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
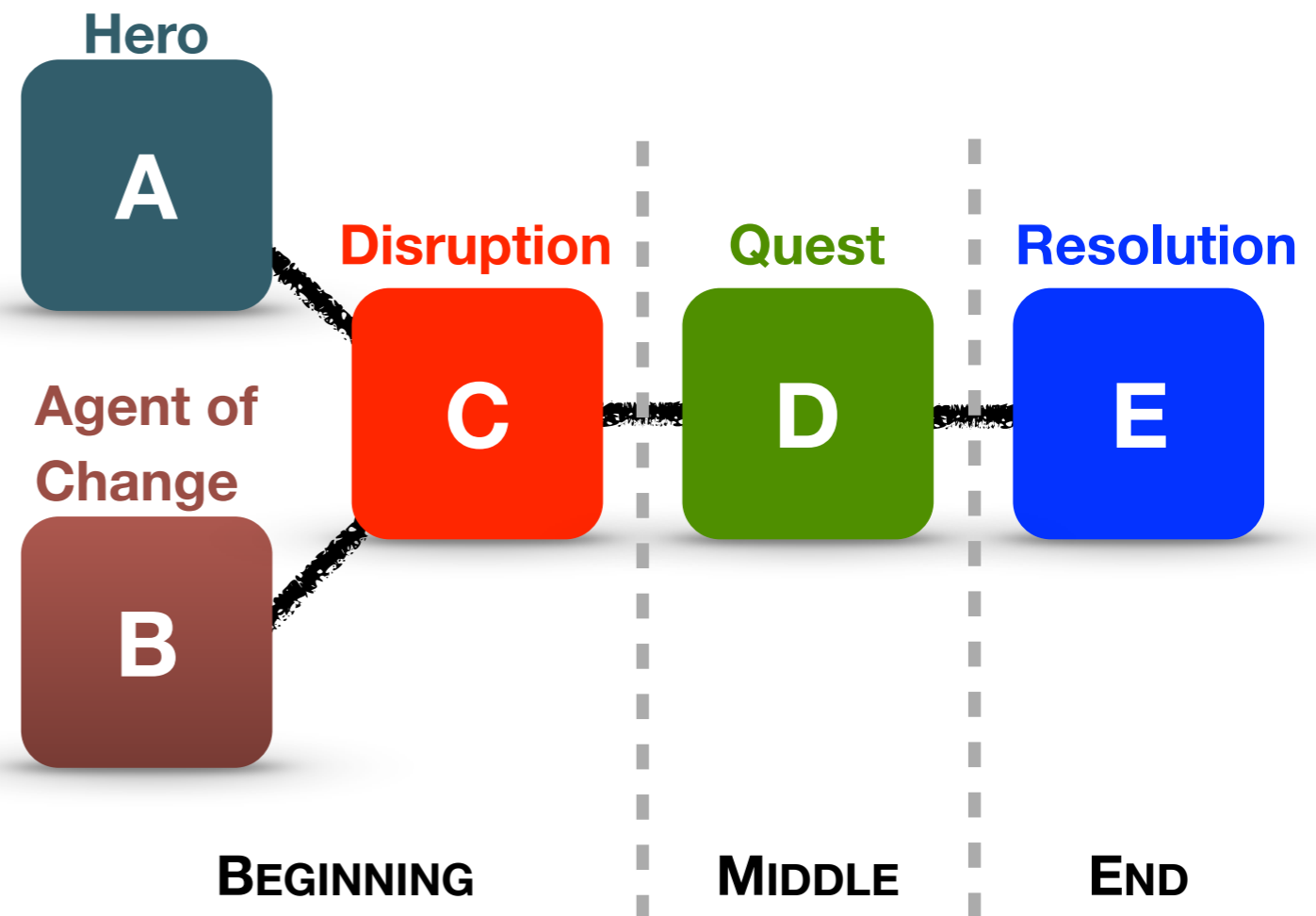
TODOROV'S MODEL OF NARRATIVE THEORY

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

Agent of Change

B

Disruption

C

Quest

D

Resolution

E

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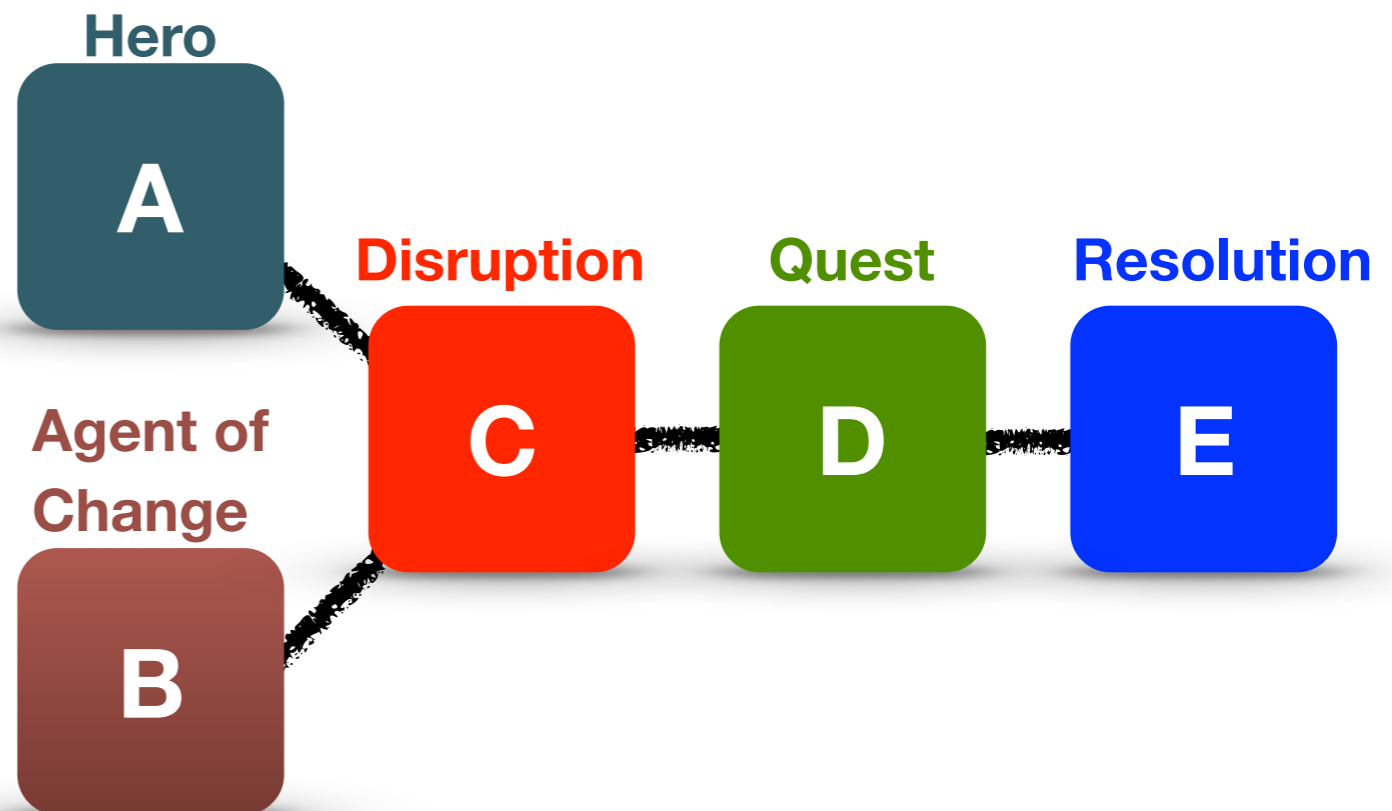
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A big fish(B) is eating people(C) and this is causing the Chief of Police(A) a problem. He chases the fish(D) and kills it(E), thus resolving the problem.

