



Key Aspect: **Narrative**

Higher Media

# NARRATIVE

- This key aspect looks at the way stories and messages in media are **shaped** or **structured**.
- By examining **narrative structures**, **codes** and **conventions**, you will begin to plan how to shape your own text(s).
- When we watch a film/television programme/film trailer/advert, we are caught up in the **story** (*the narrative*) that it is telling and accept everything that happens on the screen as natural.

# NARRATIVE

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- In fact, everything that we see has been **carefully** chosen and **arranged** to ***appear*** natural (although not always as some film-makers deliberately set out to create an ***unrealistic*** narrative).
- Despite the fact that there are many different types of stories, **all narratives share certain common qualities**. That is, there is an *underlying structure* that can be examined and analysed in each moving-image text.

setzen

**NARRATIVE**

**STRUCTURES**

# CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE



# TODOROV'S MODEL OF NARRATIVE THEORY

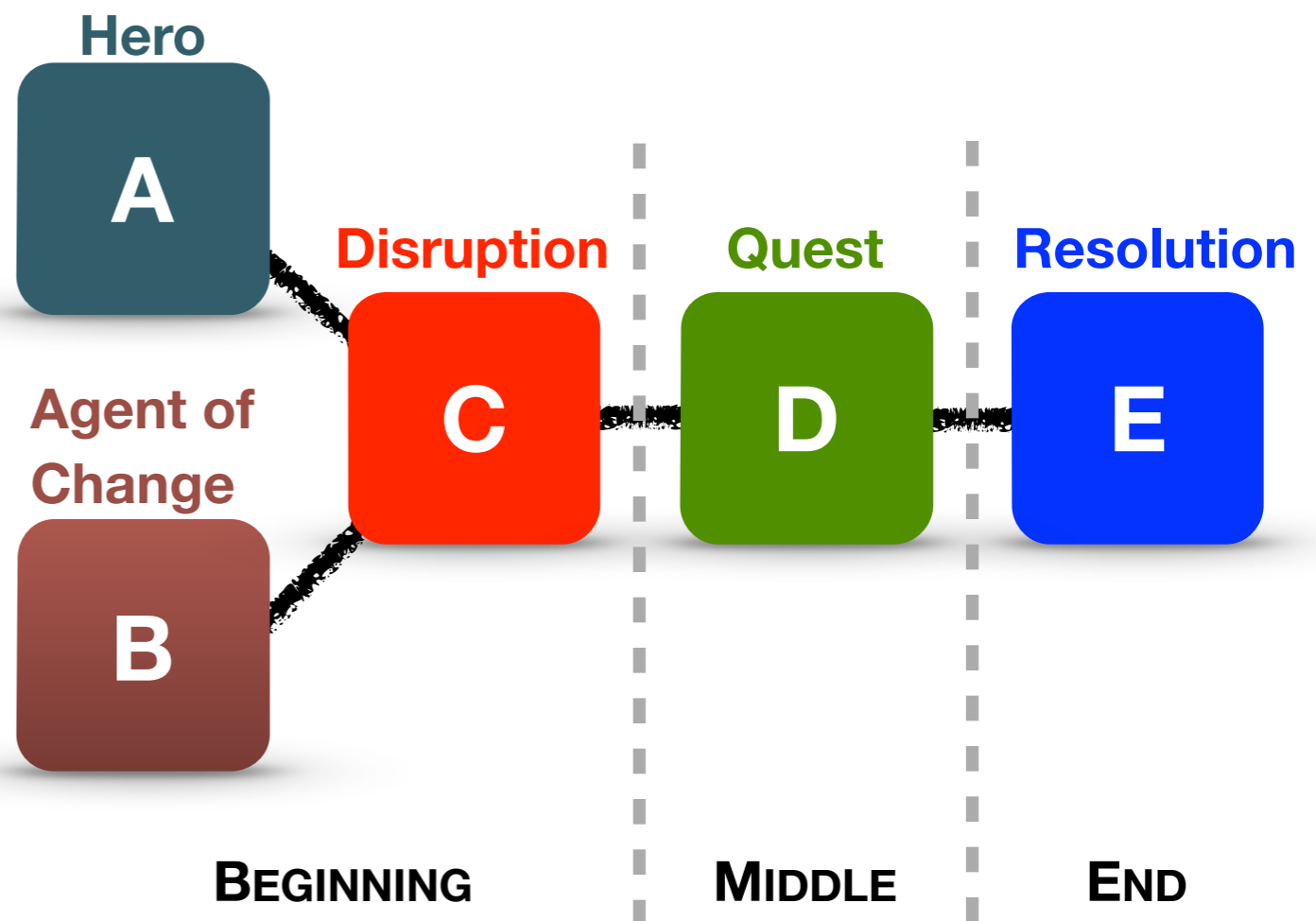
**Tzvetan Todorov** was a very smart French-Bulgarian who spotted that an awful lot of stories follow a similar pattern.

