

## 12 Best Character Archetypes For Film: Part 1

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**Carl Jung used the concept of the character archetype in his theory of “the collective unconscious.” To him, universal, mythic characters have been used in human storytelling dating back to the beginnings of spoken language.**

According to Jung, they represent characters throughout history that resonate with all of us, in all cultures and timeframes. He also felt these universal characteristics offered ways of describing people’s current day personalities.

As the universal nature of these characters were thought to resonate with people from all cultures, movie studios back in the 1980’s made big heroic spectacles, or animated epics featuring the archetypes viewers would relate to, and recognize.

Jung broke his major 12 personality types into three subsets; Ego, Soul, and Self. People don’t always fit into one archetype, sometimes they can be considered a combination, like Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*.

She comes across as “The Innocent,” but in the context of the film she is also “The Explorer.” Without getting too complex about it, for the purposes of writing fiction, many writers have

created stories about the following archetypes:

**1. The Everyman, the Orphan, Regular Person, also referred to as the realist, the working stiff, or the boy or he next door.**

The Everyman archetype is embodied by a character who is sincere, empathic, and fits in with other people like himself. Personality-wise, this archetype appears down to Earth, with solid virtues and a lack of pretense.

The Everyman values the dignity of others. Acceptance comes easily to them, as they are fair, friendly, understanding and inviting. They go about their everyday existence enjoying the simple things in life.

They are driven by positive, personal values such as love, hope, faith and loyalty. The character seeks to avoid loneliness and to join with others. Jimmy Stewart often played this type of character.

In *It's a Wonderful Life*, he is down on his luck and feels alone, but as the story unfolds he realizes how important he has been to his community.

In *The Man Who Knew Too Much*," Jimmy Stewart is not the hero, if anything he's a reluctant participant. Once pulled into the fray, though, he manages to acquit himself admirably.

Similarly, Elijah Wood, as Frodo, from *The Lord of the Rings*, does not seek out adventure, personal glory or to change the world. He's happy with his lot in life. However, when given the task he "does the right thing."

**Other examples:**

Daniel Radcliffe as Harry Potter, in film versions of *Harry Potter*.

Elijah Wood as Huck Finn, in the film version of *Huckleberry Finn*.

**2. The Innocent, also known as the romantic, the mystic, the naïve, or the dreamer.**

The Innocent is uncompromised by life's knowledge and characterized by optimism, simplicity, goodness or faith.

The Innocent appears, in storytelling, to be pure, wholesome and full of virtue. When examined, their enthusiasm seems to come from a sense of wonder, and a positive energy.

They are driven by strong positive personal values that stem from love, hope, faith and loyalty.

The Innocent dreams of personal goals such as freedom, happiness, and bliss. They might even believe in and seek out "magical realms," like *Oz*" and "*Wonderland*."

The motivations of these dreamers are free worldly drives, such as greed, vanity, or personal glory. They are most definitely not driven by Darwinian motives such as sex and aggression. In fact, their stories appear to speak to the the child in us all.

Dorothy, in *the Wizard of Oz*," actually dreams the whole story. She becomes a combination of The Innocent and The Explorer once she's trapped in Oz, and seeks out what becomes self-knowledge.

*Alice In Wonderland* is about another innocent, and dreamer, a little less naïve than Dorothy. Whereas Dorothy remains sincere, and resolute, throughout her travels, Alice embraces and enjoys some of the trickery of The Caterpillar and The Mad Hatter.

### **Some other examples**

Tom Hanks as Forrest in *Forest Gump*.

Julie Andrews as Mary in *Mary Poppins*

Julie Andrews as Maria in *The Sound of Music*.

Ben Stiller as Walter, in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

### **3. The Hero, also called as the soldier, the warrior, the crusader, the superhero or the dragon slayer.**

The Hero or warrior archetype appears in storytelling as a rescuer, or a crusader for a cause. He is quick to fight for what he believes is right. He is not afraid to use violence in this pursuit.

At his core, the hero wants to prove his worth through courage, strategy, and determination. The Hero wants to improve the world using his strength and competence.

In myth and story-telling, he often squares off against, men of dark, evil motives, men who'd wish to conquer the weak and take what doesn't belong to them.

If the hero has weaknesses, it may be his arrogance or his constant need to prove himself in battle.

In *Braveheart*, William Wallace (played by Mel Gibson) embodies the elements of heroism, as he defends his homeland. He is not afraid to die in battle. His place in the film is to prove his worth through courageous acts, to fulfill a lofty, and worthy destiny.

Luke Skywalker, is another hero who learns to master "The Force," as taught by the Elder Sage, Obi-Wan Kenobi in order to defeat his own father, Darth Vader, in *Star Wars*.

Similarly, Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, is taught by the Sage, Morpheus, to fight and conquer the dark forces in *The Matrix*.

**For further information on how to use Archetypes in your screenplay, or to ask about careers in writing. [click here](#).**

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