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Recommended Citation

Tovey, Shannon () "Arrows of Resilience: Teaching the Artemis Archetype in Children's Literature," *Literacy Practice and Research*: Vol. 48: No. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/lpr/vol48/iss1/1>

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Arrows of Resilience: Teaching the Artemis Archetype in Children's Literature

Adults, teens, and children alike have positively responded to the character of Katniss Everdeen in the *Hunger Games* book series (Collins, 2009). While Katniss's story takes place in the dystopian future, her same story has been told through myth and legends around the world for centuries. With her bow and arrows, independent spirit, and commitment to protecting the young women around her, Katniss embodies the archetype represented by the Greek goddess Artemis. When we respond to Katniss with admiration and wish to adopt her characteristics, we are responding to the same archetype that people have for millennia. The setting may be different, but the story of a strong female, fighting for justice and equity for herself and others, is a story that has stood the test of time. One of the most accessible and relatable ways that teachers can introduce young girls to archetypes of resilient women is through story. Children's literature can help children to recognize "the perils of the soul," as well as "the heart's possibilities of blessing" (Hillman, 1980, p. 5). This is the basis for resilience. Characters like Katniss, who represent the Artemis archetype can help children, particularly young women, to develop resilience skills.

Theoretical Framework

Theories from varied scholastic traditions together support the notion that literature can help children to develop resilience skills. These include, but are not limited to, psychoanalytic, resiliency, reader response, and Storyworld Possible Selves theories.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Archetypes are constructs that represent parts of ourselves, and are represented in story by characters such as Katniss. Mayes (1990) describes archetypes as, "those inborn dispositions and expectations, hopes and fears, potentials and limitations that express themselves in images and narrations" (p. 61). Drawing on the work of Carl Jung (1936/1990), mythologist Joseph Campbell (1988) believed that archetypes lie in the collective unconscious, and that every human possesses one or more of them within their personalities. He believed that it is our life work to integrate our unconscious archetypal self with our conscious self in order to gain personal empowerment as we navigate the challenges of our lives. This, he said, could be done through experiencing and becoming aware of these archetypes through the arts. Once we become conscious of these archetypes and adopt or relate to these archetypal characteristics, we can then participate in our unique "hero's journey" and make meaning of our lives. Von Franz (1972/1993) explained that, "The self is a dormant, inherent possibility. It is like an egg, a mass of possibilities that needs actual conscious life with its tragedies, conflicts, and solutions to bring the totality into reality" (p. 22). Archetypal self-awareness is the key to awakening the whole self, to realize one's own story, and to realize the power that often lies dormant within us.

Resiliency Theory

Authentic education is not just the teaching of academic skills, but also fosters the emotional development needed for a fulfilling inner life. Gitz-Johansen (1996) stated that, “The school should be not only the child’s bridge between family and the wider world, but also a bridge to the child itself [sic]” (p. 370). Developing resilience skills in children is part of a wholistic approach to learning.

Resilience is “the ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity and stress” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015), to “show healthy development, in spite of adversity” (Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, n. d.). It is “the individual’s development of an effective set of responses to stress” (Ginsberg, 2006, p. 140), and, the “ability to cope with adversity and to develop in a positive way when faced with setbacks” (Petty, 2014). Masten & Powell (2003) explained that resilience “...requires two fundamental judgements: (1) that a person is ‘doing okay’ and (2) that there is new or has been significant risk or adversity to overcome... individuals manifest resilience in their behavior and life patterns” (p. 4).

Ginsberg (2006) noted that people with resilience exhibit competency, confidence, moral character, connection to others, coping skills, a sense that they are contributing in a positive way, and a feeling of self-efficacy, or control. These qualities will be explained in more detail later on in this paper. Teaching the components of resilience through archetypal characters in story oral and written has occurred for centuries in every cultural tradition. Today’s teachers can also help children to gain an awareness of these archetypes in story by focusing on the resilience skills of the characters, with the potential result of the development of these traits within the children themselves.

Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory emphasizes the role of story in personal transformation (such as that of becoming a more resilient individual) by contending that meaning lies ultimately within the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). A reader’s emotional investment in a story can lead to a broader view of the world and new ways of thinking about the self, others, and society: “Readers who become immersed in the story experience are able to develop more complex understandings of the actions of others and develop awareness of the social conditions that affect people’s behaviors” (Rosenblatt, 1995). These understandings extend to the reader her- or himself (Benton, 2004). Storyworld Possible Selves theory explains more psychologically why a change within the reader may occur.

Storyworld Possible Selves Theory

Storyworld Possible Selves (SPS) theory (Marcus & Nurius, 1986; Martinez, 2014) compliments the notion of archetypal awareness and how individuals may change as a result of story. Drawing on humanist psychology (Rogers, 1961/2004), it maintains that most people are in a continual state of personal development and that they make meaning from story by encountering, learning from, and internalizing “possible selves”. According to Marcus & Nurius (1986):

Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation...They function as incentives for future behavior (i.e., they are selves to be approached or avoided)...an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self (p. 954).

Readers experience “artistically-motivated self-transformation” (Martinez, 2014, p. 110), as they move toward their idealized future self. They “engage a scene in a text mimetically, such as imagining oneself in the position of a character” (p. 224). The reader is then able to “become” the character, undergoing the experiences and emotional states of the characters, which helps them to develop their own identities, including their attitudes, judgements, and self-concept (Martínez, 2018). SPS is seldom drawn upon in literacy education research (see author, 2021), but the idea of personal growth through identifying with the protagonist of a story compliments the idea of internal archetypes and the impact of an emotional response to story. Altogether, these theories support a teaching approach in which traits that illuminate resiliency characteristics, already within the reader, can be brought forth to consciousness through story.

Story Comprehension Development. Children’s literature can be a vehicle for inner transformation when children recognize archetypes that they and the story character(s) share. Bolen (2014) stated that, “When you *feel* personal and archetypal traits together, when there is a connection between you and the story that holds your attention, when you realize a truth that you have not before seen, this is an *aha* moment – a moment when an unacknowledged archetype comes to life” (p. xviii) [*italics in original*]. At the moment, the child is engaged in the story.

While engagement in story helps children to internalize resilient archetypes, teachers can scaffold the process by making it more overt. This is particularly critical in the intermediate grades, as children make sense of story differently as they grow. Appleyard (1990) built on Piagetian theory to identify three stages of comprehension. In the *Reader as Player* phase, from preschool to early elementary school age, the child engages in an imaginary world in which stories are concrete representations of a reality world of fears and desires. In the *Reader as Hero/Heroine*, occurring from later elementary to middle school, the child is able to imagine themselves as the hero. They can experience a sense of competency and independence and “solve the problems of a disordered world” (p. 55). The *Reader as Thinker* stage involves the adolescent’s need to explore contradictions in characters’ behaviors and how and why they might exist. Given that grades four through eight bridge these last two stages, the intermediate grades are particularly critical times for helping children to identify with and adopt the qualities of strong and capable archetypal characters.

Artemis as Model of Resiliency. There are many lenses through which story character archetypes can be understood, but one in which they are particularly evident is through the myths of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. (see Appendix A for collections written especially for children). This paper will focus on the archetype represented by the “virgin” goddess, Artemis. There are three so-called virgin goddesses, and all three, Athena, Hestia, and Artemis are

representative of strong, independent females. Bolen (2009) describes them as representing “the independent, self-sufficient quality in women...as archetypes, they express the need in women for autonomy, and the capacity women have to focus their consciousness on what is personally meaningful.” These goddesses “expand our notion of feminine attributes to include competency and self-sufficiency” (pp. 15-16). As teachers, when we understand how these characters represent universal archetypes, we can better identify and highlight their heroic qualities in characters in children’s literature. The archetypal traits represented in Artemis, in particular, can be drawn on to help children, especially young girls, to develop resiliency as they navigate the challenges of their lives.

