

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.

Gawain and Galahad's search for the Holy Grail, The Lion King, Excalibur

2. **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 which requires that the goal be a restoration of fertility.

Arthur pulls the sword from the stone, Grendel is slain by Beowulf, Frodo must arrive at Rivendell, Luke Skywalker must destroy the Death Star

3. **The Initiation** This usually takes the form of initiation into adult life. The adolescent comes into his/her maturity with new awareness and problems along with new hope for the community.

Huckleberry Finn, King Arthur, the hobbits

4. **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 truth, quite often concerning his faults. Once the hero is at this lowest point, he must accept personal responsibility to return to the world of the living. A second use of this pattern is the depictions of a limited number of travelers on a sea voyage or other trip for the purpose of isolating them and using as a microcosm of society.

The Odyssey, Canterbury Tales, The Fellowship of the Ring

5. **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. The fall is often accompanied by expulsion from a kind of paradise as penalty for disobedience and moral transgression.

Adam and Eve, Lancelot and Guinevere, Paradise Lost

6. **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.

7. **Nature vs. Mechanistic World** Nature is good while technology and society are often evil.

Walden, The Terminator, Brave New World

8. **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.

Sauron vs. Middleearth, Satan vs. God in Paradise Lost, any western, most cartoons

9. **The Unhealable Wound** This wound is either physical or psychological and cannot be healed fully. This would also indicate a loss of innocence. These wounds always ache and often drive the sufferer to desperate measures.

Food's shoulder, Lancelot's madness, Ahab's wooden leg

10. **The Ritual** The actual ceremonies the initiate experiences that will mark his rite of passage into another state. The importance of ritual rites cannot be overstressed as they provide clear sign posts for the characters' role in society as well as our own position in this world. weddings, funerals, coronations

11. **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.

Excalibur, Odysseus' bow, Bilbo's ring