



Archetypes: The Roles Characters Play

*"All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts."*

William Shakespeare (*As You Like It*)

Archetypes describe the function or role a character plays in a story. Think of the Archetype as a mask a character wears in a particular scene. One character may serve primarily as the Mentor of a tale, wearing that single mask for the majority of the Journey. But just as we play many roles in our lifetime, or even change masks in a given day, a story's characters have the potential to wear any of the Archetypal masks depending upon the demands of the story. Obi Wan Kenobi is the Mentor throughout *Star Wars*, and yet he must wear the Hero's mask and sacrifice himself to Darth Vader in order to allow Luke to escape with the princess. In some stories, like the one told in *Casablanca*, a single Archetypal mask may be handed from one character to the next. Although Rick is the central character and can be considered our Hero, the Hero's mask is passed from Victor Lazlo to Ilsa before she gives it to Rick, who finally wears it to the journey's end.

What follows is an overview of the Archetypes that occur most frequently. The Archetypes and an action describing their primary function are:

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| 1. Hero | "to serve and sacrifice" |
| 2. Mentor | "to guide" |
| 3. Threshold Guardian | "to test" |
| 4. Herald | "to warn and challenge" |
| 5. Shapeshifter | "to question and deceive" |
| 6. Shadow | "to destroy" |
| 7. Trickster | "to disrupt" |

When placing these masks on your characters, ask yourself the following:

- What is the character's function on the Journey?
- What is the character's goal?
- What action should the character take to achieve that goal?