Todorov said that lots of stories have the following things:

- A. a Hero
- B. an Agent of Change
- C. a Disruption
- D. a Quest
- E. a Resolution

What this means is that the **hero(A)** has a **disruption** or problem(**C**) that is caused by an **agent of change(B)**. The story ends when the disruption is **resolved(E)**, and most of the story will be a **quest** or journey(**D**) to solve the disruption. A quick example might help explain this. Can you identify this film:

*A big fish(B) is eating people(C) and this is causing the Chief of Police(A) a problem. He chases the fish(D) and kills it(E), thus resolving the problem.*



Now, can you do a similar exercise for these well known stories?

***Snow White, E.T., Shrek...***

*Keep watching out for this structure when you read other stories or see other films... you will spot it!*

# CHRONOLOGICAL

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**Chronological or linear –**

events unfold in order (beginning, middle, end)

*e.g. Cloverfield*



# NON- CHRONOLOGICAL

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Non-chronological or non-linear

flashback/forward/dream

eg: Citizen Kane,  
Kill Bill Vol. 1 & 2,  
One Hour Photo,  
Lost





# MULTIPLE STORYLINES

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**Multiple story-lines or  
Interwoven story-lines**

draws upon Vladimir Propp's  
character driven narrative

*e.g. Game of Thrones*



GAME OF THRONES  
4.12 AT 9 HBO

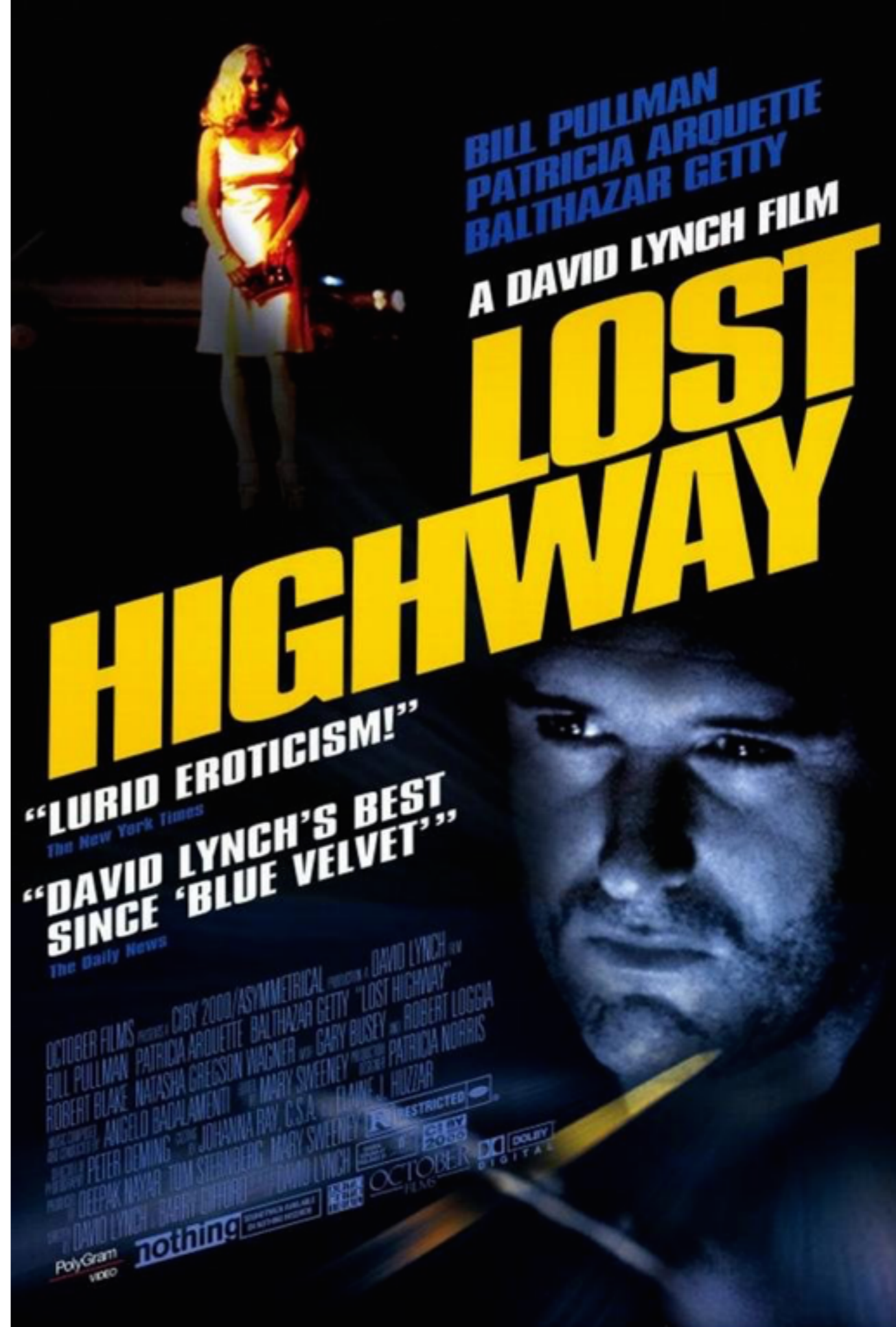
# FRAGMENTATION

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## Fragmentation or Fragmented

narrative that needs to be pieced together, like a jigsaw puzzle, in-order to make sense