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

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

You'll be learning about Propp before the week is out!

FRAGMENTATION

Fragmentation or **Fragmented**

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

eg: Lost Highway
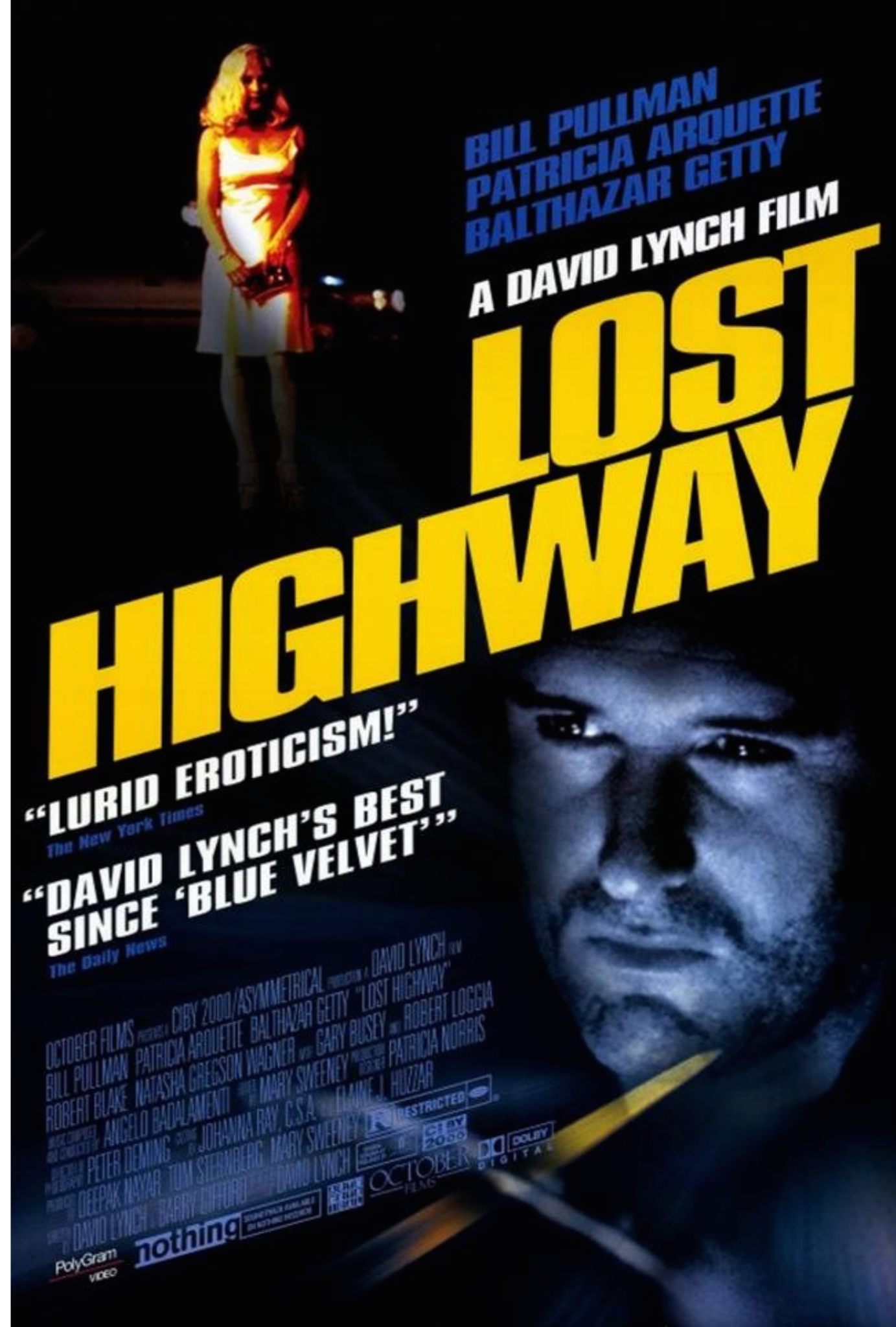
EPISODIC STORY-LINES

