

CHARACTER

206 - BRAD DAILEY

PROTAGONIST



PROTAGONIST

- The Protagonist is the main character of the story.
- The story is the journey of the Protagonist to achieve their goal(s).
- In some contexts, *a* protagonist is a person who is helping the main character achieve their goal. This is usually the case in series where there are multiple characters that take turns being the main character, from episode to episode.
 - To some, these are simply known as 'secondary' or 'supporting' characters.
- 'Protagonist' does not mean 'good guy'. Your main character can be a neutral, or even bad, character.

ANTAGONIST



ANTAGONIST

- *The* Antagonist is the primary force that opposes the Protagonist, and tries to keep them from achieving their goal. They might also be called the 'Villain'.
- It's not always a person who opposes the Protagonist. Forces of antagonism can come in many forms, such as a car accident or tornado.
- There can be multiple 'antagonists'. **An antagonist is any person or thing that gets in the way of the protagonist(s) achieving their goal.**
- An antagonist doesn't have to be 'bad guy'. Even if the Protagonist is a 'good guy', an antagonist might just be another good guy that is competing for the same thing.

A dramatic scene of a large fire being extinguished. A person in the lower-left foreground is using a high-pressure water hose, directing a powerful stream of water towards a massive, intense fire that fills the upper right portion of the frame. The fire is bright yellow and orange, with thick smoke rising from it. The overall atmosphere is one of intense action and emergency response.

GOALS

GOALS

- The story is the journey of the Protagonist to achieve their goal.
 - Goals are arguably the most important part of the story. A goal, or set of goals, is what drives the plot.
 - The goal can be anything. The only necessity is that the protagonist care about achieving their goal and/or fear the consequences of failure.
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- The Protagonist's goal should be established early; usually within the first 25% of the story.
 - A 'MacGuffin' is an object or device of desire that drives the plot. Often arbitrary.

MOTIVATIONS



MOTIVATIONS

- Motivations are WHY the Protagonist is going on their journey or mission.
 - Goals are the WHAT, and Motivations are the WHY.
 - Oftentimes, Motivations are directly related to what's "at stake" (the Stakes).
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- Motivations are important. Goals by themselves are rarely enough to act.
 - Motivations can also be great points of conflict and drama, if they change.
 - It's common for characters to lose their motivation. In these cases, Mentors or Allies might remind them of their motivations (literally motivating them), or help them find new motivation to achieve their goals.

CHARACTER TRAITS

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Fears
- Flaws
- Quirks
- Likes
- Dislikes



- Other traits - Loyalty, Passion, Ignorance, Skepticism, Creativity, Dimensionality, Etc, Etc

CHARACTERIZATION

- How a character looks, sounds, moves, and acts. The superficial details of a character.
- There are many preconceptions of 'types' of people. You can use these preconceptions to your advantage by making a character look or act a certain way. The audience will feel like they know this character, even when they don't.
 - Mailman, Nurse, Construction Worker, Cop, Secretary, Bartender, Punk
- Flip these preconceptions to make complicated, interesting characters. But do so in moderation! My suggestion is to flip preconceptions with (some) main characters, and leave them in place for secondary characters.

TRUE CHARACTER

- Who the character is, deep down inside.
- 'True Character' is often revealed in moments of solitude, or when a lot is at stake.
- Most characters' 'True Character' is never revealed, but assumed.



CHARACTER ARC

- Changes to character, during the course of the story.
- Changes should be a direct result of what happens in the story, particularly as a consequence of their own action, or inaction.



CHARACTER ARC - REVELATION

- Revelation - True Character is revealed to the audience or to the characters themselves.
- In this arc, characters don't fundamentally change, but rather their potential is unlocked or the audience learns who they really were all along.
- This is the most common type of character arc.



CHARACTER ARC - STATIC

- Static - There is little to no character change at all. This is typical, almost necessary, for anthological episodic structure, i.e. sitcoms, which require the character to learn little to nothing, so that similar journeys can be had.
- This arc is seen in many antagonists.
- This is also a common character arc.



