

## ARCHETYPE

In literature, an archetype is a typical character, an action or a situation that seems to represent such universal patterns of human nature. It may shape the structure and function of the literary work.

The use of archetypal characters and situations gives a literary work a universal acceptance, as readers identify the characters and situations in their social and cultural context. By using common archetype, the writers attempt to impart realism to their works, as the situations and characters are drawn from the experiences of the world.

### Archetype Examples in Literature:

#### Archetypes in Characters

##### Example #1

**The Hero:** He or she is a character who predominantly exhibits goodness and struggles against evil in order to restore harmony and justice to society e.g. *Beowulf*, *Hercules*

##### Example #2

**The Mother Figure:** Such a character may be represented as Fairy Mother who guides and directs a child, **Mother Earth** who contacts people and offers spiritual and emotional nourishment, and Stepmother who treats their stepchildren roughly.

Some examples are:

- In Literature: *Glinda* from the “Wizard of Oz”
- In Fairy Tales: Characters such as the stepmother in “Cinderella”, *fairy godmothers*, etc.

##### Example #3

**The Innocent Youth:** He or she is inexperienced with many weaknesses and seeks safety with others but others like him/her because of the trust he or she shows in other people. Usually, the experience of coming of age comes in the later parts of the narratives such as *Pip* in Dickens’ “Great Expectation.”

#### **Example #4**

**The Mentor:** His or her task is to protect the main character. It is through the wise advice and training of a mentor that the main character achieves success in the world e.g. *Gandalf* in “The Lords of Rings.”

#### **Example #6**

**The Scapegoat:** A character that takes the blame of everything bad that happens e.g. *Snowball* in Orwell’s “Animal Farm.”

#### **Example #7**

**The Villain:** A character whose main function is to go to any extent to oppose the hero or whom the hero must annihilate in order to bring justice e.g. *Sher Khan* from Kipling’s “The Jungle Book” stories, *Captain Hook* from Peter Pan.

### **Archetypes in Situations**

#### **Example #8**

**The Journey:** The main character takes a journey that may be physical or emotional to understand his or her personality and the nature of the world. For example, Dante’s “The Divine Comedy,” Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travel” etc.

#### **Example #9**

**The Initiation:** The main character undergoes experiences that lead him towards maturity. We find such archetypes in novels like Fielding’s “History of Tom Jones, a Foundling,” Voltaire’s “Candide” etc.