Artemis “represents a sense of intactness, a one-in-herselfness, an attitude of “I-can-take-care-of-myself” that allows a woman to function on her own with self-confidence and an independent spirit” (Bolen, 2009, p. 47). As the favored child of Zeus, she was granted six wishes. These included a wish for independence, the ability to be a bringer of light to others, a bow and arrow and dogs to hunt with, and a band of nymphs (young girls) to run wild with outdoors. She was considered by ancient peoples to be the goddess of the hunt and protector of young animals, women, and children. When she or the people or animals she was protecting were harmed in any way, Artemis reacted swiftly and decisively. The Artemis archetype can “confront danger clearly and close up, hold her ground, take aim at the vulnerable spot, and let the point they are making hit the target” (p. 181). The Artemis archetype “has a tendency to feel strongly about her causes and principles...[she] does not meekly accept inequity as a ‘given’ (p 53). Archetypal characteristics are internalized metaphorically (Campbell, 1988), Therefore, “hitting the mark” could be any target, including those of personal achievement, independence, and social justice. The Artemis archetype also represents inner strength and resilience throughout difficult circumstances.

Teaching Resiliency Through Archetypal Awareness. Teachers can help children to become aware of the Artemis archetype and to identify her counterparts in children’s literature. They can help children to identify the challenges that the Artemis-like main character faces, her resilient qualities, and the result of her actions based on those qualities. Finally, students can relate the qualities to themselves through writing exercises. This cycle can continue with new literature selections, widening perspectives on how the archetype plays out in varied scenarios and reinforcing its meaning and internalization.

Becoming Aware of the Artemis Archetype

The first step is to familiarize children with the Artemis archetype. Teachers may want to begin with the Artemis myth in a book on Greek myths. One way of analyzing a story character is through noting her resilience characteristics (see Appendix B). The story itself, along with the character resiliency chart can then serve as “touchstone text” (Ray, 1999) for analyzing future literary characters. In order to do this, children need to become intimately acquainted with these traits and how they relate to Artemis.

Ginsberg (2006) identified seven characteristics of resilient people, which mirror the Artemis archetype. Artemis had a *connection* with an adult who believed in her in her father, Zeus and her band of nymphs. According to

Ginsberg, other connections might include a peer group, teacher, counselor, or other adult who can be trusted, takes an interest in the child, and provides a safe place to learn and grow. Artemis was given the gift of independence. Just as Artemis was self-assured her skills and abilities to navigate the wilderness with only herself to rely on, children who are resilient are *competent*, *confident*, and have some understanding that they have *control* over at least some of their destiny. They are aware of their own strengths and believe that they can succeed in the goals they put forth for themselves. “The girl who does not give up on herself when others write her off as worthless taps into the indomitable spirit of Artemis” (Bolen, 2014, p. xvi). She feels “outrage at wrongs done, loyalty to others, strength to express a point of view, and a propensity to take action” (Bolen, 2009, p. 69). Artemis was swift to act when those she cared for were threatened or harmed. Ginsberg uses the term *character* to describe how the child sees him- or herself as a caring person with a belief system that includes a responsibility to others within his or her *community* and *contribution* to explain how the child might feel a responsibility and ability to make life more equitable and just for others. Finally, Artemis had *coping* strategies that included her need to be outdoors and to surround herself with other girls and animals. Ginsberg describes coping as having strategies help the child to react to stress in healthy ways, such as caring for his or her own body through diet, exercise, etc., knowing how to deal with stress, having an outlet for creative expression, having opportunities to communicate feelings, and knowing some relaxation techniques:

Artemis represents “an inner spirit that is not subdued, a will that is not broken. Each in her own way is a quirky, independent, courageous person who is in uncharted territory – the metaphoric wilderness, the realm of Artemis” (Bolen, 2014, p. xii). She shows us that every challenge makes us smarter, stronger, more resilient, and more capable. Young women who become aware of and develop these traits within themselves will be resilient women all their lives.