Episodic story-lines

TV serial and series, film trilogies/franchises

eg: Eastenders, Star Wars
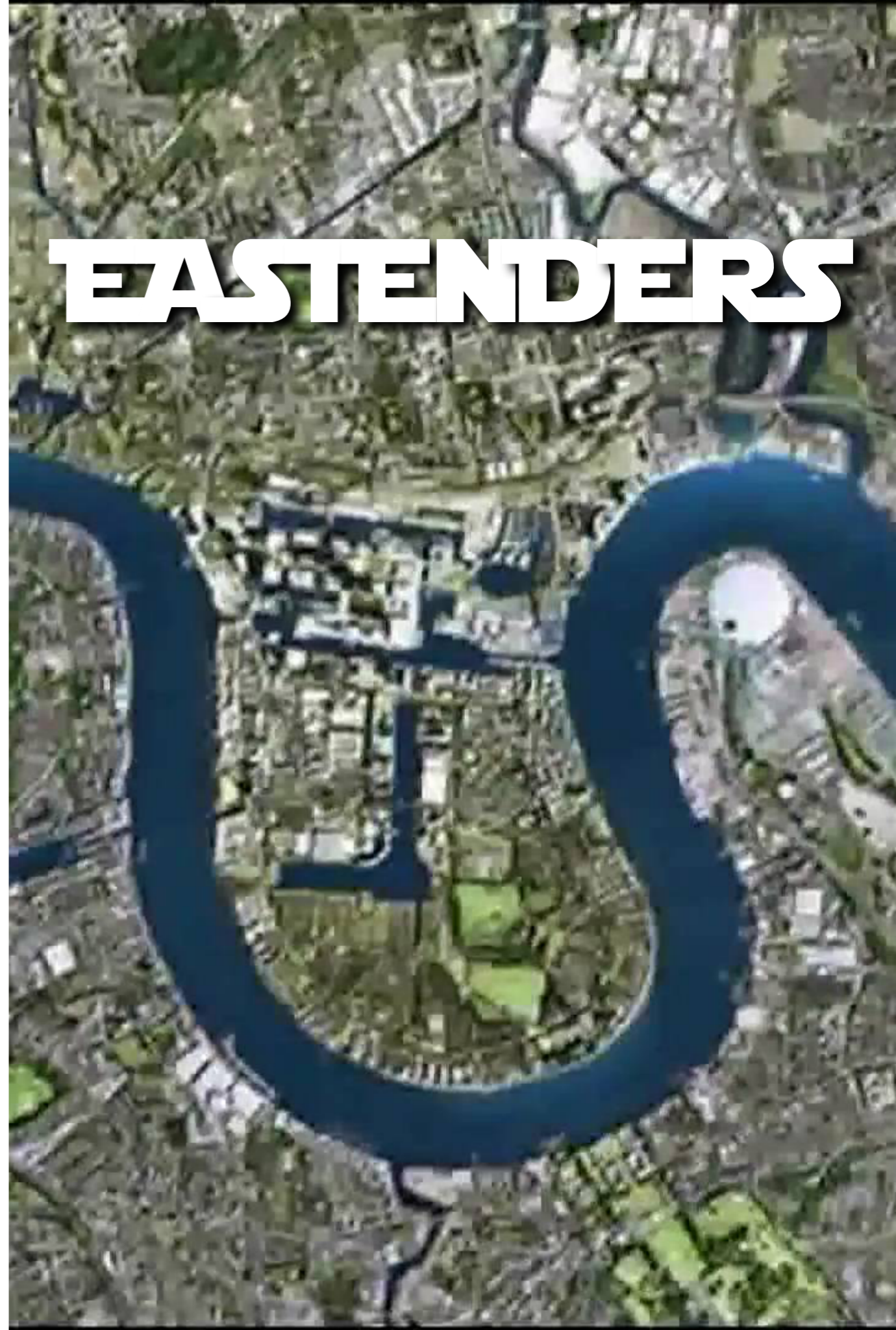
INVESTIGATION

Investigation

interview, observation,
presentation of data

non-fiction documentaries using
real life

eg: Gasland
*   POM Wonderful presents…*
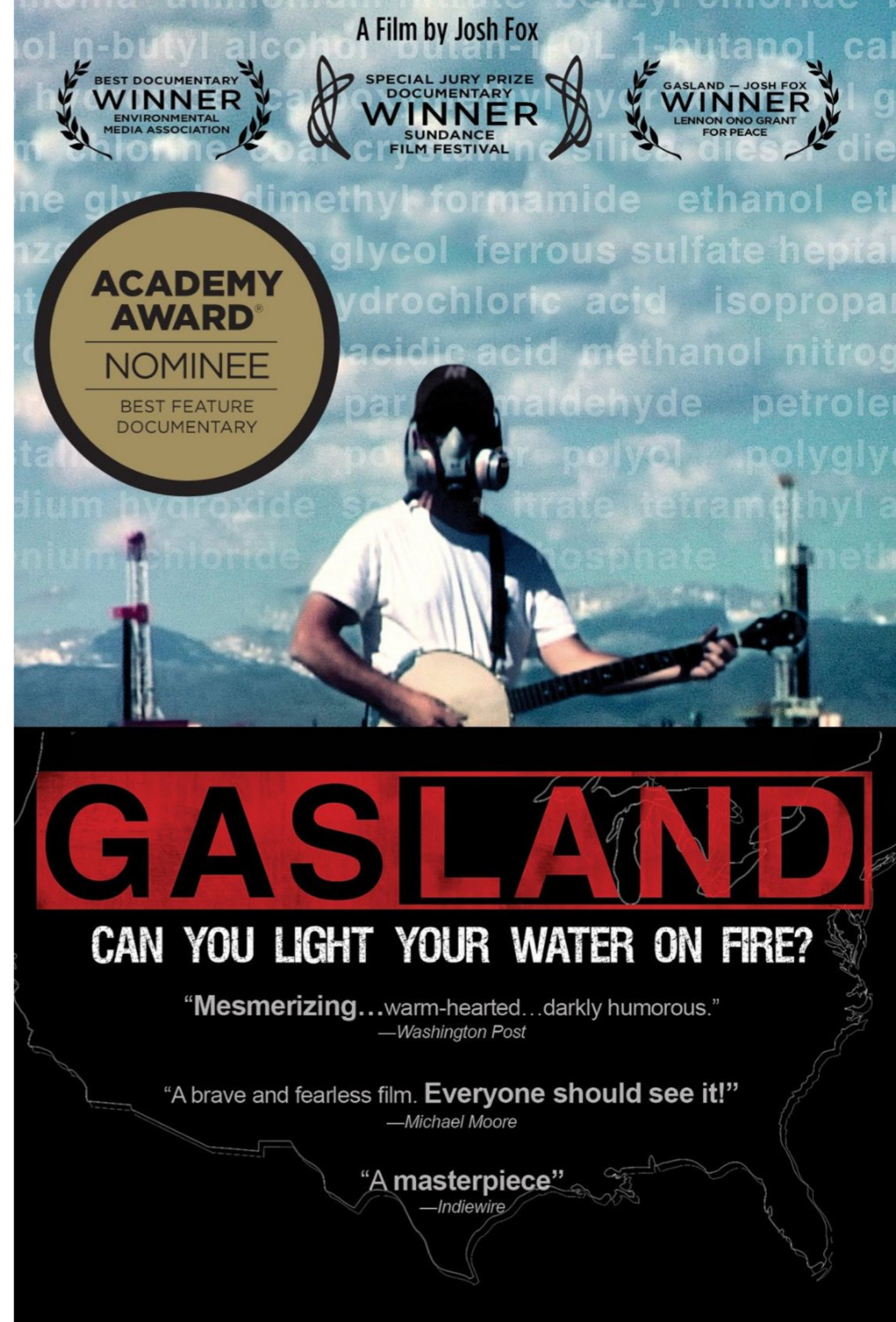
Recap: 7 Narrative Structures