CHARACTER ARC - TRUE CHANGE

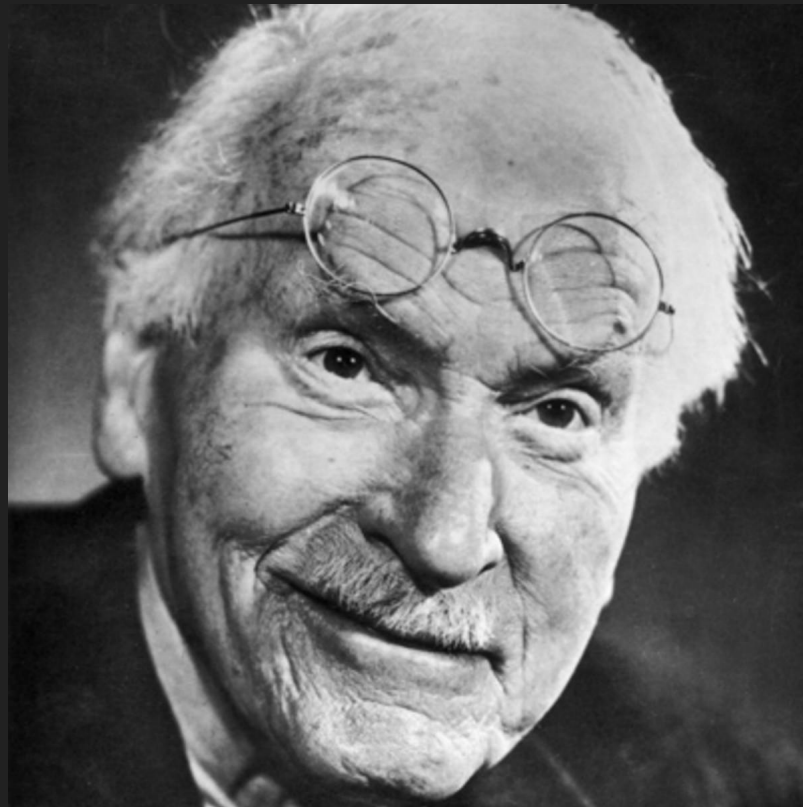
- True Change (Significant) - A change that affects the deepest ideas of who a character truly is.
- For this to feel genuine, we must experience significant moments where a character is truly tested, and where we see a fundamental change.
- This character arc is exceedingly rare.
- Many people argue that this character arc is impossible, as they simply don't believe that people can change, and thus neither can characters.



JUNGIAN ARCHETYPES

CARL JUNG (1875-1961)

- Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst
- Founder of Analytical Psychology
- Developed the ideas of Introversion, Extraversion, Anima, Animus, and the Archetypes, among many others.
- Focused on the idea of Individuation, which is what makes a thing... a thing.
- Studied the 'unconscious'.





