyman,
 - but on the other, it is about highlighting the power the Everyman has to control his own destiny.

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): SETTINGS

Authors place the Everyman in familiar situations

- to make the ordinary processes and quirks of life visible to us through dramatization
 - so we may see them more clearly




- and therefore question them in an effort to try and recognise the truth about the world we live in.
 - Therefore, stories typically start with the Everyman placed in a familiar setting and a brief illustration of the problem he faces:
 - he works in a cafe,
 - an office,
 - a library,
 - a school.
 - Alternatively, the author may juxtapose the everyman's ordinariness with an extreme setting of some sort, for example
 - A battlefield
 - A dystopian setting
 - Any extremely dangerous setting of some sort
 - In this case, the author may want the ordinary person to understand how any one of us may end up in the most extreme situation

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): EMOTIONAL EFFECTS: PART 1

- The time in which a character lives,
- the place where she works,
- and her home
- and family situation
 - all contribute to greater empathy.
 - For example, Julie in Julie and Julia is a young wife living and working in Manhattan.
 - Obviously, this doesn't mean that everyone who identifies with the character has been in that situation,
 - but rather it means that the audience is likely to have known or heard a lot about people who are in such a setting—and has repeatedly seen similar situations on the screen.
 - This results in empathy because we recognize ourselves in the Everyman,
 - and thus identify
 - with him,
 - his desires,
 - and his needs,
 - even if the Everyman character has been endowed with special powers like Peter Parker in Spiderman. Peter Parker is, in essence, just an ordinary person who has been thrust into extraordinary circumstances and is simply trying to do the right thing, living by his murdered uncle Ben's motto: 'with great power comes great responsibility.'

THE EVERYMAN (AVERAGE JOE): EMOTIONAL EFFECTS: PART 2





This archetype helps us understand how to connect, interact, and belong by providing a model or structure for doing so.

- The Regular Guy/Gal provides a balanced outlook on the world that allow us to
 - deal with the darkness of the world,
 - to fit in enough to be part of a group
 - and to place a value on all people,
 - not just those who excel.

THE UNDERDOG

The underdog is very popular as a main character in fiction. Everybody loves an underdog.

- The Underdog character is inferior to the reader.
- They're the unlikely hero.
- The odds are against them.
- They're outmatched by antagonistic forces
 - and overwhelmed by them.
- The underdog is the character who seems always at a disadvantage.
 - So we're inclined to
 - protect,
 - help,
 - or console them as the story progresses.
 - The Underdog is an appealing protagonist because he makes us feel three emotions—
 - compassion for their
 - lack of self-esteem
 - or resources to be successful,
 - including any
 - physical,
 - emotional,
 - social,
 - or mental handicaps;
 - admiration for their determination to triumph over obstacles and take control over their lives;
 - and suspense for the implausibility that they'll succeed,
 - the odds being so stacked up against them—
 - Will this person pull it off?
 - And if so, how?
 - Examples include
 - Rocky,
 - Forrest Gump,
 - The Karate Kid,
 - Raising Arizona,
 - The Elephant Man,
 - My Left Foot,



- and Sarah Connor in *The Terminator*.
- The ugly duckling, for example, was singled out for all of the wrong reasons. By the conclusion of the story, the character has pushed through hardship and won respect.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNDERDOG


1. The Underdog character is inferior to the reader.
2. They're the unlikely hero.
3. The odds are against them.
4. They're outmatched by antagonistic forces
 - a. and overwhelmed by them.
5. The underdog is the character who seems always at a disadvantage.
6. The underdog does everything in person.
 - a. They go face-to-face with powerful influences.
7. They have grit.
8. They are courageous and resolute, and they go for it with determination.
9. They are passionate and likable.

TYPES OF UNDERDOG STORIES

- An underdog story is a 'David Beats Goliath' story going back even further than Biblical times.
- Underdog stories are often rags-to-riches stories. (Cinderella stories)
- Another variation is *The Baby In The Basket*, starting with *Oedipus*.
- When the main character is an underdog, the audience tends to care about them and root for their success in whatever goal the writer sets up.
- Sometimes the underdog is discriminated against due to their identity, e.g., racism or sexism or any other kind of prejudice. In fairytales it was because they were poor or unconnected or because their stepmother didn't love them.
- In children's stories, the child is always part underdog archetype by virtue of being a child, not considered capable of doing anything significant, not trusted, not believed.
- In fables, mice are under-'dogs' because of their small size.
- Northrop Frye categorised heroes based on how similar main characters are to the average person. The underdog sits between low mimetic and ironic narrative, right at the bottom of the pecking order.

THE LOST SOUL





The Lost Soul, also known as the “Anti-Hero,”

- is a character who’s the opposite of the reader—
 - the character who takes the wrong turn,
 - who goes down the wrong path.
 - He’s morally defective and represents the darker side of human nature.
 - This character evokes fascination since we’re intrigued by glimpses of the dark side.
 - He may be...
 - Wounded
 - Hiding
 - Haunted
 - self-loathing
 - an outsider
 - simply unpleasant.