Teaching the Artemis Archetype

Teachers can use a protocol of drawing on the touchstone text to set a purpose, and then recognizing, identifying, naming, and relating the traits to themselves, as they explore other characters with their students. Teachers need to be fully aware of the archetype, her resilient traits, and the plot within the literature so that they can guide students into identifying these for themselves with discussion and/or guided reflection questions. In the realistic children's novel, *Becoming Naomi Leon* (Munoz), for example the main character, Naomi faces significant challenges that include poverty, debilitating shyness, significant levels of anxiety, responsibility for protecting a brother who is disabled and unloved by their mother, and the dual traumas of the reappearance of an abusive and neglectful mother and abandonment by her father.

Before Reading: Setting the Purpose. Before reading, the teacher can set up background knowledge by providing essential questions such as, “What does it mean to survive?” “What are some examples of things that people might survive?” “What are some ways that people survive life's challenges?” The teacher might say:

Look at the cover illustration. What do you think the title means? Why do you think the author chose the last name “Leon”? What is the character doing? How does the character seem to feel in the illustration? Why do you think the illustrator has her seemingly hiding behind the bushes? Why do you think there is a lion in the bushes behind her?

This pre-reading discussion will set up the predictions and inferences needed to identify the character’s challenges and means for meeting those challenges.

During Reading: Identifying the Character’s Challenges. Next, teachers can help students to recognize the challenge or challenges that the character faces. Generally, the character’s challenge(s), or “problem” is laid out in the first few chapters of the book. After chapter three, children can ponder questions like these: What does the author tell us about Naomi’s challenges at home and at school? What other challenges can we infer that she has, given the fact that she doesn’t talk and that her hands shake constantly? How does Naomi feel about her mother returning?

During Reading: Identifying Character’s Resilient Qualities. Artemis is always shown with her arrows, which she uses to protect herself and others. Tools of resilience can be seen as “arrows,” with which the character advocates for herself and others or tools that others offer to her for protection. Questions for reflection and discussion can include the qualities of resilience, such as: What connections with people who care about her does Naomi have? How does having these connections help her to overcome her confidence challenges? What special competency or talent does Naomi have? How does having this skill help her with knowing who she is? What other advantage or advantages does her soap-carving ability have in helping her to overcome her lack of confidence? How does Naomi demonstrate her character in the way she cares for her brother? How does Naomi cope with her fears regarding her mother? What are some ways in which Naomi becomes part of a community? How do you think this affects her confidence? What inner strengths does Naomi show? Discussing these questions can help students identify and name the resilience quality and what it might look like in a particular context. A final reading comprehension activity might include a form of story mapping known as *Somebody Felt Yet And* (Tovey, 2021) (See Appendix C), in which resilience skills take center stage in determining the meaning of a story.

After Reading: Relating the Archetypal Qualities to Self. The final step is for the child to see herself as possessing the resilience skills and her own Artemis archetype. Ideas for doing so might include journal prompts that ask the student to identify a challenge in her life and a resilience quality that she has that can help her to overcome it. Children could also write their own myths in which they include a set number of resilience qualities as means for solving the problems. The *Somebody Felt Yet And* story map organizer can additionally serve as a planning tool for this activity. These activities will ensure that children understand that many, if not most, of life’s challenges take multiple and continuous “arrows” to overcome, and that everybody can attain these by becoming aware of them.

Introducing Other Literature

The Artemis archetype is universal and prevalent throughout varied ethnicities, religions, racial and socioeconomic groups, and geographic locations in novels appropriate for grades 4-8 (See Table 1). The protocol for each of these books can follow the same sequence. The teacher may also wish to compare and contrast characters with Artemis and characters from stories read previously. As a result, the qualities of Artemis will become even more salient, and the students will be able to see how the quality might appear in a particular situational context. Strong females abound biographical and autobiographical accounts texts as well, and this type of literature can be used to show Artemis characteristics at play in real life circumstances.

