TEACHER OVERVIEW

Myths, Legends, and Archetypes
Grade Seven

Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create

Close Reading	Grammar	Composition

Reading Strategies
  Determining Main Idea
  Generalization
  Inference
  Seminar/Discussion
Literary Elements
  Archetype
    character
    setting
  Character
  Plot
  Setting
  Structure
  Theme
Literary Techniques
  Allusion
  Argumentation
    classification
    comparison/contrast
  Symbolism
	Mechanics
	  Capitalization
	  Punctuation
	  Spelling
		Types (modes)
		  Expository
		    analytical
		  Narrative
		Multiple Mode
		  Expressive
		  Imaginative
		The Process of Composition
		  Prewriting
		    generation of ideas
		    organization of ideas
		    selection of topic
		  Drafting
		    extended time
		  Revision of Multiple Drafts
		    content
		    organization
		    precise diction
		    sentence variety
		    unity
		  Editing
		    mechanics
		    sentence structure
		    usage
		Style/Voice
		  Experimentation with Sentence Variety
		  Selection of Detail
		  Use of Figures of Speech
		  Use of Sound Devices
		  Use of Various Sentence Openings
		Use of Technology

Materials and Resources
- Composition Foundation Lesson: "Writing Workshop"
- Composition Foundation Lesson: "Style and Voice Workshop"
- Composition Foundation Lesson: "Filling in the Blanks – Using Modifiers to Provide Detail"
- Assorted folk tales and myths
- Film clips from such works as
  Jason and the Argonauts
  Clash of the Titans
  O Brother, Where Art Thou

Lesson Introduction

The study of archetypal patterns, characters, and setting elements can open a window in the minds of students, a window that allows them to interpret symbols in a meaningful and accurate way. It is absolutely essential that middle school students have this experience – they are ripe for it developmentally, and their minds will never be as open to abstract thinking as they are now. If students have the experience of interpreting and using symbols at an early age, they will not struggle with this concept later on, as do so many high school students who have not been exposed to this process early on. Beginning with myths and legends is an easy way to open the way to symbolic interpretation for younger students. Myths and legends from many different regions lend themselves to this kind of interpretation because they contain the kinds of archetypal patterns and characters described in this overview.

First, the teacher and the students should become familiar with some of the different characteristics of the archetypal journey of the hero and the types of people, objects, and settings that commonly appear in these stories. A student handout is included in the "Student Activity" section of the lesson that explains some of the archetypes. It is a good idea to "talk through" this handout, exploring through discussion different examples of the archetypes in films the students have seen or stories they have read.

Teachers who would like to know more about the archetypes can find many Internet and print resources that will enhance their knowledge of this fascinating subject.

The students should read five stories from folk tales and mythology, working in groups to identify and interpret the use of archetypes as symbols in the stories. Possible selections might be
- the story of Theseus
- the story of Paul Bunyan
- the story of Orpheus
- the story of Johnny Appleseed
- the story of Perseus

Other well-known myths or legends will be equally effective, and any can be chosen.

Suggestions for Student Activities
- Make charts of archetypal plot elements and archetypal characters, aspects of the setting, and events in the folk tales and legends, using the information provided in the archetype handout.

- View the film, or clips from the film, *Jason and the Argonauts* or *Clash of the Titans* and discuss and chart the archetypal elements that appear in it.

- View the film, or parts of the film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou* (or another film in a modern setting that contains archetypal setting, character, and plot elements) and discuss and chart the archetypal aspects that surface in this more realistic film.

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- Write a short paper exploring the relationship between a myth or legend and real life. Students should interpret the setting elements, characters, and the events in the story as representing some universal or common element of real life. For example, in the myth of Narcissus, the hero's experiences may suggest the plight of people who value only their own superficial appearance and never look outside their own mirror for meaning in life, thus missing out on the companionship of others and losing themselves in the process. The myth of Zeus and the rise of the Olympian gods may suggest the idea that younger people take over the dominant role when their parents or the powerful people in their workplace begin to age – that new ideas and youthful vigor are necessary to the survival of humankind. Many other symbolic elements exist in each myth or legend. The students will try to determine why the story has been so meaningful to humanity over time – how is it "like life"?

- After exploring the different archetypes through stories and film, and discussing and writing about their possible universal thematic significance, students are then ready to construct their own modern archetypal story. This activity often works best when students work with partners or in small groups to construct their stories.

Composition

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Rubric for Archetypal Story and Map

Outstanding
- Archetypal places are described vividly and named appropriately; the setting plays a part in creating the mood, tone, and theme of the story.
- The plot of the story echoes one or more of the types of "journey of the hero" stories, but the writer has retold the story in an original and interesting way.
- The archetypal characters are not mere stereotypes but are fully rounded characters who are lifelike. Their names are appropriate and symbolic.
- The map is highly detailed and shows an authentic archetypal landscape. The place names are inventive, appropriate, and symbolic.
- The student has experimented with interesting sentence forms and varieties, has selected detail effectively, has chosen words that create a definite tone, has used language playfully and skillfully, and has used figures of speech and/or sound devices to convey meaning.
- The story's theme is complex and shows insight about life.
- In the final draft, the story's author shows a mastery of mechanics, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. The story may contain a few minor errors.