- **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)*

Narrative - Part 2
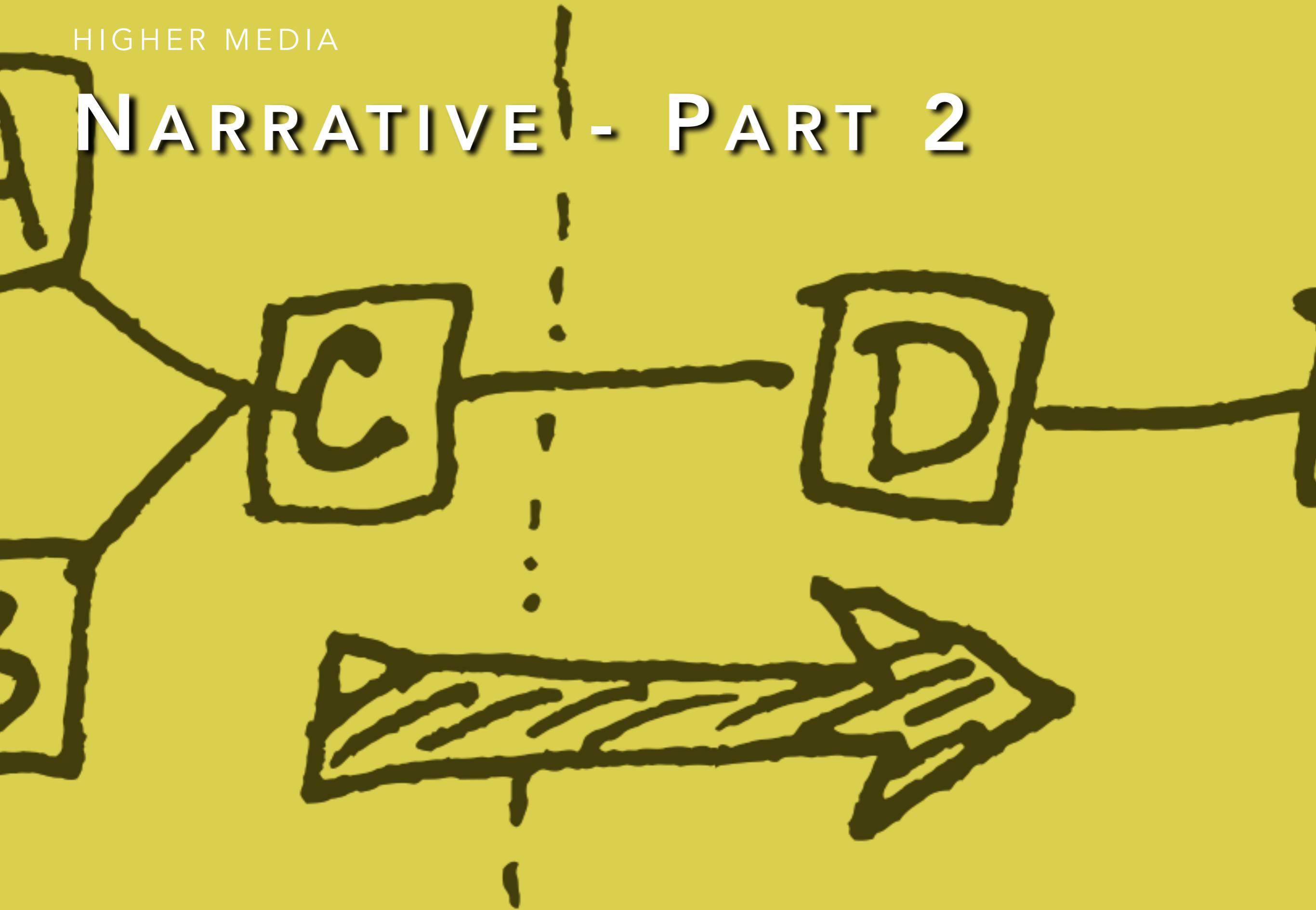
NARRATIVE: RECAP

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- **Chronological / linear** (events unfold in order)

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NARRATIVE: DELVING DEEPER

- Story

- Plot

- Narrative Structures

- Resolution and moral of story

- Conventions used to tell the story

- Codes that affect the narrative

- Audience engagement/hooks

- Narrative theories

STORY VS. PLOT...

