



Chapter 2

Why Archetypes Are Important

I should warn you that the next two chapters aren't going to have as much art as all the other chapters, but these two chapters are the most important in this entire book. So—and this is very important—*don't take these two chapters lightly! I just want to make sure you understand what I just said, so I am going to say it again. DON'T TAKE THESE TWO CHAPTERS LIGHTLY!*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, certain traits are evident in all characters. These traits, called archetypes, allow us to categorize them into specific groups. An archetype is considered to be the original mold or model of a person, trait, or behavior that we as humans wish to copy or emulate. It is the *ideal* example of a character. Archetypes encompass both the good and evil spectrums.

A wide variety of archetypes can be found throughout history, from the works of Shakespeare all the way back to the teachings of Plato. You can spend some time in the library researching archetypes throughout history, but we are going to focus on a specific grouping of archetype. Today, the most prevalent archetypes used are set forth by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Jung, a colleague of Sigmund Freud, studied the idea of the conscious and unconscious mind. He believed that multiple reoccurring innate ideas defined specific characters. It is these reoccurring ideas that we as humans grasp onto in order to define people we encounter in our everyday lives, as well as characters in fictional works. These basic archetypes exist in all literature. The Jungian archetypes are pretty self-evident, but once you become more familiar with the various archetypes and what they mean, they become much more recognizable and thus make character development easier as well.

Jung developed a plethora of archetypes and their meanings, however we will focus only on those most commonly used in storytelling today:

- The hero
- The shadow
- The fool
- The anima/animus
- The mentor
- The trickster

When dealing with character design, always remember that the character exists as a result of the story. The story will dictate that you need a *hero*. The hero is defined as someone who is very brave, selfless, and willing to help others no matter what the cost.

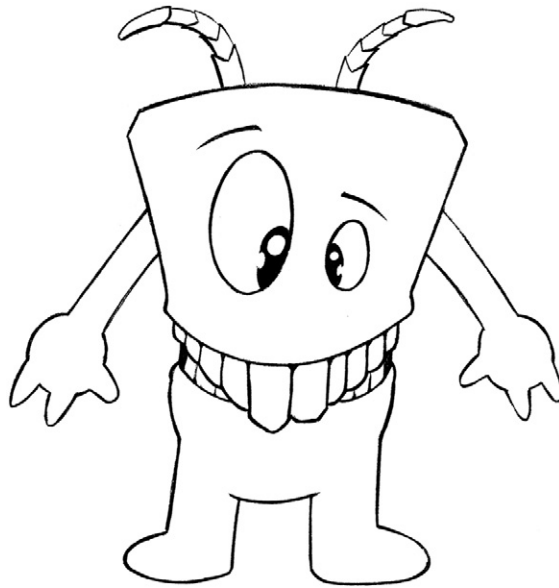


Now that we have established the hero, we are going to need an enemy for that person to interact with in the story. We are going to need to establish the *shadow* character. The shadow character is the one who is connected the most with our instinctual animal past. He or she is perceived as ruthless, mysterious, disagreeable, and evil.



Now that we have a good guy and a bad guy (or gal), we should be able to tell a great story, right? Well, just because you have the two main characters, it doesn't mean that your story is going to be great. You might be able to tell a compelling story with only two people, but that rarely happens. With that in mind, you are going to need a cast of supporting characters to help push the main characters through the story. This leads us to our next character: the *fool*.

The fool character is the one who goes through the story in a confused state and inevitably gets everyone into undesirable situations.



The fool is in the story to test the main character. How that character deals with the actions of the fool tells us a lot about that person—for example:

We are following the shadow character, who is followed by the fool character. The fool character flips the switch to the doomsday device early, and now the whole five-month plan goes down the drain. In response to the fool's action, the shadow character destroys the fool character in a fit of rage. This then proves just how unforgiving and ruthless the shadow character is.

Or, if the same situation happens and the shadow character doesn't act in a fit of rage but instead tries to fix the problem and still uses the fool character. This would show that the shadow character still has some form of humanity and morality. Therefore, the fool adds depth to the story and provides a window into the soul of the main character. No matter how annoying the fool may get, he or she provides the information we need to fully understand the story.

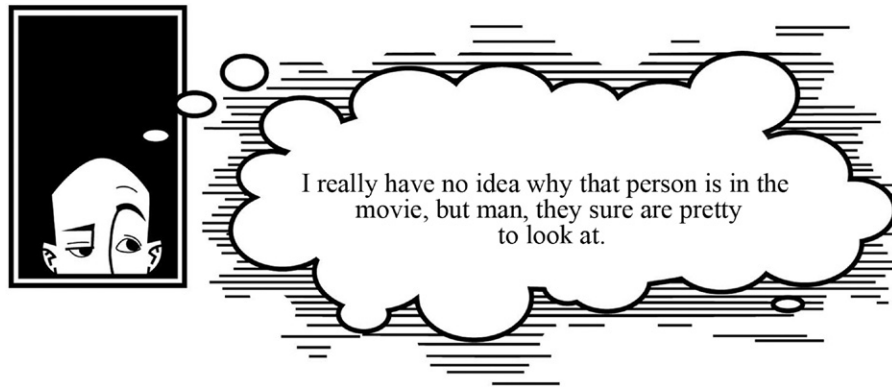
From the fool character we move on to something a little bit more interesting: the *anima/animus*. The anima is the female counterpart to the male, and the animus is the male counterpart to the female. This character embodies the male and female urges.



