

# THE 7 STORY TYPES (AND HOW TO USE THEM)

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1. **Hero's Journey / Overcoming the Monster**
2. **The Quest**
3. **Rags to Riches**
4. **Voyage and Return**
5. **Rebirth**
6. **Comedy**
7. **Tragedy**
8. **How to Use Archetypes**

PRESENTED BY WENDY STRAIN

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## 1. Hero's Journey / Overcoming the Monster



The basic elements of this archetype are the protagonist or hero is faced with something life-altering. Following this event, nothing can ever be the same again.

To get back to any state of normalcy, though, the hero must first overcome the monster the challenge presents.

The hero may fail the first time they face the monster, but in the end, the hero defeats the enemy and returns home, or creates a new home, as a changed character. He is wiser as a result of overcoming the challenge and confidently moves forward into a new future.

### *Basic Stages:*

Awareness of the Monster / Inciting incident

Imagining the Monster / Refusal of the call to action

Entrance of the Mentor / Training Stage (mostly reacting)

First encounter and Failure

Growth and Reward (mostly proactive further preparation)

Second battle with a come-from-behind win

New reality minus the monster

Examples:

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## 2. The Quest



The Quest usually starts off with a protagonist and a group of sidekicks undertaking an epic journey to reach a specific goal, though it can also involve a single hero with a mission.

As they travel, it is the interactivity of the team that addresses the various challenges they encounter along their way. Not all members of the team may make it to the end, but the other members learn the correct actions to take to achieve the objective.

Challenges in the Quest seem to be unrelated but tend to come together to make sense in the long run. The story ends when the quest is successfully achieved.

### *Basic Stages:*

The Call / The Mission

The Journey (with mini-challenges along the way)

Arrival but not the end (Goal is not actually reached yet)

Final Ordeals (the last tests)

Goal Attained

Examples:

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### 3. Rags to Riches



Here we have a modest, moral, good-hearted but downtrodden hero who gains all they desire when they are finally given a true chance to shine.

They may initially succeed because of a gift or a tool, or simply the chance to appear in front of the decision-makers that matter.

But it takes work, intelligence, goodness, and true character to achieve the end result.

#### *Basic Stages:*

Beginning State (sad emotional / physical normal conditions)

Short-lived Small Success (reason to hope / the magic gift)

Center Crisis (lowest point)

Independence / Final Fight (hero must stand for herself)

Fulfillment and Sustained Outcome

Examples:

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#### 4. Voyage and Return



The hero is taken to a fantastical land where nothing is normal.

Since the rules are all changed, the hero must find new ways of understanding what is happening.

Like Alice after eating a simple cracker and growing to giant proportions, the character must look at life from a perspective they've never encountered before.

*Basic Stages:*

‘Fall’ into Another World

Fascination and Exploration

Frustration (the world is getting darker)

Nightmare (things are at their darkest / most dire)

Escape and Return Home

Examples:

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## 5. Rebirth



In the Rebirth story, there is usually an element of the fearful as the character faces a dark unknown. The common theme in the Rebirth story is the threat of what will happen if a specific change does not occur. The hero is constantly being guided and encouraged to make that change.

### *Basic Stages:*

Encounter with Darkness Reveals Undesirable State

Return to Normal / Hero Unthreatened

Threat Returns / Inescapable

Escalating Threats

Pressure Builds Until Miraculous Transformation

Hero Transformed

Examples:

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## 6. Comedy



What distinguishes comedy is the end result of the story. It's purpose is to entertain us by disrupting our expectations and blending familiar ideas in unfamiliar ways.

Usually exploring conflict between the individual and social norms, comedy builds on confusion and misplaced interpretations. The plot begins with a single confused event and everything devolves from there.

Writers of classic comedy work to introduce their characters to situations and events that keep them bumbling through one unpredictable mistake after another until they seem to somehow fall into a happy ending.

*Basic Stages:*

Initial Confusion

Confusion Becomes Complicated

Misunderstandings are Cleared

Happy Endings

Examples:

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## 7. Tragedy



In classic tragedy, the hero experiences a tremendous downfall due to a tragic flaw in his otherwise noble character.

Unlike comedy where each mistake leads to a happy conclusion, mistakes in tragedy lead to an unhappy end. Where comedy calls out each of these mistakes with a hilarious outcome, tragedy allows them to build up, making the audience feel things might work out after all, until we reach an inevitable and disastrous twist.

*Basic Stages:*

Anticipation / Ambition

Tragic Path Begins (Audience knows ruin is ahead, hero does not)

Digging In (more mistakes are made – no turning back)

The Unraveling (desperate attempts but no stopping destruction)

Disaster

Examples:

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## How to Use Archetypes



Like any story you want to tell, how you use archetypes depends on your end goal.

What do you want the audience to get out of your story?

Is your main message about facing down fears and challenges?

The Hero's Journey may be the right answer.

Are you working to foster understanding and motivate others?

The Quest may be a better fit.

Illustrate growth and external transformation with the Rags to Riches archetype.

Encourage internal development and transformation with the Voyage and Return.

Self-help is a good fit within the Rebirth archetype.

Which of the archetypes best illustrates the underlying point you're trying to make?

Use that as your guide.

And remember, in the end, it will still be a matter of interpretation.

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