STORY: The actual events that ***happen***, in the order they happen *(i.e. the audience's reconstruction of events).*

PLOT: The way the creator of the text ***arranges*** the story *(e.g. could use flashback to tell the story).* Plot is the ***sequence of events*** that happen within a text.

Story is what we **construct** from the **plot**.

Plot is what we have experienced/seen.

This is an important difference and needs to be remembered.

Story vs. Plot...

Plot: The champ, Apollo Creed, needs a new opponent when his scheduled opponent pulls out due to injury. In a decision of promotional genius, Creed gives a title shot to down-on-his-luck journeyman Rocky Balboa on the country's 200th anniversary. Rocky goes on to shock the world by going the distance with Creed in a competitive fight.

His whole life was a million-to-one shot.

ROCKY

ROBERT CHARTOFF · IRWIN WINKLER · JOHN G. AVILDSEN · SYLVESTER STALLONE "ROCKY"

TALIA SHIRE · BURT YOUNG · CARL WEATHERS · BURGESS MEREDITH · SYLVESTER STALLONE

IRWIN WINKLER ... ROBERT CHARTOFF · JOHN G. AVILDSEN · GENE KIRKWOOD · BILL CONTI

United Artists

Story vs. Plot...

Story: Rocky, the underdog, overcomes great odds to find love and self-worth in going the distance with the champ.

His whole life was a million-to-one shot.

ROCKY

ROBERT CHARTOFF · IRWIN WINKLER · JOHN G. AVILDSEN · SYLVESTER STALLONE in "ROCKY"

ALSO STARRING
TALIA SHIRE · BURT YOUNG · CARL WEATHERS AND BURGESS MEREDITH AS MICKEY WRITTEN BY SYLVESTER STALLONE

PRODUCED BY
IRWIN WINKLER AND ROBERT CHARTOFF · DIRECTED BY JOHN G. AVILDSEN · EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GENE KIRKWOOD · MUSIC BY BILL CONTI

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK ALBUM AND TAPE AVAILABLE ON UNITED ARTISTS UA RECORDS United Artists
A Transamerica Company

Plot

- Michael Corleone, the son of Mafia kingpin Don Vito Corleone, returns home from the war. In a meeting with other mob bosses, Don Corleone refuses to get into the heroin business. Someone attempts to murder Don Corleone who is shot several times in the attempt. Don Corleone's top man, Tom Hagen, is abducted and an ultimatum is issued to Sonny, the oldest Corleone son. Sonny retaliates by killing the son of another mafia boss.
- Michael, the lone Corleone son who stayed away from the family business, volunteers to kill a mob boss and a corrupt cop to avenge his father and succeeds in doing so. Michael is sent to Sicily for his protection and Don Corleone is distraught to learn that Michael has taken up the family business. Sonny is gunned down at a toll booth. Don Corleone meets with the mob bosses and agrees to back the drug trade in an effort to end the mob war.
- Michael returns from Sicily and takes over the family business. He promises to his girlfriend Kay that he will legitimize the family business within five years. Michael attempts to get into the casino business and is forced to resort to tactics even more brutal than his father's to get his way. He also confronts his older brother Fredo, who was passed over because of his weakness, and warns him to never again takes sides with anyone against the family.
- Vito passes away from a heart attack. Michael arranges for the murder of the heads of the Five Families. This completes Michael's rise to power as the new "Godfather" and finishes his revenge against those who attacked his family.

The Godfather®
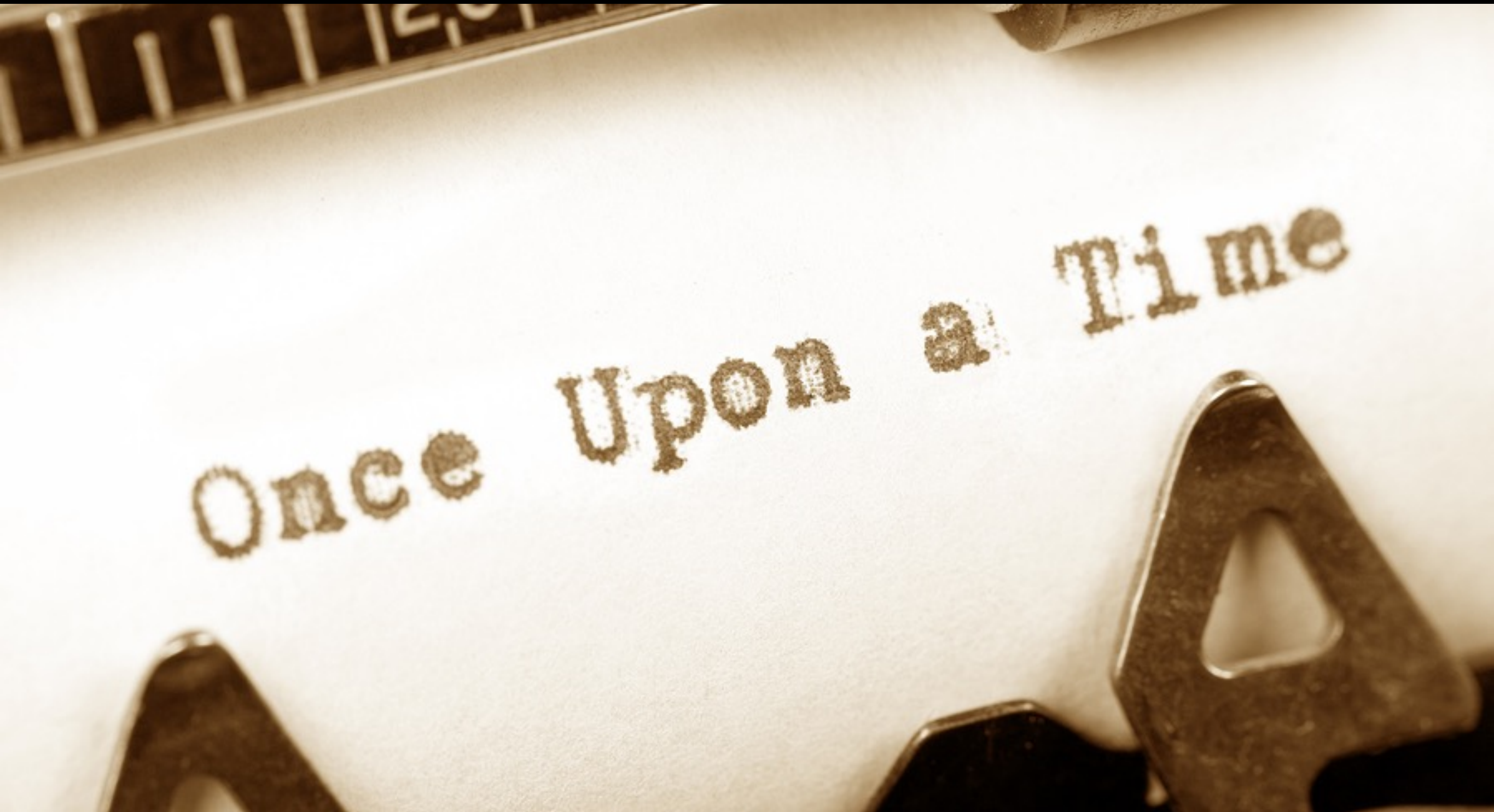
•The movie is about the corruption of Michael Corleone as he takes over the family business replacing his father after his death.

