

The Time Traveler Archetype

This article is part of a series on understanding character archetypes. In this article, we'll cover:

- the characteristics of the time traveler archetype,
- the role of the time traveler in storytelling,
- why the time traveler resonates with readers, and
- developing time traveler archetypes in your writing.

Characteristics of the Time Traveler Archetype

The time traveler is a character archetype found in many stories in which traveling through the supernatural world is possible. The time traveler willingly or accidentally moves through time—past, present, and future. Every action taken by the time traveler has a cause and effect, leading to significant consequences.

The method of the time travel is often less important than the story's exploration of the human experience. Characteristics of the time traveler include

- a desire to correct a past mistake or prevent future catastrophe,
- a curiosity about the past or the future,
- a commitment to try to save the world, prevent disaster, or resolve personal tragedies, and/or
- a need to uncover the truth.

The Role of the Time Traveler in Storytelling

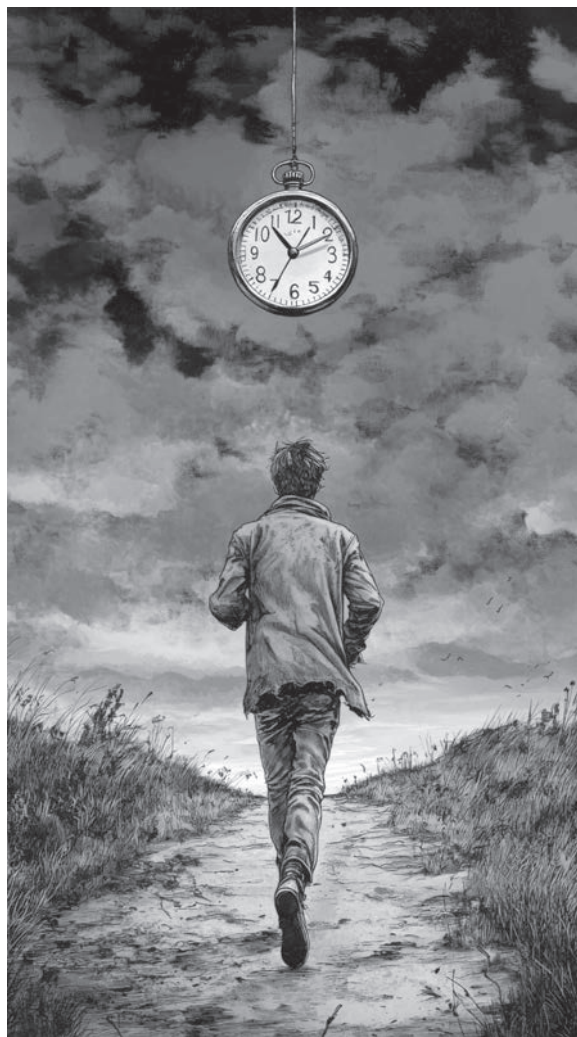
The time traveler's journey is often dangerous; as the character moves through time, changes in the past may lead to ripple effects, altering the future and potentially creating new realities. The possibility of encountering another version of oneself can lead to interesting interactions or conflicts.

Time travel stories frequently involve high stakes, such as saving the world, preventing major historical disasters, or resolving personal tragedies. For some time travel characters, the conflict in the story is simply trying to find the way back home.

Why the Time Traveler Resonates with Readers

The time traveler archetype is exciting because it asks:

- *What if you could go anywhere in time and learn anything?*
- *What if you could change the past?*
- *What if you could know the future?*



These questions pique our curiosity and encourage a sense of adventure while challenging us to think about choices and consequences. Time traveler stories inspire us to be brave, curious, and seek the truth.

Developing the Time Traveler in Your Writing

Crafting a believable time traveler requires delving into the character's backstory.

- What mistakes has the time traveler made in the past?
- What is the time traveler in the story searching for?
- How does the journey into the past, present, or future change them?
- What truths are uncovered on the journey?

Characters like Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Meg Murray in *A Wrinkle in Time*, Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, and Hannah in *The Devil's Arithmetic* are brilliant examples of traveling through space and time to change the past, save lives, discover one's own identity, and experience the past firsthand.