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

- 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 *un*realistic 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.

se7en

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE

Equilibrium *(normality)*

▼

Disequilibrium *(disruption of normality)*

▼

Process/**Quest**

▼

Resolution

▼

Return to Equilibrium *(normality)* or **New Equilibrium** – Tzvetan Todorov

e.g. Independence Day

Todorov's Model Of Narrative Theory is a useful model to remember.
There are several versions of it, but the most straightforward one is outlined on the next slide…

PS: It is also available as a download from the blog!
(Hint! Hint!)

highermediastudies.wordpress.com

# 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.

Hero

A

Disruption   **Quest**   **Resolution**

Agent of Change

C   **D**   **E**

B
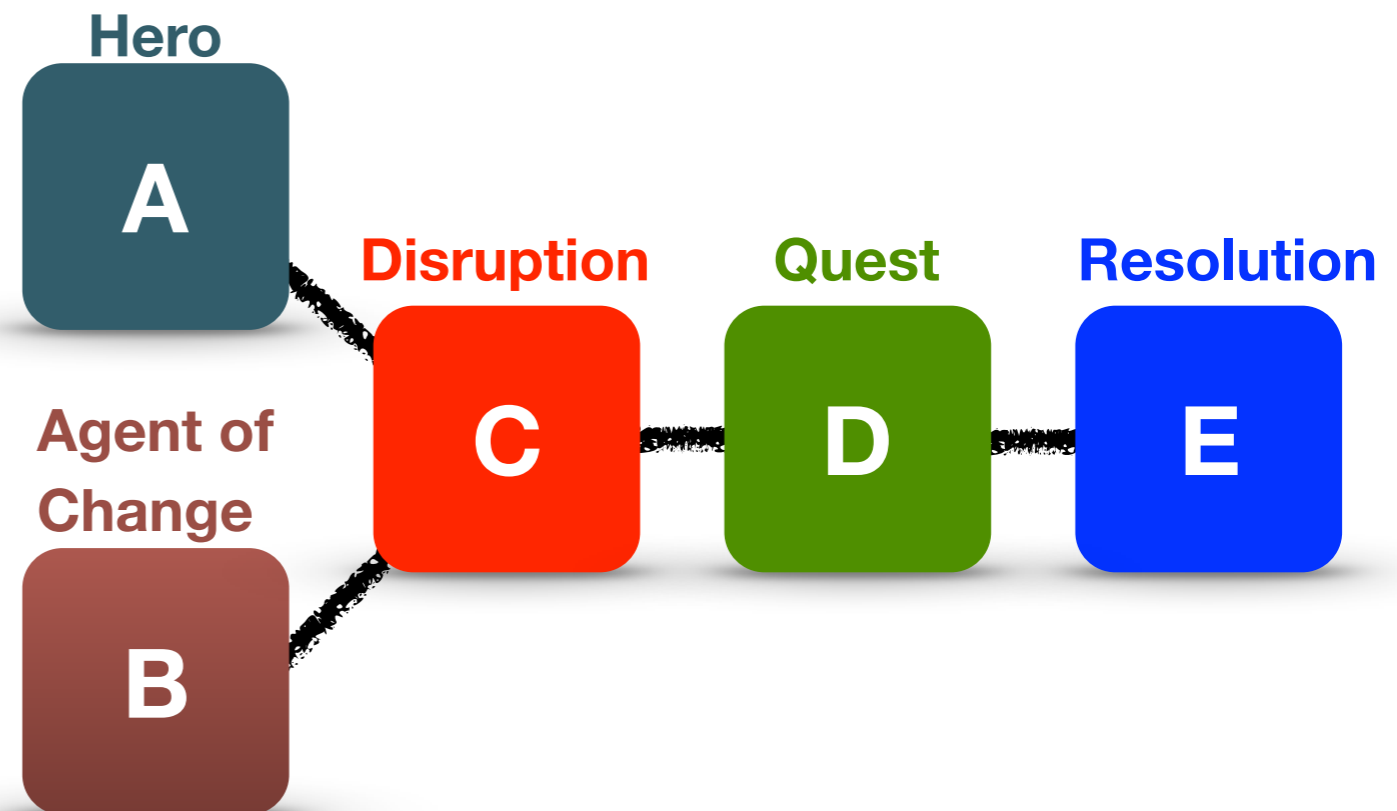
Now, can you do a similar exercise for these well known stories?
Snow White, E.T., Shrek…
Keep watching out for this structure when you read other stories or see other films… you will spot it!

