

Squid Game released on Netflix in 2021 and took the nation by storm. The show is a Korean thriller that follows the stories of 8 people in dire need of cash as they are entered into a sketchy elimination game by a shadowy cabal of foreign capitalists to win a grand prize of 45.6 billion South Korean won, which equates to around 38 million U.S. dollars. This huge prize comes at a huge cost, however, as each of the 456 players lives are worth 100 million won, with the pot getting bigger as each player is killed off. Squid Game currently only has one season available to watch on Netflix, with a second one on the way. The episode I've chosen to spotlight is the second of the series titled, "Hell." In this episode the characters that survived the first game hold a vote to see if the games will continue. The score is tied up until the final contestant, Oh Il-nam (the old man), votes for the games to end. After the tie is broken, they are set free but told if over half the contestants wish to return, the games will continue. They realize the outside world is just as much of a prison as the games, and every contestant returns.

The central tension core to both this episode and the whole series is a struggle between morals and capital. The contestants initially fear the games, wishing to be spared. They see the game as immoral – it does not value the sanctity of life. Yet when faced with the opportunity to leave, they choose to play anyway. We can see this dichotomy visually in the scenes where contestants vote whether to leave or stay. The set becomes lit very sparingly, illuminated mostly by the glowing piggy bank full of blood money. The golden bank is framed directly above the contestants as they make their choice, conveying that seeing the prize has influenced many into choosing to continue to play.

The main 8 characters within Squid Game fit nicely into the 12 archetypes of Jungian psychoanalysis, with some fitting into more than one. Seong Gi-hun is the main protagonist, who fits into the role of the everyman. He is an average, working class man with a gambling problem

and a daughter who lives in another home because of divorce. The audience is encouraged to empathize most with him due to his large amount of time on screen as well as his likeable personality and strong morals. Cho Sang-woo fits the ruler archetype in this episode as he knows the rules of the game and calls for the vote, bringing order from the chaos. Kang Sae-byeok is the caregiver this episode, as it shows her taking drastic measures to provide for her little brother and bring her parents from North Korea. She hides behind a mask of the rebel, projecting a tough-girl persona so people won't see this side of her. Oh Il-nam is the true mastermind behind the games, but he hides as a contestant. He fits into the sage archetype as Gi-hun looks to him for guidance. Hwang Jun-ho is the hero, a detective who needs to find his brother that's gone missing due to the games. Jang Deok-su, the gang ringleader, fits the archetype of the outlaw. Finally, Han Mi-nyeo fits the archetype of the lover due to her ability to sway people based on emotion alone. Though the general American audience becomes increasingly more accepting of and interested in foreign media, especially east Asian media, it could be argued that the archetypal classifications of these characters allowed for this to be an easily digestible story for viewers outside of South Korea. Following Jung's theory, these archetypes are ingrained into our public consciousness, explaining the worldwide popularity.

Gi-hun doesn't just fit the archetype of the everyman. More archetypes can be assigned to him under a lens of Jungian psychoanalysis. The persona Gi-hun projects is one of a care-free, fun-loving everyman. His shadow is the Gi-hun he doesn't want to be. This is the gambler and alcoholic who cannot control himself. The audience is clued into when the shadow self is showing due to the lighting of the scene becoming yellowish and dark, as seen when he returns from the hospital and is cornered by Jun-ho. We also see the shadow self in the scene before, where Ga-yeong's stepfather tells him to stop seeing his daughter. He slaps him in a rage, with

his face cloaked in shadow. Rain falls in the background and no music plays, boosting the drama of the scene ten-fold. The true Gi-hun lies somewhere between these extremes. The anima within is exemplified by his relationship to his daughter. He wishes to provide for her and be a father figure in her life but struggles to connect with her both emotionally and physically for various reasons including divorce and his financial issues.

Shifting away from Jungian psychoanalysis and onto Freudian, we can see Gi-hun's id, ego, and superego in this episode. The id surfaces in the scene where Gi-hun slaps his daughter's stepfather. In this instance, the superego was not able to control the aggressive urge to lash out. The superego can be seen when he casts the first vote to end the games, showing his strong belief that the game is still wrong despite the life-changing cash prize. The ego, the mediated middle ground between id and superego, is seen later as he calmly watches with confusion after Sang-woo votes to stay in the game. The camera watches Gi-hun's confused and disapproving expression as Sang-woo returns from the podium, slowly shifting focus back onto Sang-woo's somewhat sad expression, realizing he has no life to go back to unless he wins this game.

The slap, as mentioned previously, can also be interpreted as an example of Freudian guilt resulting in aggression. Because Gi-hun feels deeply guilty about his inability to parent his daughter, the threat of not being able to come around her made him result to violence. This can be seen in his immediate regret on his face as the camera cuts back and forth between Ga-yeong's disappointment in her father and Gi-hun's embarrassment.

Another Freudian concept seen in Squid Game is the defense mechanism of regression. When the guards come into the living quarters of the contestants with heavy artillery, they position themselves on the stairs, above all the contestants. All tight shots of the guard with the square symbol on his mask, the leader, are filmed from a low angle. These choices signal

superiority compositionally. This becomes more obvious when Han Mi-nyeo begins to fall to her knees and plead for her life, claiming she's just had a child but hadn't registered a name yet. Most other contestants follow suit, submitting and begging for their lives. As they cry and beg to leave, the guard fires a warning shot from a pistol, a phallic symbol. Later when it comes time to vote to go or stay, Mi-nyeo votes to stay and play the game. This brings into question her reaction earlier. Was she simply lying, or did she experience a Freudian regression in fear of the guards' heavy artillery?

Squid Game asks interesting philosophical, ethical, and ideological questions about how money functions in society. The series has surprisingly anti-capitalist themes, demonstrating how the working class are pitted against each other while the 1% enjoy the benefits of their labor. It asks both the audience and its characters to what extent would they bend their morals if a life changing cash prize was on the line. It asks, "at what price will the superego stop mediating the id, and at what price will the shadow overcome the true self?" I think this episode exemplifies that conflict especially well, given that the next episode reveals every single contestant chose to return and risk their lives at hope for the future, rather than continue the rat race of working-class life.