SO, JUST HOW MANY STORIES/ PLOTS ARE THERE?

7

~~Losing~~ finding the Plot

The **PLOT** is what we call the **main** sequence of events in a film (which may include the use of flashbacks!)

All the extra added bits are what turn the **plot** into a **story**

For Example

1. The prince searches for Cinderella with the glass shoe

2. Cinderella's sisters try the shoe on but it does not fit

3. The shoe fits Cinderella's foot so the prince finds her

For Example

1. The prince searches for Cinderella with the glass shoe

2. Cinderella's sisters try the shoe on but it does not fit

3. The shoe fits Cinderella's foot so the prince finds her

Number 3 happens as a result of number 1. They are essential for the **plot**.

Number 2 is not essential for the plot, so is just part of the **story**.
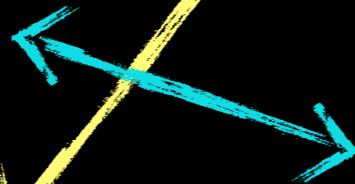
In a way, the **plot** is a bit like a domino rally.
One thing makes something else happen until
we reach the end.
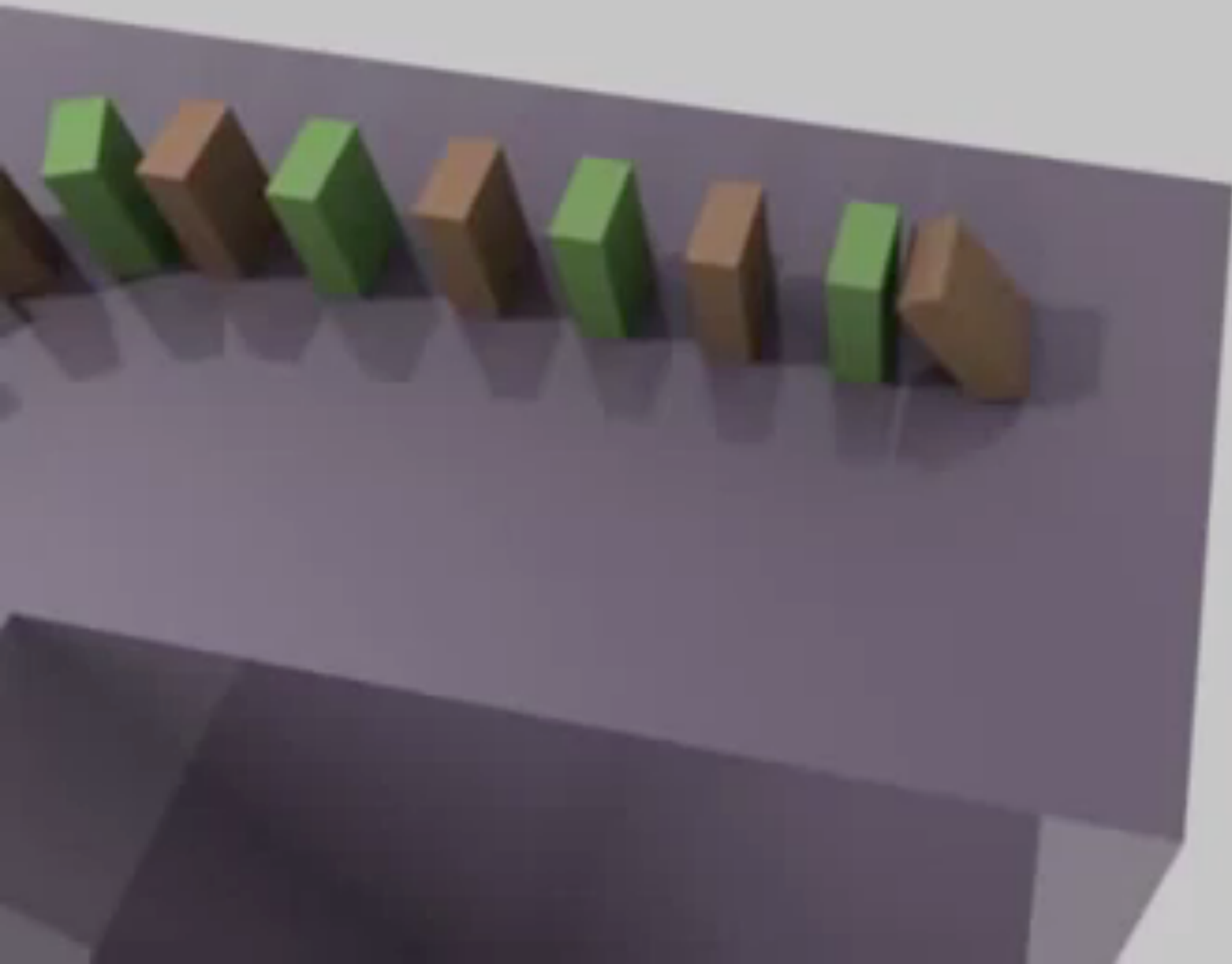
Seven Plots

So, if we cut out **all the extra bits** from **all the stories we know**, we will find that **there are only 7 different plots** that are used in them all…

7

Seven Plots

Now get ready, because you're going to find them useful…

HINT: Just copy down the title at the top of each slide, you'll get a handout with the details!

