

The Question:

A friend has sent you the following e-mail:

Last week you were telling me about archetypes in mythology and how this whole “archetype thing” works. I found it interesting and sort of saw what you were saying, but then you explained that you are going to have to show how archetypes show up in *Life of Pi*.” I’m interested in hearing about how you did this. I thought that *Pi* is a contemporary work and I’m wondering how this whole idea of the archetype fits in to a contemporary work. I thought that archetypes were mostly Greek Classical characters.

Key question: Where and how does the whole idea of the archetype fit into *Life of Pi*?

You decide to respond to your friend, explaining how the archetype isn’t limited to Greek Classical work, and that the whole idea is that these characters just keep showing up over and over again in literary history, but that the way that these characters show up can shift around over time. You decide to show what you mean here using, as a character, the “shadow” archetype.

Expanded Key Question: Where and how does the whole idea of the archetype of the shadow fit into the *life of Pi*?

Material from presentations in class, and/or other sources:

*The **Shadow** is the threat - the primary obstacle to the Hero's successful completion of his Quest, and should be strong enough to provide a worthy opponent. The Shadow can be the darker side of the Hero that he is trying to suppress. (An obvious example would be the "Evil Duncan" that emerges when MacLeod takes the Dark Quickening in Highlander. The best Heroes, and the best Quests incorporate both internal and external Shadows.)*

From: <http://annezo.net/fiction/archetype.html>

Basic Strategy:

Define Terms: layout theoretical language that you will use to make sense of the material in the story you are going to discuss.



Outline the information that is significant, and that will help you answer the question (in our case where the shadow shows up in the story).



Then explain this information.



Finally, having described and made sense of the information you have to address, go back and provide your reader with an overview of what you have found, and what you are about to show them.

<p>Providing definitions (from notes on archetypes)</p>	<p>One archetype, the shadow, is the primary obstacle to the hero's successful completion of his quest. Shadows have to be a worthy opponent (otherwise we don't have a story) and shadows are often the dark side of the hero him or herself.</p>
<p>Overview shows reader what to look for in latter part of the story.</p>	<p>The primary shadow in "Life of Pi" is the Bengal Tiger that the main character Pi ends up living on a life boat with for two hundred and fifty days. Pi finds himself in this weird set of circumstances after the boat carrying his family and the too animals that his family was selling</p>
<p>Provide context. Describe characters</p>	<p>sinks at sea. In the first telling of this story that appears in "Pi" the character Pi's family drowns and Pi is left on a lifeboat with a Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker, along with a collection of other animals: a seriously wounded zebra, an orangutan, a hyena, a rat and some cockroaches. After all of the other animals are either eaten or escape the (the cockroaches jump into the ocean) Pi is left to deal with Richard Parker and his massive appetite. The remainder of the story covers how Pi and Parker achieve a form of territorial balance with Richard Parker letting Pi live while Pi feeds him. In the end of this difficult story, Pi and Richard Parker land in Mexico, Richard Parker heads off into the jungle, while Pi is found, and then placed in a hospital to recover after his long and difficult journey.</p>
<p>Outline of plot of first story. Chronology of events. This is an important step as, even if your reader has read the book, they don't know what information you think is important. It is important that you outline what you think is significant.</p>	<p>This is one story. There is another account of what happened after the Tsimsum sank</p>
<p>Transition Providing context Describe characters</p>	<p>though, that involves a cook, Pi's mom, a badly injured sailor and Pi himself. In this second version of things, Pi and these four find themselves on the lifeboat and again nobody finds them. To survive the cook first butchers that sailor's badly mangled leg for bait: a process that doesn't work out too well. Then in another episode the cook goes on to butcher the dead sailor and cure his body parts so that they can be "used for bait." We next see though, that the cook eats the sailor's dried flesh. The next "victim" is Pi's mom. She is killed when she criticizes the chef. Pi escapes to a life raft that has been made, but the chef throw's Pi's mom's head at Pi. Later on in this story Pi ends up killing the cook and then, as he puts it, "surviving."</p>
<p>Outline plot of the second story in chronological order. Again provide the information that is significant for your argument and provide it in the most simple, clear manner possible</p>	<p>Part of the problem with finding the "shadow" in <i>Life of Pi</i> has to do with reconciling</p>
<p>Transition into explanation Provide context, this is what I'm going to have to deal with in order to make things make sense</p>	<p>the differences within these two stories, and then finding the shadow once these differences are reconciled. Part of this problem can be overcome though if we accept Richard Parker as a strong primal animal presence that a Bengal tiger might represent, and then accept him as the</p>