HERO

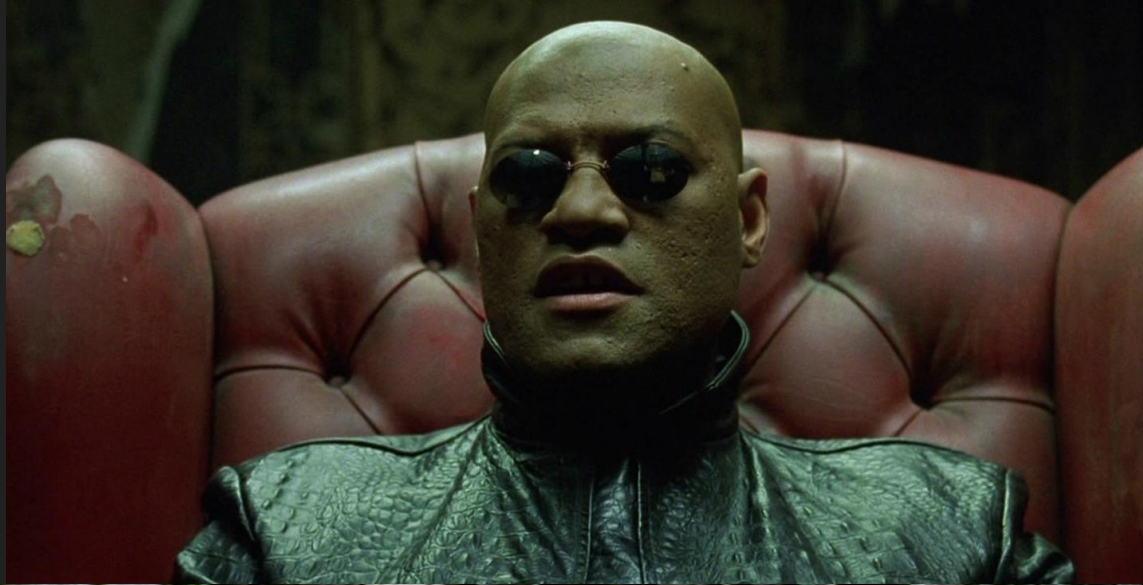


HERO

- Goal = Journey
- Audience Identification
- 'Growth' or Change
- Action
- Sacrifice
- Brushes with Death (and/or Failure)
- Humanizing Flaws
- Willingness to Embrace the Journey
- The Anti-Hero



MENTOR



MENTOR (THE WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN)

- Representative of Conscience, Logic, and/or Wisdom
- Guide to the World
 - Delivers plot plants, or foreshadows what is to come
- Teacher of Skills and Techniques
 - Deals Assignments and Gives Tests
- Gift Giver
 - Gifts might be weapons, keys, clues, advice, medicine, magical items, etc
 - Gifts should be earned through tests and trials
- Reminder of Motivations
- Dark Mentors
 - A mentor who might initiate the hero, but ultimately try to lead them down a dark path.
- Fallen Mentors
 - Mentors who are failed heroes themselves.



THRESHOLD GUARDIAN

- A form of antagonist, but rarely the villain. Usually has some sort of relationship with the villain, though.
- Representative of the obstacles of everyday life. The things that get in our way.
- Story function is to 'test' the hero. To ensure that the hero has learned, and is ready for the next stretch of the journey.
 - Test of strength.
 - Test of weapon proficiency.
 - Test of wit, knowledge, or wisdom.
 - Understanding or mastery of a skill.
 - Understanding of the world or surroundings.
- Threshold Guardians are an opportunity for growth.



HERALD

- Delivers the challenge or call to adventure.
- Represents the inner call for change.
- Isn't always represented by a human character.
- Could be represented by the villain, or another archetype who is fulfilling the role of the herald.



SHAPESHIFTER



SHAPESHIFTER

- Often representative of the animus or anima, but can represent any number of qualities or traits that are wholly misunderstood by the hero.
 - Anima is the female qualities repressed in a man, and animus is the male qualities repressed in a woman.
- Personification of our 'projections' of how we think people 'should' be. This sets up drama when the person is inevitably not who we thought they would be. They either don't meet our standards, or are different entirely. This can be bad or good.
 - The 'perfect' man or woman
 - Stereotypes and prejudice
- The 'Femme Fatale' (Hommes Fatale) is a frequent personification of the Shapeshifter.
 - Common in film noir.
- They might outright wear disguises or lie, but just as often they are simply misunderstood by the Hero.



SHADOW

SHADOW

- Representative of repressed or hidden qualities, traits, trauma, or guilt. Bad habits. Old fears.
- Often related to the Hero's past.
- Can be expressed in Villains, Antagonists, or even Allies.
- Causes confrontation with the Hero. Forces the Hero to face the things that they have repressed.



ALLY

- Companion, sparring partner, conscience, comic relief.
- There can be numerous allies, but their personalities and purpose shouldn't be redundant.
- Can be another helpful tool for exposition, when either the Hero or the Ally doesn't know information (and neither does the audience).
- Allies don't need to be human. Animal allies are common and beloved.
- Allies give the Hero someone to talk to.
- Should be complementary to the Hero.



TRICKSTER

- Makes mischief. Desires change.
- Points out the flaws in the structures of society or a like system. Points out folly, hypocrisy, and the absurd.
- Gives an uncommon (grander) perspective.
- Act as comic relief in their points of view, and willingness to point out absurdities.

- Trickster Hero

