Archetypes
What is an archetype?

- An archetype is a term used to describe universal symbols that evoke deep and sometimes unconscious responses in a reader.

- In literature, characters, images, and themes that symbolically embody universal meanings and basic human experiences, regardless of when or where they live, are considered archetypes.

- Common literary archetypes include stories of quests, initiations, scapegoats, descents to the underworld, and ascents to heaven.
Common Character Archetypes

- **The Hero**: The courageous figure, the one who’s always running in and saving the day.
- **The Outcast**: The outcast is just that. He or she has been cast out of a society or has left it on a voluntary basis. The outcast figure can oftentimes be considered as a Christ figure.  
  (i.e. Simon in *The Lord of the Flies*)
- **The Scapegoat**: The scapegoat figure is one who gets blamed for everything, regardless of whether he/she is actually at fault.  
  (i.e. Snowball in *Animal Farm*)
- **The Star-Crossed Lovers**: This is the young couple joined by love but unexpectedly parted by fate.  
  (i.e. *Romeo and Juliet*)
- **The Shrew**: This is that nagging, bothersome wife always battering her husband with verbal abuse.
The Task: A situation in which a character, or group of characters, is driven to complete some duty often of monstrous proportion. (i.e. Frodo’s task to keep the ring safe in *The Lord of the Rings*).

The Quest: Here, the character(s) are searching for something, whether consciously or unconsciously. Their actions, thoughts, and feelings center around the goal of completing the quest. (i.e. *Shrek* 😊).

The Loss of Innocence: This is, as the name implies, a loss of innocence through sexual experience, violence, or any other means.

The Initiation: This is the process by which a character is brought into another sphere of influence, usually (in literature) into adulthood.
Certain images that recur in myths and other genres of literature often have a common meaning or tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions.

- Water
- Sun
- Colors
- Shapes, Numbers, & Other objects
Water

- a symbol of life, cleansing, and rebirth—represents the mystery of creation

Examples:

*Sea*—spiritual mystery and infinity; timelessness and eternity

*River*—death / rebirth (baptism), flowing of time into eternity, transitional phases of the life cycle
Sun

- Represents energy, creativity, thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision, the passing of time, and life

Examples:

*Rising Sun*—Birth and Creation

*Setting Sun*—Death
Colors

- **Red**—love, sacrifice, hate, evil, anger, violent passion, sin, blood, disorder
- **Green**—birth / death, fertility, luck, hope, jealousy, decay, greed
- **Blue**—sadness, spiritual purity, truth, religious feelings of security
- **Black**—power, doom, death, darkness, mystery, primal wisdom, unconscious evil
- **White**—purity, innocence, death, terror, supernatural, blinding truth
Shapes

- **Circle** (Sphere)—wholeness, unity
- **Egg** (Oval)—the mystery of life and the forces of regeneration
Animals

- **Snake** (serpent, worm)—evil, corruption, sensuality, destruction, wisdom, temptation

- **Dark-colored bird** (raven, hawk)—death, hate, corruption

- **Light-colored bird** (dove)—peace, love, life
Numbers

- **Three** (3)—represents unity, spiritual awareness, and light

- **Four** (4)—cycle of life, (earth, water, fire, air) nature

- **Seven** (7)—unity between 3 and 4, completion and perfect order