

The gift of the magi archetypes

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



The Gift of the Magi Archetypes “ The Gift of the Magi” involves the reader with imagery that conjures up archetypes. Within the careful analysis of the tale, three main archetypal structures can be seen. These are character archetype, plot archetype and setting archetype. Carl Jung’s theory illustrates that archetypes depict inherited modes or ideas of thoughts. These thoughts come from a person’s experience and are present in the subconscious. Character archetypes in this story include the hero and heroine. Setting archetypes in the story include the house and the street. Plot archetypes include the hero’s quest and the heroine’s quest, their journey, disappointment and their fulfillment. It is evident from Henry’s story that there is the presence of different archetypal forms. They form an elaborate description of different archetypes complicated enough to make readers have a keen eye for detail (Gioia and Kennedy 170). The tale starts on a high note with the heroine archetype where Della, the heroine, counting the little money she has accumulated to buy a present for her husband. The story begins with a narrative. This makes the reader grasp the backbone of the tale forming a strong understanding of the story. The heroine sobs because she has so little money in her possession to buy anything worthy. Her quest is to buy her husband a valuable gift. The story begins with a setting archetype: the house. This is where the heroine gets the solution to overcoming her obstacle. This is also, where the hero and the heroine reside and where the climax of the tale takes place (Gioia and Kennedy 170). Almost all narratives contain a basic, progressive outline that all heroes and heroines follow in order to achieve a certain objective or complete their

predetermined quest. This generic structure is: i. An introduction that includes a setting and introduces characters ii. A series of events that build up iii. Complications iv. Resulting events v. Resolution and ending

The Gift of the Magi takes the same form: i. Introduction of Hero and Heroine ii. Christmas is approaching, and they do not have enough money iii. They struggle to find money to buy gifts for each other iv. They both sell their most valued possession v. They meet and resolve to eat and put away their gifts for they do not need them now

Henry depicts Della and Jim as the heroine and the hero respectively. They both have to sacrifice something of notable value in order to fulfill their quest. Jim had to sacrifice his inherited gold watch while Della sacrificed her beautiful long hair. The two protagonists strive to fulfill an all-important and far off goal. They do not rest until their task is under completion. They meet obstacles along their way, and they oppose forces trying to prevent them from achieving their goal, but in a twisted fate of irony, they find that they cannot use their gifts. Henry brings out this irony in an exceptionally witty and humorous way that keeps the reader attentive (Gioia and Kennedy 171). Internal struggle and poverty is part of the archetypal plot line in this tale. Internal struggle represents willingness to perform a personal task, but obstacles prevent one from doing so, while poverty represents the obstacles that curb someone from doing something. This is a primary struggle depicted in many symbolic tales and can depict a person's life. At first glance, this metaphor comparing Della and Jim to the magi is a bit strange. After all, the archetypal wise man is aged, having learned a lot throughout a long life of study and contemplation. He is most often male, reflecting the idea of knowledge as a masculine pursuit in

most patriarchal societies. He tends to lead a somewhat solitary existence and whether he is rich or poor (and he is more often the latter), he is still usually well-respected in his community (Gioia and Kennedy 169). Clearly, Jim and Della demonstrate the archetype of a hero and a heroine respectively. They do this by facing challenges and gaining new insights. Their similar quests end figuratively, but they get a resolution. Self-sacrifice illustrates the hero archetype. Their journey leads to another identity, which has grown to encompass the experiences of the story. The heart of this tale is not the obstacles they face, but the wisdom they acquire in the process (Gioia and Kennedy 172). Works Cited Gioia, Dana, and X. J. Kennedy. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. 11th ed. New York: Longman, 2009. Print.