

Down-to-Earth Character Archetypes In Film

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This group of archetypal characters are considered “down to Earth.” They are the guy or girl next door, they are relatable. In a way the audience in watching the film through this character’s eyes. Films often strive to create an exciting, or incredible world filled with larger than life characters.

If all the characters were over-the-top, the audience would have a difficult time relating, which is why a lot of films are tanking at the box office these days. Let’s examine some of these character archetypes;

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

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

Acceptance comes easily to this archetype, as they are fair, friendly, understanding and inviting. They go about their everyday existence enjoying the simple things in life.

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 your typical movie 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 of the Everyman include; Daniel Radcliffe as Harry Potter and Elijah Wood as Huckleberry Finn.

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

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 of worldly drives, such as greed, vanity, or personal glory. In fact, their stories appear to speak to the child in us all. Their weaknesses – being to naive, being easily manipulated.

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.

Other examples of The Innocent include; Tom Hanks in *Forest Gump*, Julie Andrews in *Mary Poppins*, Julie Andrews as Maria in *The Sound of Music*, and 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 bravely 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.

4. The Caregiver, also thought of as the guardian, the saint, the parent, the helper, the altruist, or the supporter.

The Caregiver generally shows qualities of compassion, generosity and protectiveness. It's often part of his or her motivation to look after those who can't protect themselves.

He or she views helping or rescuing others as their highest calling. Doctors, psychotherapists, nurses, and angels often fall into this category. They take in strays, lend a helping hand, and seek out those in need.

The Caregiver seems happiest when they are making a difference in someone else's life. However, they tend to be people-pleasers, and as such – may take on too much responsibility which can wear them down or burn them out.

They are vulnerable to those who would seek to exploit their generosity. The Caretaker often takes better care of his or her ward than they take care of their own selves.

A great example of a truly self-sacrificing Caregiver is Oskar Schindler, as played by Liam Neeson in Schindler's List. He risked his life every time he helped a Jew escape from Germany.

In It's A Wonderful Life, George Bailey's guardian Angel, Clarence Oldbody, watches over him at his low point. Clarence shows Bailey what life would have been like for the others in his town if he'd never been born. Bailey learns the town could hardly get along without him.

In The Equalizer, Denzel Washington has left the CIA, but uses his near James Bond-like spy skills to defend innocent victims of sex trafficking.

Other examples of The Caretaker include; Sandra Bullock as Leigh Anne Tuohy in The Blindside, Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in To Kill A Mockingbird, and Rene Zellweger as Dorothy Boyd in Jerry Maguire.

This group of archetypal characters were thought by Jung to be good at level-headed thinking – about problems involving survival, planning, execution of plans, rescuing missions, and self-actualization.

In movie worlds that are often clearly larger than life, these characters – the Michael Corleones, the George Baileys and the Frodos allow us to feel more at home in this worlds.

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