7

1: OVERCOMING THE MONSTER

A terrifying, all-threatening **monster** has been terrorising a community and must be defeated by the **hero**

eg: *Shrek*

2: RAGS TO RICHES

The story of an ordinary insignificant person, usually overshadowed by someone else, who turns out to have special qualities

eg: *Aladdin*

3: THE QUEST

The hero and some companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location, facing many obstacles and temptations along the way.

eg: *The Lord of the Rings*

4: VOYAGE AND RETURN

The hero goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to him or her, returns with nothing but experience.

eg: *Alice in Wonderland*

5: COMEDY

Light and humorous character(s), with a happy or cheerful ending; often after triumphing over difficult circumstances

eg: *Mr Bean*

6: Tragedy

The main character is a
villain who falls from
grace and whose death is
a happy ending (**or,**
sometimes, he or she gets
away with their deeds)

eg: *Macbeth*
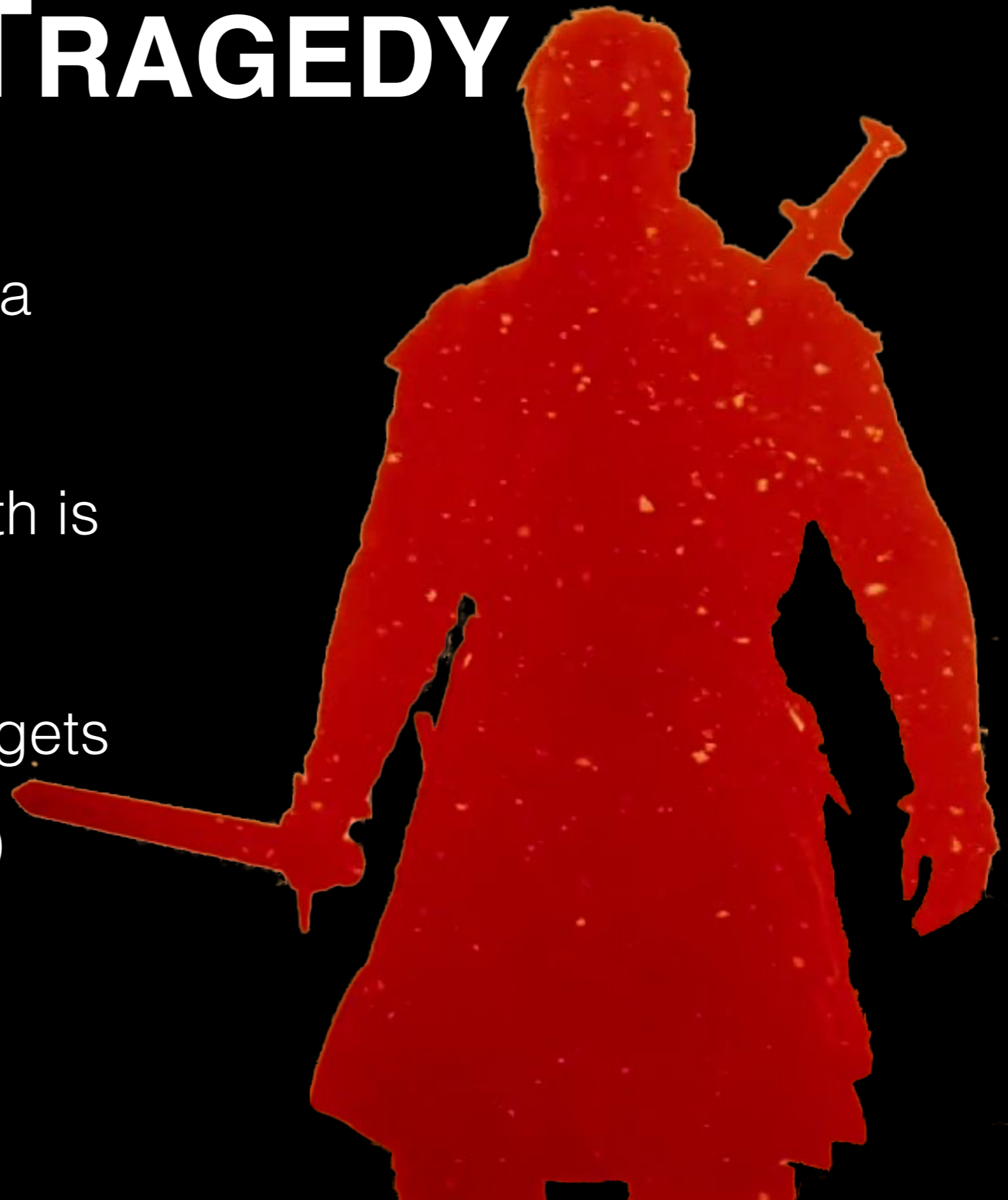
7: REBIRTH

During the course of the
story, an important event
forces the main character
to change their ways,
often making them a
better person.

eg: *Despicable Me*

TASK

Look at your list of stories.

Can you identify which
plots they have used?

Write down at least 3

different examples (give

the* TITLE *of the story

and the* PLOT *it uses.

THE SEVEN BASIC PLOTS

- The **plot** of a film is **not** the same as the **narrative structure**.

- In his book *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*, Christopher Booker outlines the 7 basic plots that he sees as being in all stories.

- His theory took him 34 years to write, and references **thousands** of stories he read in formulating it.