CHRONOLOGICAL

Chronological or **linear** –

events unfold in order (beginning, middle, end)

e.g. Cloverfield

NON-CHRONOLOGICAL

Non-chronological or **non-linear**

flashback/forward/dream

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

MULTIPLE STORYLINES

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

draws upon Vladamir Propp's character driven narrative
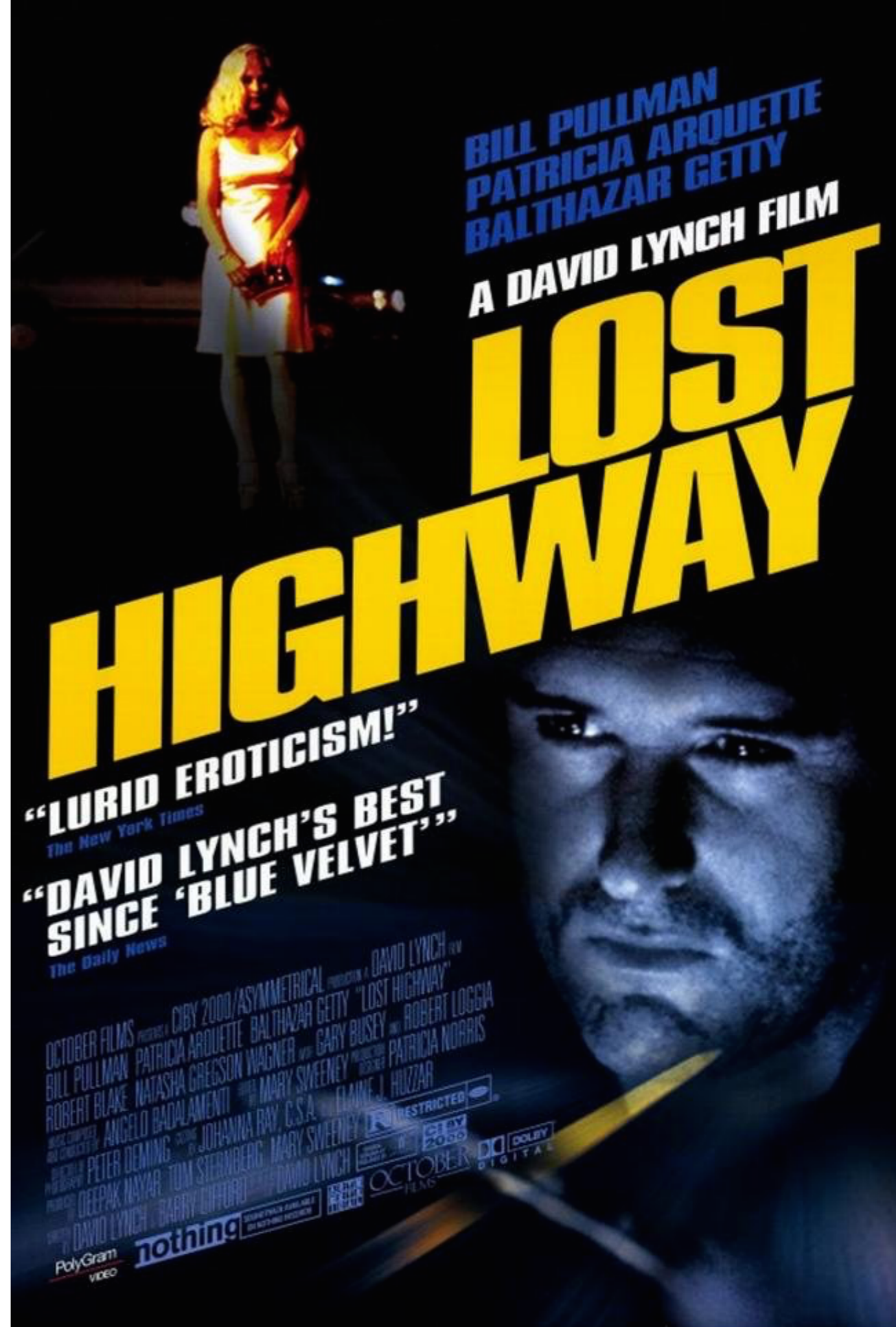
e.g. Game of Thrones

