Universal Questions and Controlling Ideas (a partial list)

How do the following “Big Ideas” play a role in your book?

1. Nature
2. Family conflict
3. Power
4. Relationships between people of different ages
5. Strangers in town
6. Members of different cultural, religious, ethnic groups interacting
7. Coming of age
8. Survival
9. Facing death
10. Friendship
11. Conformity and non-conformity
12. War
13. Search for meaning in life
14. Facing reality
15. Religious faith
16. Desire to escape
17. Losing hope
18. A woman’s role
19. Commitment to an ideal, such as patriotism
20. Disillusionment
21. Self-created downfall
22. Living up to the expectations of parents
23. Loss of innocence
24. Betrayal
25. Xenophobia (fear and hatred of outsiders)
26. Unconditional love
27. The price of greed
28. The power (and consequences) of the truth
29. Abandonment
30. Travel
31. Income inequality

What to Notice about Characters

1. Is there an opposite (foil) to a major character?
2. Does the character change (dynamic character) or stay the same (static character)

3. How does a minor character relate to the main character?

4. Consider very minor characters, the ones who appear in only one

or two chapters. Why did the author include these characters?

Common Archetypes in Literature

Archetype: A recurrent symbol, model, or pattern found across multiple

stories and genres

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| Seasons | Colors | Paradise/Promised Land | Apparent death |
| Supernatural adversaries | Supernatural helpers | Extraordinary animals | Magical objects |
| Magical powers | Magical transformations | Deep sleeps | Witches |
| Trickery | Consequences of greed | Beautiful princess | Floods |
| Foolish or dimwitted hero | Significance of threes | Illness | Flowers/Plants |
| The bewitching woman | The damsel in distress | The wicked ogres | Struggle of the poor/rich |
| The journey of escape | The lost | The miracle | Journey from innocence to awareness |
| Sacrificial friend/savior | The inward struggle | The temptation | The returning soldier |
| The victorious underdog | The betrayal | Revenge | Meeting the Supernatural |
| The search for identify | Justice for all | Born again/recalled to life | The corruption of power |
| Oppression of the poor | Big Brother is watching | The wild woman/madwoman | Madness |
| Separation | Serpent | Garden | Tree |