

Why are Archetypes useful?

In our picture you see Marlboro Man. What does he represent? An archetypal hero, in the sense of **a rugged individualist**, much like Rambo or any other brawny man of action. This contemporary version of the hero is at the centre of just about every movie or TV show from Popeye Doyle in the French Connection to Liam Neeson in Taken.

However, in recent years the aspirational value of smokers has been demolished so I suspect most won't aspire to this identity any longer - but there was a time when we did!

What are the most significant labels we use to describe ourselves? I suggest that it is the level of **identity**, how we are seen as a whole by ourselves and others, that resonates most strongly. There are quite a number of parts to an identity, things like roles, including your job, temperament, values and beliefs and so forth, but we use an archetypal level of identity words to sum ourselves up: *"she's an Angel", he's a Hero."*

There are a large number of identity labels, some desirable others less so: trustworthy, honest, manipulative, evasive, caring, indifferent, self-absorbed, curious, deceitful to name a few.

These are more potent labels than say, accountant or shop assistant, simply because our professional role may have been arrived at by accident or circumstances that have little to do with intentions or values. Most professionals I talk to don't say "I dreamed of being a marketing man from my childhood." Most of us end up doing something partly on purpose, partly by accident, that we settle for yet is not our true vision. This vision is created by the stories of angels, devils, heroes and bad guys we read or see as children.

Identity labels exist at a higher level than job or role descriptions: they are characteristics that not only define us, but which are almost endogenous – part of our core self. They are very prone to generalisation too, we don't typically say, "He's trustworthy on timing but not on loyalty." We say, "He's trustworthy."

Archetypes then, are identity labels which define core values, that also carry information about activities and roles. **They are both 'being' and 'doing' labels.** This makes them attractive and useful as metaphors for researchers - and those who wish to capture our aspirations in advertising.

This is potent **when we think about them as used by brands, organisations, products and services, since we so often use or choose these as boosts or compensations for qualities we wish we had or feel we lack.** Whether we are buying something for play, comfort, status or attractiveness, we have an desired identity concept lurking in our unconscious. As Jung pointed out these identity concepts are universal - characters found in myths, legends and stories around the world - although Jung himself did not specify many of these characters in his own writings. However, those of us who observe modern culture can quite quickly distinguish the common identities that feature in our

modern tales. Our popular TV shows give us many clues. Here are some of them:

Archetype	TV/film/story representation	Purpose/intention	Shadows
Healer	Hospital/medical dramas – too many to name!	To restore the sick	Wounded healer, torturer
Genius	The Mentalist Iron Man Mastermind University Challenge	To enlighten the world	Fool
Lover	Casanova The Lovers Friends or Lovers?	To adore, create	Hater
Wise Woman	Miss Marples Midwives Three Wise Women Oprah Winfrey	To counsel	The witch
Teacher	Mentors on reality shows Brian Cox BBC	To inform, educate	The Failure Lazy Bones
Hero	Too many to mention	To save/rescue/right wrongs	The Devil
Ally	Buddy series & movies	To be there for you	Betrayer

You could go on to a much more exhaustive list. Typically Archetype Card decks have between 50/100 cards.

You can find out how I use these in research here:

<http://www.langmaidpractice.com/blog/technique-tip-8-using-archetypes-groups/>