

ADVANCED PLACEMENT WORLD LITERATURE

NORTHROP FRYE'S THEORY OF ARCHETYPES

OVERVIEW AND TERMS

Agnon : Romance : Conflict
Pathos : Tragedy : Catastrophe
Sparagmos : Irony and Satire : Absence of Heroism and Effective Action
Anagnorisis : Comedy : Recognition of Newborn Society

Alazon: a deceiving or self-deceived character in fiction, normally an object of ridicule in comedy or satire, but often the hero of tragedy.

Archetype: a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole.

Eiron: A self-deprecating or unobtrusively treated character in fiction, usually an agent of the happy ending in a comedy and of the catastrophe in tragedy

Hamartia: A term coined by Aristotle to describe "some error or frailty" that brings about misfortune for a tragic hero. The concept of hamartia is closely related to that of the tragic flaw: both lead to the downfall of the protagonist in a tragedy. Hamartia may be interpreted as an internal weakness in a character (like greed or passion or hubris); however, it may also refer to a mistake that a character makes that is based not on a personal failure, but on circumstances outside the protagonist's personality and control.

Hybris or Hubris: Excessive pride or self-confidence that leads a protagonist to disregard a divine warning or to violate an important moral law. In tragedies, hubris is a very common form of hamartia.

Mythos: One of the four archetypal narratives, classified as comic, romantic, tragic, and ironic.

Applications:

- **Evaluation of an Example:** Examines how a specific text compares with the archetype. The focus here would likely be in finding insightful variations from the traditional archetype and analyzing how these function. An examination of a text that simply pointed out how the narrative meets the criteria for a specific archetype would be flat and uninteresting.
- **Textual Analysis:** Since the archetypes offer insight into typical traits that are present in different types of writing, they are useful in explicating a text in the reader's mind. By using the archetypal traits as a guide, select interesting or unique traits and discuss their function in the work. This could easily be applied to plot, characters, symbols, and setting.
- **Comparison of Archetypal Traits:** By using the traits outlined in the archetype create a comparison of two or more works. The archetypal traits can be used here to guide the analysis implicitly or explicitly.
- **Definition of Archetypes:** Too broad for this class, this approach would require creating your own theory of archetypes relying on numerous examples for support. Northrop Frye did this with literary narratives, Joseph Campbell with world myths, and Carl Jung with dream imagery.