

Archetypes and Symbols

SITUATION ARCHETYPES

1. 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.
2. The Task – This refers to a possibly superhuman feat that must be accomplished in order to fulfill the ultimate goal.
3. The Journey – The journey sends the hero in search for some truth or information necessary to restore fertility, justice, and/or harmony to the kingdom. The journey includes the series of trials and tribulations the hero faces along the way. Usually the hero descends into a real or psychological hell and is forced to discover the blackest truths, quite often concerning his faults. Once the hero is at this lowest level, he must accept personal responsibility to return to the world of the living.
4. The Initiation – This situation refers to a moment, usually psychological, in which an individual comes into maturity. He or she gains a new awareness into the nature of circumstances and problems and understands his or her responsibility for trying to resolve the dilemma. Typically, a hero receives a calling, a message or signal that he or she must make sacrifices and become responsible for getting involved in the problem. Often a hero will deny and question the calling and ultimately, in the initiation, will accept responsibility.
5. The Ritual – Not to be co

models and often serve as father or mother figure. They teach by example the skills necessary to survive the journey and quest.

5. Hunting Group of Companions – These loyal companions are willing to face any number of perils in order to be together.
 6. 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.
 7. Friendly Beast – These animals assist the hero and reflect that nature is on the hero's side.
 8. The Devil Figure – This character represents evil incarnate. He or she may offer worldly goods, fame, or
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RECOGNIZING PATTERNS

The following list of patterns comes from the book How to Read Literature Like a Professor by Thomas C. Foster who teaches at the University of Michigan. If you are serious about literary analysis, then I highly recommend buying this book. It goes into detail what I just briefly mention and is written in such a lively, witty voice that it does not read like a textbook at all! It will be well worth your time and effort to read it.

Trips tend to become quests to discover self.

Meals together tend to be acts of communion/community or isolation.

Ghosts, vampires, monsters, and nasty people and sometimes simply the antagonists are not about supernatural brew-ha-ha; they tend to depict some sort of exploitation.

There's only one story. Look for allusions and archetypes.

Weather matters.

Violence and be both literal and figurative.

Symbols can be objects, images, events, and actions.

Sometimes a story is meant to change us, the readers, and through us change society.

Keep an eye out for Christ-figures.

Flying tends to represent freedom. What do you think falling represents?

Getting dunked or just sprinkled in something wet tends to be a baptism.

Geography tends to be a metaphor for the psyche.

Seasons tend to be traditional symbols.