Since I mentioned that there is a counterpart to the female:



These characters represent our sexual desires bundled into one character. In other words, the anima or animus represents the love interest in the story. The love interest doesn't have to be just for the main characters; he or she could be for you, the viewer. How many times have you seen a movie or read a comic and thought to yourself:



The anima/animus characters exist to draw you into the story. If you or the main character is attracted to the anima or animus character and something happens to that character, it will evoke a wide range of emotions from within. This is another technique to keep you immersed in the story.

Once the main character is emotionally connected to another character—generally the anima or animus—the *mentor* then appears. The mentor is relevant because he or she has the profound knowledge that the protagonist needs even he or she doesn't want to hear it.



The mentor plays a key role in making the protagonist realize his or her full potential and is often portrayed as an old man or woman. This is because most cultures associate age with having wisdom. The mentor takes on many of the characteristics of a parent. I'll bet that if you think back on your childhood, you can recall that often what your parents told you didn't make any sense, but now that you are older and wiser, you realize they only had your best interests in mind. Remember when I said that the mentor is "often" portrayed as an old man or woman? Well there are many instances where the mentor character is the same age or younger than the main character.

This leaves us with one final character: the *trickster*. The trickster character is the one that is constantly pushing for change.



The trickster can either be on the side of good or the side of evil. In both situations, the trickster is trying to move the story toward his or her favor or benefit. Just like in the illustration, they are just like puppet masters. The trickster causes doubt to creep into the main character's mind, making that character change the way he or she was going to handle a certain situation. Generally, in the end, it is the trickster's actions that make the main character the type of person he or she is at the end of the story. The trickster is vital to any story because he or she is generally the toughest mental test that the main character has to overcome before the main character can physically and mentally overcome his or her antagonist.

So these are the basic character archetypes, but they don't always fit into their stereotypical roles. Take, for instance, the hero and shadow characters. For the most part, these characters are central to the story, but is the hero always the main focus of the story? In this day and age, that isn't always the case. In fact, more and more stories focus on the villain/shadow. That is why the story will focus on the *protagonist*—the main character of the story. Then you also have the *antagonist*, who stands in opposition to the protagonist.

What I am trying to say is that when most people think of a story, they go straight for the hero as the protagonist. That just isn't always the case. If the story is about an evil dictator trying to take over the world, then the antagonist would be the patriot hero standing in the dictator's way of world domination. So, as you can see when you write a story, you need both a protagonist and an antagonist.

I know I have given you examples of each kind of archetype, but I don't know if you understand exactly what each archetype looks like, so, I am going to give you some examples from a very popular movie series: George Lucas' *Star Wars*. I hope that if you are reading this book you have seen all six *Star Wars* movies. If you haven't seen them, hopefully you know a little about them. If you don't know anything about them, you should go watch them. Otherwise this part of the chapter isn't going to help you understand archetypes either.

In all six *Star Wars* movies, I think it is pretty obvious who the hero character is. Luke Skywalker is the true embodiment of the hero character. He stays on the path of good the whole time. Even when he was wandering down the dark path to find out more about his father, his morals and actions were always pure at heart.

He would also put himself in harm's way to help his friends. Even against the wise words of Yoda, Luke went to sky city to help his friends. One of the best

examples of why Luke is the hero character, is when he defeats Darth Vader (UHHHHH, hope I didn't spoil that for you!), but still tried to save him. Luke wanted to give him the ability to start over and come to the good side.

The one, the only, true bad guy, Darth Vader, is our shadow character. Darth Vader is ruled by emotions. He believes in survival of the fittest. That goes back to the primitive animalistic nature of humans. This becomes very evident in the third movie, where Anakin Skywalker fully turns into Darth Vader. From that movie on we see that Darth Vader acts on the impulses of his emotions, which makes him very susceptible to the influences of the trickster in *Star Wars*.

Only one character in *Star Wars* can justifiably wear the crown of fool, and that is Jar Jar Binks. That character was able to get under everyone's skin. He would always run into something, drop an important device, or flick some switch that would put the entire cast at risk. Jar Jar was the one character whom everyone had to tolerate. He would change the conditions with almost every step he made, making everybody around him adjust to a new situation.

I know there are characters who fill both of these roles, but the character that both the cast of the movie and the viewers would consider the anima is Princess Leia. If you don't know why this is so, Google her character, and I'm sure you'll understand.