Very Good
- Archetypal places are described in considerable detail and named appropriately but with less depth than the "outstanding" papers; the setting plays a part in creating the mood, tone, and theme of the story.
- The plot of the story echoes one or more of the types of "journey of the hero" stories. The writer has attempted to tell the story in an original way.
- The archetypal characters are well-developed and their names are appropriate and symbolic.
- The map is detailed and shows an authentic archetypal landscape. The place names are appropriate and symbolic.
- The student has made an effort to vary sentence structure, to select detail effectively, to choose words with an awareness of their connotations, and to use figures of speech and/or sound devices to convey meaning.
- The story has an identifiable theme that shows insight about life.
- In the final draft, the story's author has edited carefully for mechanics, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. There may be some errors, but they are not distracting to the reader.

Good
- The story contains archetypal places, but they are not fully described. The places are named appropriately and the setting plays a part in creating the mood, tone, and theme of the story.
- The plot of the story echoes one or more of the types of "journey of the hero" stories.
- The story has archetypal characters who are named appropriately and symbolically.
- The map is somewhat sketchy or carelessly prepared but shows an authentic archetypal landscape. The place names are appropriate and symbolic.

- The student has made an effort to vary sentence structure, to select detail effectively, to choose words with an awareness of their connotations, and to use figures of speech and/or sound devices to convey meaning.
- The story has an identifiable theme that shows insight about life.
- In the final draft, the story's author has edited for mechanics, capitalization, punctuation, and usage but has missed some important errors that may be distracting to the reader; however, the errors do not prevent the reader from understanding the story.

Needs Improvement/Do Over

- The story does not contain archetypal places, or the places are not described well. The places may not have appropriate names and may not contribute to the mood, tone, and theme of the story.
- The plot of the story may not be related to any of the "journey of the hero" stories.
- The story may have characters that are not identifiable as archetypal and who are not named symbolically. The description of the characters may be sketchy or non-existent.
- The map is sketchy or carelessly prepared and may not show an authentic archetypal landscape. The place names may not be appropriate or symbolic.
- The student's effort to vary sentence structure, to select detail effectively, to choose words with an awareness of their connotations, and to use figures of speech and/or sound devices to convey meaning is incomplete or unsuccessful.
- The story's theme may not be evident to the reader.
- In the final draft, the story's author has edited for mechanics, capitalization, punctuation, and usage but has missed many important errors that are distracting to the reader.

STUDENT
ACTIVITY

Myths, Legends, and Archetypes
Grade Seven

Review the following information with your classmates and your teacher. See how many examples of each archetypal element you can think of from films you have seen or from your reading.

The Archetypal Journey of the Hero

Characteristics of the Hero/Heroine
The hero or heroine
- is inexperienced and gullible
- meets monsters or monstrous men
- has a strange wise being as a teacher
- is born and raised in a rural setting away from cities
- has an origin that is mysterious or loses his or her parents at a young age, being raised by animals or a wise guardian
- returns to the land of his or her birth in disguise or as an unknown
- is tested to determine strength, persistence, and fortitude
- faces danger and suffers pain or sorrow
- wins what he or she fights for/wants

Archetypal Setting Elements
- The threshold: a gateway to a new world the hero must enter to change and to grow
- The underworld: the place where the hero encounters fear or death
- The wilderness (forest): the place where rules don't apply, and people and things run wild
- The river: the place representing the flow of time
- The garden: the place of harmony with nature, innocence, union, imagination; sometimes the garden can be ruined or poisoned, or the hero has to leave it
- The wasteland: the opposite of the garden; the place of loneliness, desolation, despair; the place where there is no growth
- The desert: the place of purity, reflection, solitude; the lonely quest for meaning
- The crossroads: the place of suffering and decision
- The maze or labyrinth: represents a puzzling dilemma or great uncertainty; sometimes represents the search for a monster within the self
- The castle: the strong place of safety; holds the treasure or the princess; may be bewitched or enchanted; may represent home or some other safe place
- The tower: the strong place where evil resides or where the self is locked away from society and fellowship
- The winding stair: the long and difficult way into the unknown

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Archetypal Characters

- The mentor or teacher: teaches the hero; gives valuable gifts (weapons, food, magic, information); older, wiser, can serve as the hero's conscience
- The shadow: worthy opponent with whom the hero must struggle in a fight to the end/must be destroyed, neutralized, or assimilated
- The monster or dragon: the hero's dark self; the forces of evil; the scary aspect of life
- The animal companion: represents that side of nature that helps man and is friendly to him
- The blind seer: mysterious figure who can see into the nature of life though he or she cannot see physically
- The witch: the scary or angry aspect of women
- The old crone/wise woman/potion-maker: may represent the frightening knowledge and wisdom of experience and age
- The damsel in distress: women who need to be rescued
- The princess in the tower: women who are unattainable

Common Archetypal Journey Patterns

- The quest to know who you are
- The quest to find knowledge
- The quest to find the promised land or to build a beautiful city
- The warrior's quest to save the people
- The quest to get revenge
- The quest to rid the land of some danger
- The quest for fame and fortune
- The fool's quest (a clown, simple-minded person, or silly person saves the land or the princess because of his or her own innocence or foolishness)
- The search for love (to rescue the princess)
- The grail quest (the search for perfection or spiritual nourishment)

The Archetypes in Folklore and Mythology

1. Read five myths or legends. Working with a partner or a small group, identify and interpret the use of archetypes as symbols in the stories. Possible selections might be
    • the story of Theseus
    • the story of Paul Bunyan
    • the story of Orpheus
    • the story of Johnny Appleseed
    • the story of Perseus

2. Your teacher will also provide you with several films or film clips to analyze.

3. After reading the stories and viewing the film selections, fill in the following chart, using your handout on archetypal elements as a guide.

Archetypal Characters	Archetypal Setting Elements	Archetypal Events

Composition

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