<p>Thesis</p> <p>Explanation of thesis</p> <p>Chronological in terms of dealing with the two stories</p>	<p>shadow character that represents the brutal will to survive that exists in all of us, but in the story in the cook character, and in Pi. The cook in the second story is described as a brute with no civilized respect for human life. He takes what he needs, and butchers what or whomever he has to. He is Richard Parker—the dark shadow that is what we become when faced with some very basic human choices. But Richard Parker is not just the cook. He is also Pi himself. In a somewhat convoluted description, in the first story, Pi describes how Richard Parker kills the blind chef. It isn't entirely clear, but what might have happened is that the cook did go blind, and then Pi, brought up as he had been with his good Hindu background but reduced to his need to survive, kills the cook realizing that it will either be the cook that goes, or Pi. In the second story Pi states explicitly how he butchered the chef. Pi, like Richard Parker, knows what he has to do to survive and does survive.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Expands thesis</p> <p>Specifics of how this works</p>	<p>The shadow character as presented in Pi, is indeed humanity's dark other, the thing that we must overcome and live with sometimes. Pi's way of "overcoming" this formidable animal instinct is, as he writes in his first story, to learn how to negotiate with it in the case of the time he spends with the cook on the life boat, and then, after his ordeal, to write an allegorical story that turns the awfulness of even his own survival instincts into this other character—the tiger character—that eventually disappears into the jungle in the second story.</p>
<p>Further expansion (historical significance)</p>	<p>What's different about this story when we compare it to Greek mythology, is that the shadow in "Life of Pi" is not so much an "other" character as it is the recognition of the shadow in ourselves, in all of us, a dark underside that comes out when even the most gentle, non-violent individuals are presented with difficult choices.</p>

Adding an Introduction:

As discussed in class, my take on the whole process of making sense of the world, and of developing structured pieces of writing as part of this process, is that generally speaking we don't make any judgments, or have an overall view of any topic until we have looked at it, described it to ourselves, thought about it, made sense of it and then come to a conclusion about the topic that we are addressing. Toward that end, we are better off:

1. Establishing some sort of theoretical framework that we can use to make sense of things (in our case we are using archetypes to make sense of the book)
2. Describing the information that is going to help us answer the key question for our reader (in our case we're going to show where the archetype shows up)
3. Showing how the theory we've come up with applies (explain how the archetype shows up in the material we've described)
4. Expanding on what we have found and establishing the significance of what we have found (in our case we've pointed to what might be a more general shift in the way that archetypes show up), and then...
5. After having established and described the information that is needed to answer the focus question, after having made sense of it and having described how we have made sense of it, THEN and really only then can we go back and show our reader what's coming, what we've found, and how you we have made sense of this information. It is not until we have collected the information that we can use, not until we have made sense of it, that we can tell our reader what information is important, and what we think of it. Bottom line (for me at least):

Write your introduction last.

(My sample intro is on the next page here.)

Friendly intro that indicates what we're talking about.

Overview that positions the way you'll be making sense of things.

Introduce specific idea that will be discussed and where (the shadow in *Life of Pi*)

What you've found about these things (your thesis)...note how it will be much easier to prove something like this at this point in the game...because (big surprise!!) you've already done so.

Transition that shows how next bit of stuff makes sense, and how it is related.

Here's my intro to the letter we have been writing:

Hi Raul:

First off, I'm blown away that you are interested in this whole "archetypes" thing. How scholarly! And given that you are interested I think it's only fair that you deserve my best response. So here goes:

Archetypes provide one way of making sense of narratives and how they work. And it's a useful way as the shifts that take place in the way that archetypes work can show us something about ourselves relative to the way we used to be. For instance the archetypal "shadow" characters show up in *Life of Pi*, but there are changes that have taken place in the way that this archetype appears relative to the way it has shown up for the Greeks. Specifically more recent narrative don't divide roles up the way they were separated in Greek Classical narratives: for the Greeks a hero is a hero, and a shadow is a shadow; there may be a relationship between the two, but they are still separate characters. In a work like *Life of Pi* on the other hand the use of Richard Parker as an allegorical character allows the location of the shadow character to shift around, first being connected to one person in the story and then to another. This shows us something different about ourselves in the long run, i.e. that when confronted with difficult situations, all of us have to struggle with our deep, dark, other selves.

To see how this works, it is first important to understand how the "shadow" archetype shows up in *Life Of Pi*....[then first sentence of next section]