FRAGMENTATION

Fragmentation or **Fragmented**

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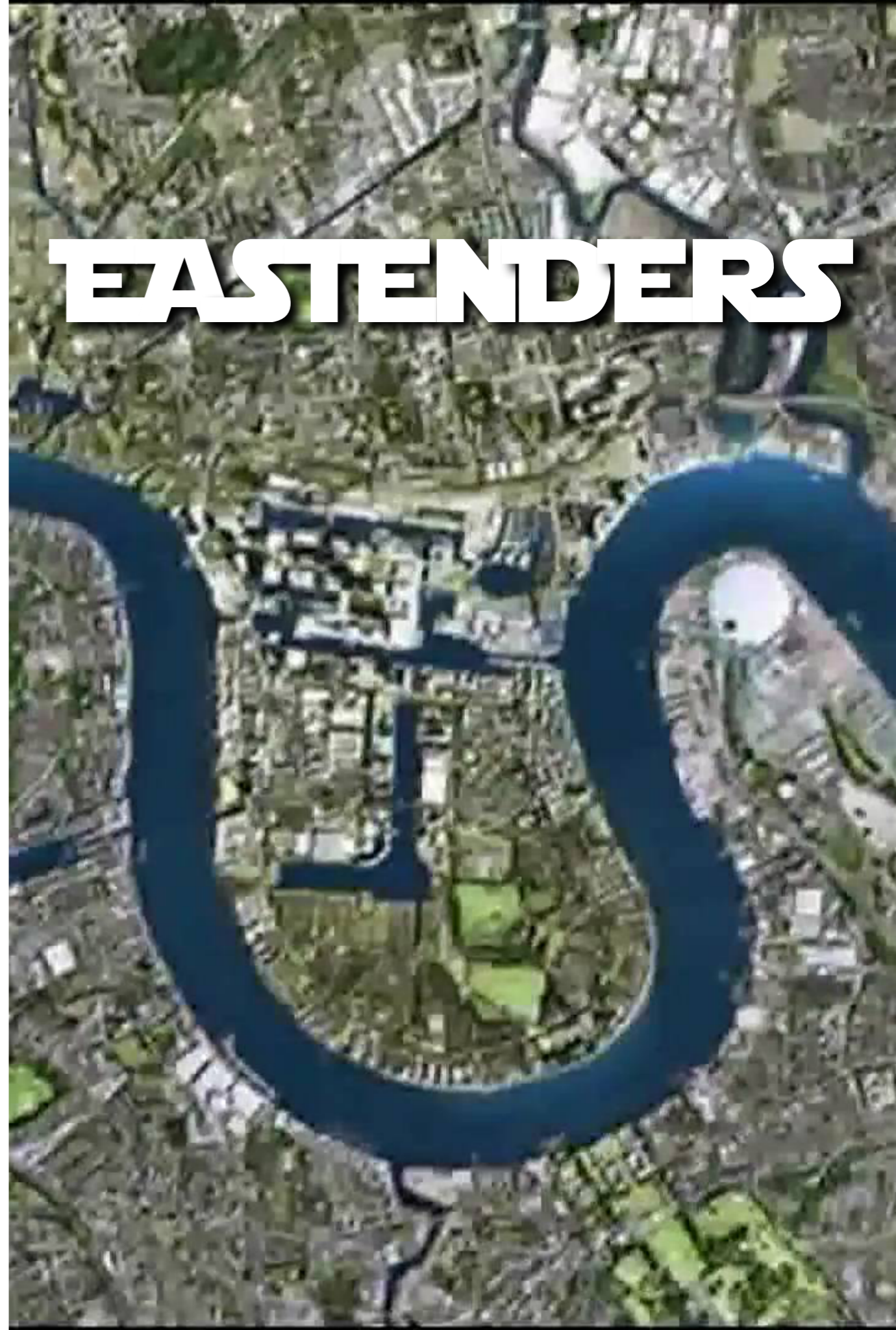
eg: Lost Highway