Table 1: Book Summaries with Artemis Archetype Characters and Related Resilience Skills

Title and Author	Summary	Resilience Skills (“Arrows”) Emphasized
<i>If This Were a Story</i> by Beth Turley	Hannah faces the challenges of being gifted, bullied at school, dealing with her parents’ volatile relationship, and her worsening depression.	competence, connection, contribution
<i>The War That Saved My Life</i> by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley	Ada has a disability in a time in which the disabled are hidden and ostracized, her challenges compounded by having an abusive and neglectful mother.	competent, confident, connection, control, character, contribution, community
<i>One Crazy Summer</i> by Rita Williams Garcia	11-year-old Delphine is responsible for caring for two younger sisters with little help from her mostly absentee mother.	competent, confident, connection, control, character, contribution, community
<i>An Ocean Apart, a World Away</i> by Lensey Namoiaka	Yanyan dreams of being a doctor in early 20 th century China, despite the disapproval of society and the notable lack of women in universities.	competent, confident, connection, control
<i>Chains</i> by Laurie Halse Anderson	Isabel is an orphan and a slave in revolutionary America.	Competent, confident, control
<i>Return to Sender</i> by Julia Alvarez	Mari is an undocumented immigrant whose mother has gone missing. She faces bullying, loneliness, and fear of her family being deported.	coping, community, connection

Summary and Theoretical Connections

Archetypal psychology makes evident the universal models of strong females. These role models can help children to envision themselves as heroes by understanding the character traits of strong, independent women. Resiliency theory provides guidance for teachers in making these traits more salient.. Reader response and Storyworld Possible Selves theory can emphasize the purpose of

literature in fostering the growth of an individual as they encounter and internalize these traits as they grow into their future selves. The amalgamation of these theories in practice help to create an educational roadmap for student social-emotional development.

Further Research and Conclusion

There is a need for more applications that apply their theoretical synergy to other archetypes. This might include protocols for identifying and internalizing other goddess and god archetypes in story. As teachers, we have a responsibility for teaching not only the tools for learning to read effectively but also wholistic purposes for why we read. Literature can show examples of how story characters rose to the challenges in their lives and developed the resilience skills needed to survive and thrive. By becoming conscious ourselves of the qualities of strong female archetypes like Artemis, we can bring them to consciousness within our students and help them to identify with and adopt her traits. The result can be education that promotes the ability to become strong men and women with a quiver full of arrows to help battle any life challenge that comes their way.

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Appendix A: Greek Mythology for Children

Greek Mythology for Children

Chae, Y. I. (2020). *Goddess power: A kid's book of Greek and Roman mythology:*

10 empowering tales of legendary women. Rockridge Press.

D'Aulaire, I. & Parin, E. (1992). *D'Aulaires' book of Greek myths.* Delacorte

Books for Young Readers.

DK. (2017). *DK Eyewitness Books: Mythology: Discover the amazing adventures*

of gods, heroes, and magical beasts. DK Children.

Menzies, J. & Menzies, D. K. (2020). *Greek myths: Meet the heroes, gods, and*

monsters of ancient Greece. DK Children.

Napoli, D. (2011). *Treasury of Greek mythology: Classic stories of gods,*

goddesses, heroes and monsters. National Geographic Kids.

Appendix B: Character Resiliency Chart

Arrows for Resilience (Adapted from Author, 2021)**My Name** _____**Name of Book** _____ **Character's Name** _____

Competence What strengths or talents does the character have?	
Confidence How does the character become confident?	
Character How does the character in the story exhibit positive characteristics?	
Connection Who does the character have to turn to?	
Coping What does the character do when she feels upset about challenges?	
Contribution How does the character make a difference in the world?	
Control What does the character do to meet her goals?	

Appendix C: Somebody Felt Yet And Story Map

Somebody Felt Yet And Story Map (Adapted from
Author, 2021)

Directions: Fill in the graphic organizer. Remember what you learned about the resilience skills of competence, confidence, character, connections, contribution, control, and coping as you fill in the “yet” part.

_____ (main
character)

Felt _____.

Yet, _____,

And _____.

Example:

Naomi

Felt afraid of rejection

Yet, she realizes that she has a special talent and a grandmother who loves her

And, she becomes more confident in herself.