THE LOST SOUL: DRAMATIC EFFECT: PART 1

Maybe we feel a hint of guilty admiration for their courage to be bad and challenge established morals.

- This is why actors often admit enjoying playing flawed characters,
 - especially villains.
 - They’re not likable, so to form the crucial bond with them, the reader must understand them and admire something about them—
 - their intelligence,
 - their motives,
 - their lack of options,
 - or even a rare positive value,
 - such as loyalty to family (The Godfather),
 - caring for another human being (Midnight Cowboy),
 - or passion (Amadeus).
 - Other examples of Lost Soul characters include
 - Bonnie and Clyde,
 - Raging Bull,
 - Citizen Kane,
 - Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*,
 - Macbeth
 - and Taxi Driver.

THE LOST SOUL: DRAMATIC EFFECT: PART 2

What is the appeal of flawed or transgressive lost soul characters?

- Obviously, they provide opportunities to show how people who commit social or criminal transgressions face consequences for their actions,



- and teach the audience not to follow their example.
 - And such lessons play a potentially important role in teaching moral behavior,
 - the glue that binds societies together
 - so they can function successfully.
 - “Story—sacred and profane—is perhaps the main cohering force in human life,” says Gottschall. “Story is the counterforce to social disorder, the tendency of things to fall apart.”
- However, Lost Soul characters also provide an opportunity for us to understand how people can become detached from humanity
 - Sometimes, this is because of some traumatic personal experiences they suffered in the past
 - Such as Scrooge being constantly let down by human relationships in his younger years;
 - His father was – apparently - abusive
 - His mother was absent
 - His fiancée left him
 - And his beloved sister died in childbirth
 - Sometimes the Lost Soul character becomes detached because of societal flaws
 - In Macbeth, for example, the protagonist becomes a Lost Soul because of trying to live up to impossible standards of masculinity
 - He becomes extreme and, therefore, destroys himself and others

THE REBEL: INTRODUCTION

Rebels are

- outrageous,
- outspoken
- and radical in a cutting-edge way many of us wish we were.
 - They are counter-cultural and innovative, and are most fulfilled when they change something they feel needs to be changed to better the world.
 - Therefore, their fearlessness in the face of injustice can produce admiration in the audience because they represent the part of us that wishes we could find the courage to overturn the
 - prejudices,
 - oppressions
 - and other kinds of injustice in the world.

THE REBEL: DRAMATIC FUNCTION

In the face of an unjust society, they are the ones with the will to overthrow the status quo.

- A rebel might be a charismatic leader,
 - but they also might work in secret.
 - They can be a freedom fighter,
 - or the girl in chemistry class with the purple highlights in her hair.



- To say they are unconventional thinkers would be an understatement.
 - They confidently motivate others to confront societal negativity
 - and think differently,
 - and not just conform and accept the most tried-and-true methods and predominant thoughts of the day.
 - This revolutionary radicalism screams for freedom and a sense of social consciousness, away from materialistic designs.
 - They are often surprisingly humble and honest individuals, given that they often live on the cusp of life and death.
 - They can find a balance between exercising a responsibility to their ideals when confronting someone or something contrary to those ideals.
 - In essence, The Rebel desires to restore humanity to society by confronting the sources in society that have removed humanity.

THE EXPLORER: INTRODUCTION

The Explorer, at the very core, is on a journey.

- In fact, every focal character is on a symbolic journey, in their quest for self-awareness and knowledge.
 - The reason or motivation driving their quest is usually represented in the form of a visible desire or goal
 - – in mythology, this was known as ‘the holy grail’.
 - The goal may be
 - to win a competition,
 - to escape from somewhere,
 - to take revenge on someone
 - or to deliver something.
 - The explorer, therefore, is one of the most fundamental and important of all the archetypes,
 - because even if the character starts off the journey with a particular goal in mind, the Explorer archetype takes us on the focal character’s journey to the discovery of his or her true self,
 - which is often very different, or even the opposite to what they may have initially thought.

THE EXPLORER: PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT

The protagonist’s journey is the road less travelled.

- It represents us
 - stepping outside ourselves,
 - stepping outside our comfort zone to explore



- new ideas,
- different ways of life
- and new places
 - to eventually return with a new set of eyes
 - and ideally our true selves.
 - the Explorer goes out
 - seeking a better world,
 - craving new experiences,
 - repelling boundaries,
 - restrictions,
 - and conventions
 - to transform into a new identity.
 - the explorer's journey often begins in captivity.

HOW TO WRITE ABOUT ARCHETYPES

- If we take an archetypal perspective, we could see [CHARACTER NAME] as a [CHARACTER ARCEHTYPE(S)]; For example, he/she portrays [TRAITS] such as when he/she...
- [CHARACTER NAME] can be seen as a [CHARACTER ARCEHTYPE(S)], especially when he/she...