EPISODIC STORY-LINES

Episodic story-lines

TV serial and series, film trilogies/franchises

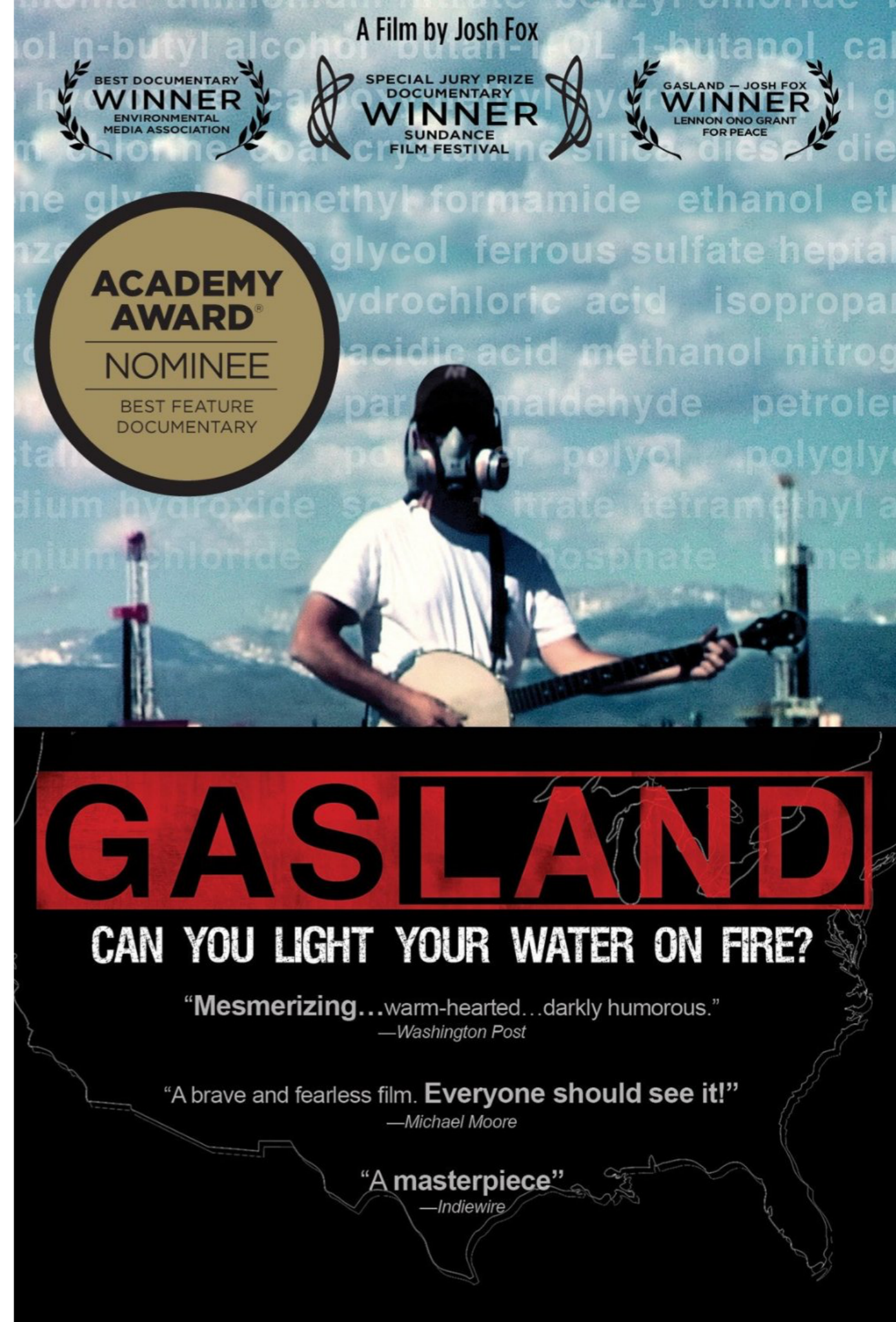*eg: Eastenders, Star Wars*

INVESTIGATION

Investigation

interview, observation,
presentation of data

non-fiction documentaries using
real life

eg: Gasland
*   POM Wonderful presents…*

RECAP: 7 NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

- **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)*