

Character Type: Healer

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This is your **last** free member-only story this month.

“Educated and intelligent, combined with their calling to make people well, the Healer is generally a character others put their trust in. Oftentimes this is a key to the patient’s ultimate well-being... or their downfall if they put their faith in a false Healer.”

Those of you who have followed my blog for some time or taken courses with me through Screenwriting Master Class know how fascinated I am with character archetypes, specifically how there are five — Protagonist, Nemesis, Attractor, Mentor, Trickster — which recur in movies over and over and over.

Some might see archetypes as a sort of reductionist approach to writing when in my experience, it is precisely the opposite.

By working with these five Primary Character Archetypes, we can identify the core narrative function of every key character, then use that knowledge as a guide as we build them out in a limitless number of ways.

One approach is to use an extensive array of Character Types available to us. In an ongoing Go Into The Story series, we consider how writers can use character types to

create unique, compelling figures in our stories.

Today: Healer.

Nurse. Doctor. Psychiatrist. Therapist. The Healer character type is typified by a passion to serve others with the skills to repair individuals. There are medical doctors featured prominently in movies such as *Awakenings* (1990), *Dr. Doolittle* (1998), and *Patch Adams* (1998).

While there are benevolent Healers who focus on the body, there are also counselors whose work is about the patient's psychological self in movies like *Spellbound* (1941), *Good Will Hunting* (1997), and *Ordinary People* (1981).



Dr. Berger helps heal the troubled Conrad in 'Ordinary People' (1981)

Sometimes the Healer needs healing, either a disease of the body or a readjustment of their values and world view such as *The Doctor* (1991) and *Doc Hollywood* (1991).

Then there are *shadow* versions of the Healer wherein the character in question has given themselves over to darker impulses as in movies like *Frankenstein* (1931), *Dead Ringers* (1988), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931).

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What brainstorming can you do with a Healer?

I remember taking a psychology class in college in which the professor told of a study that showed a majority of people who chose to go into the field of psychiatry did so in large part to figure out their own emotional and behavioral issues. That right there creates a path toward Disunity, the mask of professionalism and care-giving shrouding deeper, perhaps darker motivations.

Another thing to consider: If Healers are grounded in science, why not put one such character into a scenario that defies logic and can only lead to the conclusion there are forces beyond that which we can know through our intellect.

The point is we can spin conventional wisdom and twist tropes. For example, what if we take a psychiatrist who is a psychopath, but put him into the role of a Mentor. That is precisely what we have with Dr. Hannibal Lecter who in *The*

Silence of the Lambs leads Clarice Starling into and through the morass of her own tortured psyche.



Yes, even a psychopath can be a healer.

Or a nurse who is an insensitive control freak like Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

What are some of your favorite Healer characters in movies?

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For other Character Types, go [here](#).