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Mythology and Folklore Midterm

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2. and 5.

(Both)In the story of Ali Baba in the Forty Thieves there are certainly clear prototype characters such as the: Trickster, Villain, and Fool and there are symbols and themes along the way that reflect the culture of the society.

I'll start off with the archetypal figures in this story, some of the main ones are Ali Baba, Morgiana, Cassim, and the Captain of the thieves. **(5.)**Ali Baba in this story can be seen as a clever trickster but also as a fool like victim. In the beginning of the story when Ali Baba discovers the cave he was clever enough to know that something was not right/ safe. He uses the tree as sanctuary from the thieves but also pays very close attention. **(2.)** There is use of symbolism here with the Ali Baba climbing into the tree. Trees represent life (aka the tree of life) and often are tied to characteristics such as wisdom. So the connection between Ali Baba saving his own life by climbing into the tree represents how the Tree gives him life and how he is very wise. **(5.)** Ali Baba is the trickster in the beginning of the story because he discovers the thieves cave and knows their secret passage word. **(2.)** Yet he is also different from his brother Cassim who attempts to do the same thing. Ali Baba was a poor man and only attempted to

take things in order to provide a better life for his family. Unlike his brother Cassim who was rich, glutinous, and fool-like. **(both)** Cassim shows signs of Hubris ties back to greek mythology, which is why his ending isn't as pleasant as Ali Baba.

(2.) Cassim is almost the opposite of Ali Baba. He is rich, rude, full of greed and is a fool. These place him into the Fool archetypal figure category. When Cassim discovers All Baba is rich he demands to know how and wants in on the money even though he is already well off. “he (Ali Baba) confessed all and offered Cassim a share. “That I expect” said Cassim; “but I must know where to find the treasure, otherwise I will discover all, and you will loss all”. Ali Baba, more out of kindness than fear, told him of the cave, and the very words to use.” Cassim expecting Ali Baba to share with him shows how much Hubris he has, which was shammed upon in society. He demands to know where the riches are and will take everything from Ali Baba if he didn’t share. Ali Baba has nothing and Cassim is wealthy so it shows how greedy Cassim is to want to steal from his brother who is not doing as well as him financially. When Cassim gets to the cave he cannot remember the words to exit the cave which leads himself to being killed by the thieves. This shows how he is a fool and because of his actions he was punished with death. His body turns into a symbol when the thieves cut him up and hang him on the inside of the cave. Death and Danger are often symbolized as skulls and corpses. So when Cassim’s dead body is hung as a warning he becomes a symbol for death and danger.

(5.) Morgiana is another big archetypal figure who becomes a clever trickster in order to save Ali Baba and his family. She discovers all of the tricks and plans the thieves try and make throughout the story and she defeats them all by killing them. “ ‘It was to preserve you master, not to ruin you’ answered Morgiana. ‘See here’ opening the flash merchants garment and showing the dagger; ‘see what enemy you have entertained! Remember, her would eat no salt with you, what more you have? Look at him! his is both the false oil merchant and the Captain of the Forty Thieves’ Ali Baba was so grateful to Morgiana” Morgiana saves Ali Baba and his family by killing the Captain and his thieves, death is a harsh punishment; but she does it in order to save her master and his family. This is why Morgiana isn't viewed as a villain archetype in this story. **(2.)** This ties back to how Ali Baba can also be seen as a fool character because he doesn't recognize the Captain in disguise. Ali Baba doesn't see that he keeps getting put into these traps that could lead to his death. Morgiana's wit allows her to out think the thieves and save Ali Baba on numerous occasions, which makes Ali Baba seem like the fool like victim.

(5.) The last big archetypal figure I will mention is the Captain, he can be seen as the fool like villain. He certainly is ruthless and it's shown when he kills Cassim and plots to harm Ali Baba. **(2.)** The use of the red chalk in the Captain's plans symbolizes death, due to the connection to blood. By marking the houses with red chalk instead of white, it comes off as more of a threat. **(5.)** Even though the Captain comes up with all these master-like schemes, he is still seen as a

fool, yet can also fall under the category of the Melancholy Classic Villain. His *dragon battles* comes up at the end of the story when he underestimates the power of Morgiana. He tries to remain disguised by being fake-amused by Morgiana's dancing. Little did he know that she was planning to kill him. The Captain assumed his plan was fool proof which leads back to how he is a fool villain. **(both)** By assuming that he will be victorious he blinds himself from the other alternatives to his plans which leads him to lose all of his companions and ultimately his life. This again leads back to the idea of Hubris in Greek mythology. If you are too full of yourself and have too much confidence it will lead to your demise.

(2.) I feel like the major theme of this story is: Hubris and Greed lead to lack of wit which causes death, and that Honesty and Kindness lead to a prosperous and joy-filled life. You can see this through the characters mentioned above. Cassim and The Thieves end up dead due to their greed and hubris but Ali Baba and Morgiana end up having a happy ending. Morgiana is freed and marries Ali Baba's son and the whole family for generations is rich because of the cave. **(5.)** When thinking a little bit more about the myths that are derived from Greek Myth we can see signs of: Aretê, Kleos, and Timê. The Aretê means shame culture. You should not shame your family, go back on your word. In this story Aretê comes into play when Cassim threatens to take everything from Ali Baba. He feels no remorse in taking everything his brother has earned which is why he is seen as a bad character in this story. Cassim wants to prove he is

superior and more excellent than Ali Baba due to his monetary status. This hubris that he has ultimately leads to his demise. The Captain shows signs of Timê because he wants to be seen as the leader and have public acclaim. He assumes no one is smarter or trickier than him, which again ties back to hubris, and dies because of that mentality. The greek myth ideas of how being too full of hubris is certainly evident in the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.