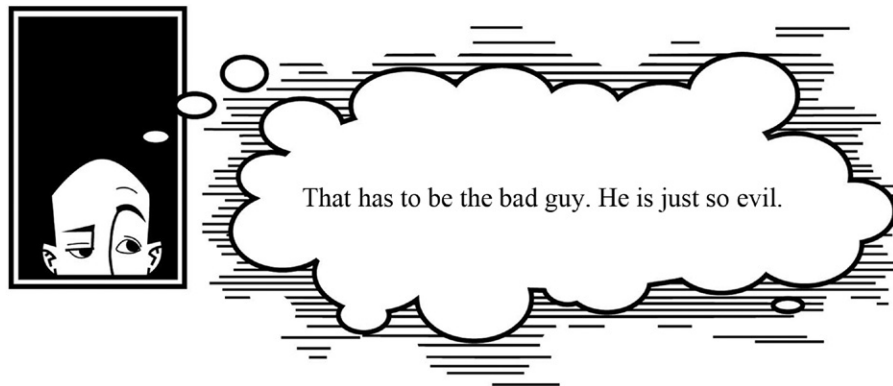
Now, depending on who you want to go with, two characters could be considered the mentor: Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda. I am going to go with Yoda because he seems to be the one who plays the part of the mentor in most of the movies. Yoda is a good example of the mentor character because he is the one everyone goes to when they need advice. He also always seems to have the right answer, even if he gives it to you in a backward sentence structure.

The trickster character is one many people would argue over, but if you watch all the movies, you will see that Senator Palpatine/The Emperor is the trickster character. He has a really easy time playing the trickster character because he is literally two different characters. So while he is telling everyone what to do, as the senator he is able to manipulate the outcome of every meeting so it will be to the empire's benefit. He is also able to control young Anakin Skywalker and make him join the dark side without even knowing that he was already slowly turning to the darkside.

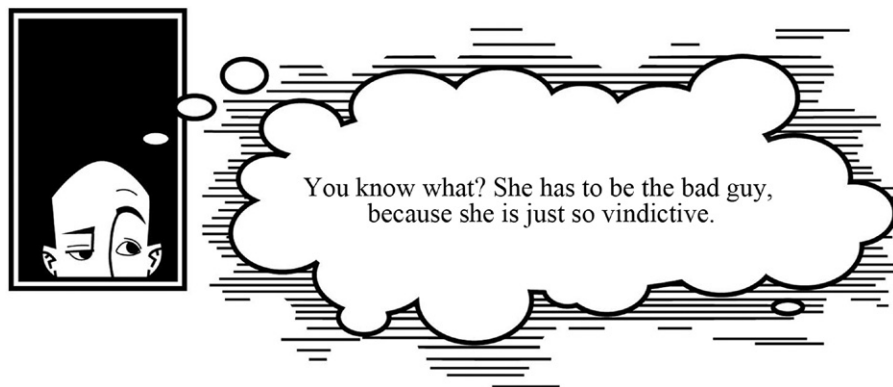
I hope this helped you to understand archetypes a little better. Now I must point out that any single character can have multiple archetypal traits.

Combining archetypes can create more complex and interesting characters, but it can also confuse viewers and readers and make events and plotlines hard to follow. In general, a character designer wants to make sure that the archetypes stay clear and singular solely for the purpose of clarity. This way the viewer or reader won't get confused and lose the magic of the story trying to figure out who is who.

Certain types of stories lend themselves to this blurred archetypal character form. These characters fall mostly into mystery and suspense stories, sometimes even horror. By keeping the character archetypes blurred and confusing, the viewer is pulled into the story, trying to figure out "whodunit." Have you ever watched a movie or read a book and thought:



Just to have that thought changed completely as soon as the story moves on:



You were just successfully drawn into the story because you were trying to figure out who did what to whom and why. The blurred archetypal characters forced you to become more involved in the story in order to answer questions raised by this intentional blurring of the archetypal lines.

We are almost done with the chapter on archetypes. The last thing I want to mention is that archetypes can change at any time. A good guy becoming a bad guy within the course of a book or movie is possible. Even the fool character can become the hero. You need to accomplish this change over the course of the story, not all at once. Your Super Boy Scout hero can't go from saving the day on one comic page to becoming a sadistic mass murderer on the next. All that will happen is that you will lose your reader.

All of this talk about archetypes and how they affect the story makes me want to get to the next chapter and delve into the character's story. Come on, let's go oh wait, before we do that, it is time for some homework. What's that? You thought you weren't going to get any homework after the first official chapter of the book? HAHAAHAHAHA funny. What I want you to do is look at your favorite movie, comic, or cartoon and identify the various archetypes represented within those stories. Once you have identified who you think they are, write them down, and then ask yourself why you believe they are archetypes.

I'll be waiting for you in the next chapter.