*eg: Lost Highway*



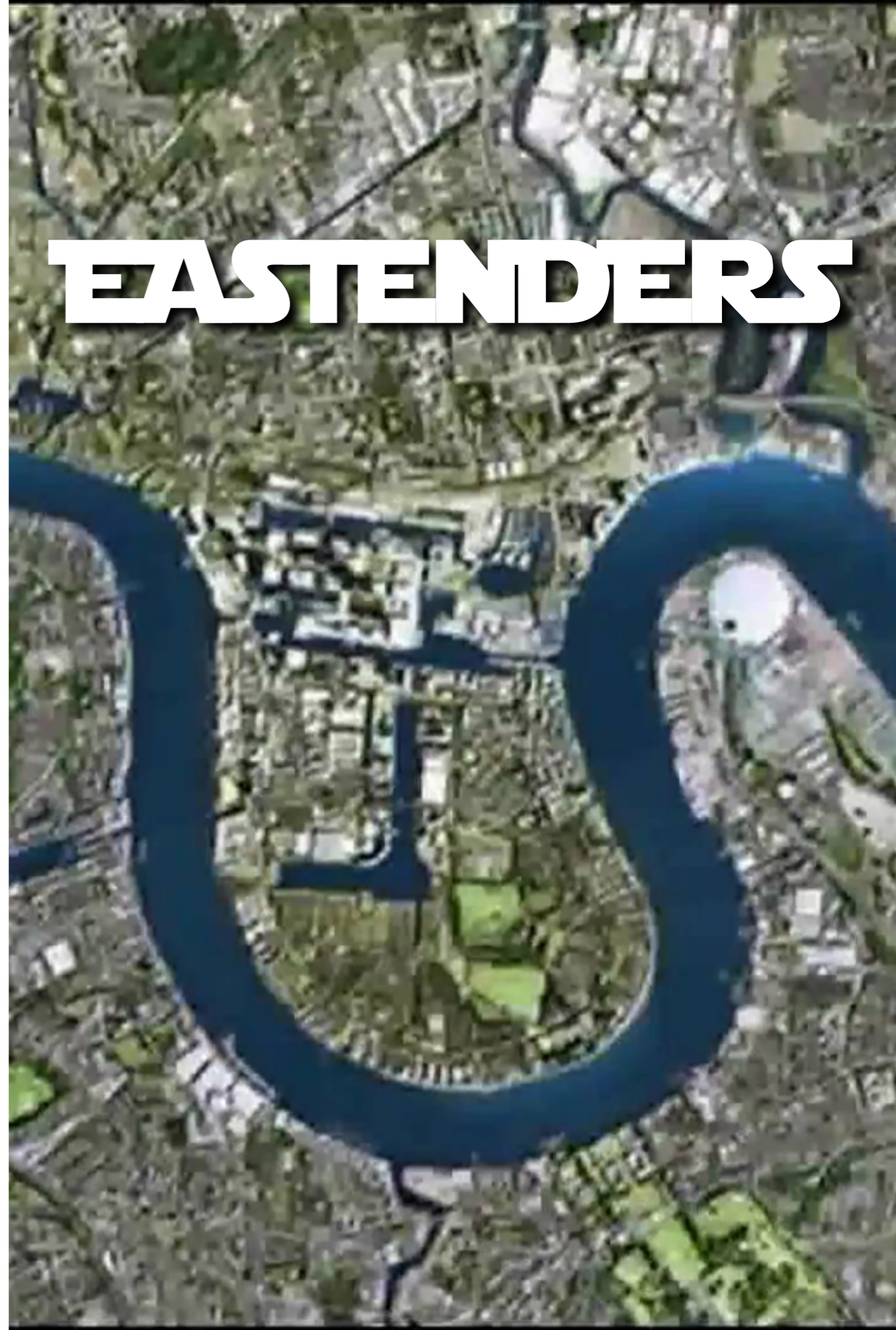
# EPISODIC STORY-LINES

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## Episodic story-lines

TV serial and series, film trilogies/  
franchises

*eg: Eastenders, Star Wars*



# INVESTIGATION

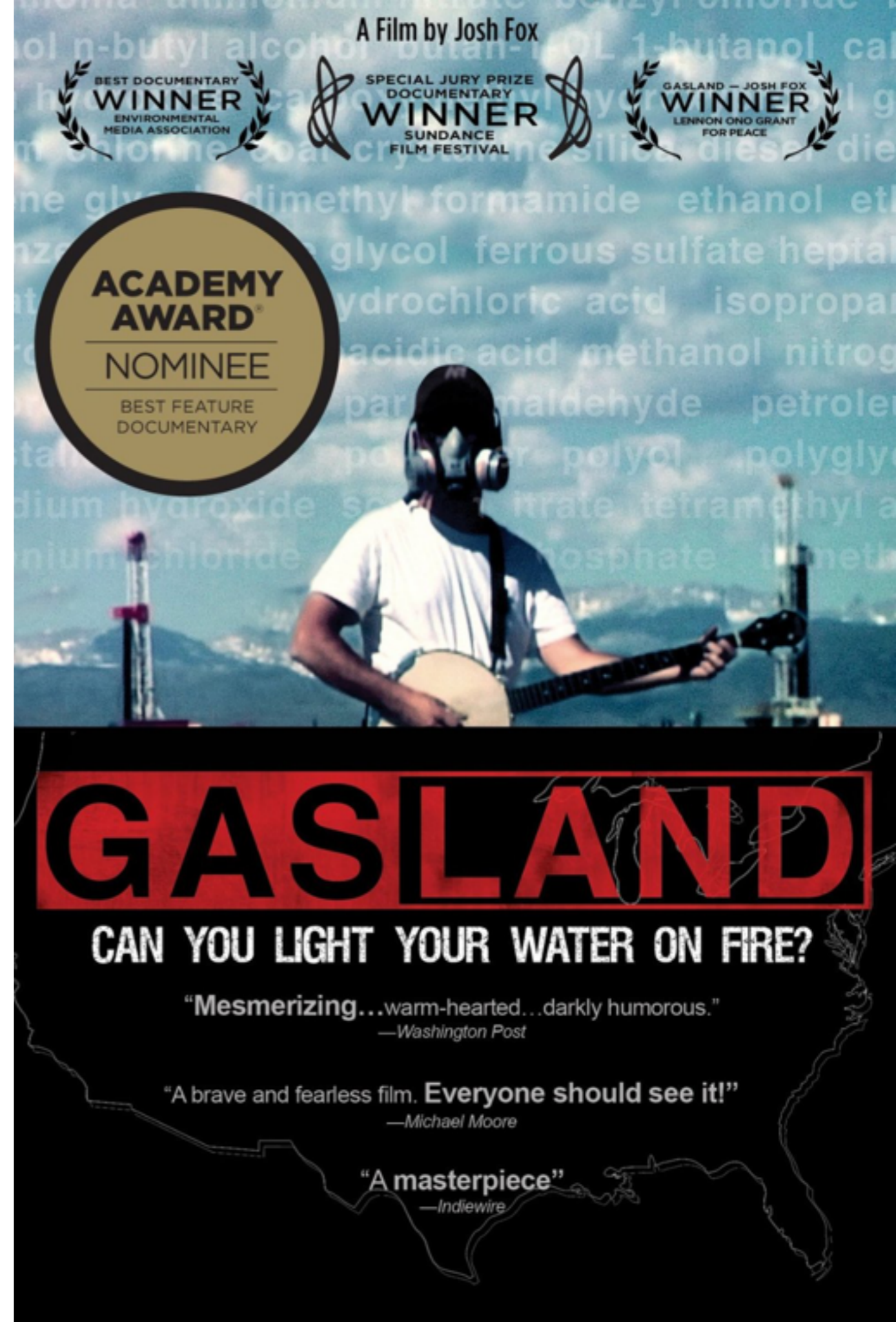
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## Investigation

interview, observation,  
presentation of data

non-fiction documentaries using  
real life

*eg: Gasland*



# RECAP: 7 NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

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- **Classic Hollywood Narrative** (*Todorov*)
- **Chronological / linear** (*events unfold in order*)
- **Non-chronological / non-linear** (*flashback/forward/dream*)
- **Multiple story-lines / Interwoven story-lines** (*Propp*)
- **Fragmentation / Fragmented** (*jigsaw*)
- **Episodic story-lines** (*series*)
- **Investigation** (*documentaries*)

# QUESTIONS

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