'This is the most extraordinary, exhilarating book.' FAY WELDON

THE SEVEN BASIC PLOTS

Why we tell stories

Overcoming the Monster
RAGS TO RICHES
THE QUEST
VOYAGE AND RETURN
COMEDY
TRAGEDY
REBIRTH

CHRISTOPHER BOOKER

BLOOMSBURY

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

The Periodic Table of Storytelling

Structure

C .04 — Conflict

Bas... plots

3as Ae 2.0 — Three Act Structure

Re 2.5 — The Reveal
Srs 2.7 — Serious Business
Anv 2.0 — Anvilicious
Phl 2.3 — Applied Phlebotinum

Cmx .03 — The Climax
Msq 1.1 — The Masquerade
Bti 5.1 — Beyond The Impossible
Tb .75 — Techno Babble

Den .05 — The Dénouement
Rcy 1.7 — Recycled IN SPACE
Cl2 1.5 — Crosses the Line Twice
Wav 2.4 — Hand Wave

End .06 — The End
X 1.2 — X Meets Y
Ria 2.1 — Refuge in Audacity
Dx 1.6 — Deus Ex Machina

Chk 2.4 — Chekhov's Gun
Aa .53 — Magic A Is Magic A
Dae 3.5 — Darker And Edgier
Ass 1.1 — Ass Pull

"Call to Adventure" primary subtropes:
Adventure Rebuff
Burning Building Rescue
The Call Has Bad Reception
The Call Knows Where You Live
The Call Left A Message
The Call Put Me On Hold
Call Reception Area
Desperately Looking For A Purpose In Life
Forgot The Call
Got The Call On Speed Dial
I'm Dying, Please Take My MacGuffin
Ignorant Of The Call
Jumped At The Call
Missed The Call
Red Pill Blue Pill
Refusal Of The Call
Refused By The Call
Regular Caller
Resigned To The Call
Screening The Call
Take Up My Sword
Two Roads Before You

Ae 2.0 — Identifier
An Aesop — Trope name
— Popularity in kilowicks (thousands of links to its page within the wiki)

Chart by ComputerSherpa
Special thanks to Elle, Micah, and the rest of the Tropers for inspiration
Thanks to Madrugada, Jack Alsworth, ~fourwillows,
and KirksOtherSon for corrections
Permalink for this chart: goo.gl/yvSM4

Character Modifiers
P .13 — Protagonist
A .01 — Antagonist

Metatropes
T .20 — Trope

Production
Can .87 — Canon
Sho 10 — Shout Out

Fandom & Audience Reactions
Fan 1.3 — Fanon
Sus .67 — Willing Suspension of Disbelief

Ls 12 — Lampshade Hanging
Tru 4.4 — Truth In Television
Tt 4.1 — Take That
Fri 5.8 — Fridge Logic

Heroes
Mcg 2.7 — MacGuffin
Ivc 1.4 — Sliding Scale of Idealism vs. Cynicism
Scw 3.8 — Mind Screw
Iac 2.1 — Sealed Evil In A Can
H 4.9 — The Hero
Kni 1.1 — Knight in Shining Armor
Bbw 1.7 — Badass Bookworm
Ib 1.9 — Idiot Ball
Wb 5.5 — Woobie

Archetypes
Mad 4.0 — Mad Scientist
Wes .90 — The Wesley
Scl .77 — Star-Crossed Lovers

Villains
Bad 13 — Big Bad
Etw 1.6 — Evil Twin
Rch 1.1 — Archenemy
Emp 1.9 — The Empire

Jt 4.2 — Justified Trope
Rur .74 — Reality Is Unrealistic
Res 3.9 — Did Not Do The Research
Et 1.9 — Epileptic Trees

Bks 1.5 — Backstory
Sq 1.2 — Status Quo Is God
Aws 2.1 — What Do You Mean, It's Not Awesome?
Aod 2.1 — Artifact of Doom
Ah 3.2 — Anti Hero
Neo 1.7 — The Chosen One
Tp .24 — Technical Pacifist
Fln 1.6 — Flanderization
Ccl 6.1 — Cloud Cuckoolander
Sue 1.7 — Mary Sue
Tsu 3.8 — Tsundere
St .68 — The Storyteller
Mgb 5.1 — Magnificent Bastard
Ewi .42 — Enemy Within
Dra 4.6 — The Dragon
Av 2.0 — Anti-Villain
Sv 3.2 — Subverted Trope
Lr .08 — Like Reality Unless Noted
Vam 1.1 — Viewers Are Morons
Dlp 1.5 — Draco in Leather Pants

Ret 2.6 — Retcon
Cal .29 — Call To Adventure
Bwb 4.1 — Fanservice
Xan 3.7 — Xanatos Gambit
Ih 1.4 — Idiot Hero
Ag 5.0 — Action Girl
Ace 1.1 — The Ace
Bda 7.9 — Badass
Ham 5.1 — Large Ham
Moo 3.9 — Mooks
Dbd .33 — The Dumbledore
Lei .16 — Rebel Leader
Mpb 2.9 — Manipulative Bastard
Law .32 — Amoral Attorney
Mol 1.9 — The Mole
Vp 1.8 — Villain Protagonist
Old 3.1 — Oldest Ones In The Book
Anp .07 — Anthropic Principle
Wob .49 — Writer On Board
Mem 6.8 — Memetic Mutation

Arc 1.1 — Story Arc
Rq .10 — Redemption Quest
Cry 7.4 — Tear Jerker
Bdh 2.9 — Big Damn Heroes
Sh .95 — Super Hero
Pg .95 — Plucky Girl
Cap .88 — The Captain
Bb 5.8 — Berserk Button
Rnd .06 — Rounded Character
Red 1.2 — Redshirts
Mus .83 — Dumb Muscle
Mal .33 — Rebellious Spirit
Chs 2.8 — The Chessmaster
Ob .80 — Obstructive Bureaucrat
Vir 1.2 — The Virus
4te 1.9 — For The Evulz
Roc 4.1 — Rule of Cool
Con .30 — Law of Conservation of Detail
Xm 3.0 — Executive Meddling
Wog 7.4 — Word of God

Rar .05 — Romance Arc
Hj .16 — The Hero's Journey
Ang 1.6 — Wangst
Pet 1.9 — Pet The Dog
Kh .77 — Kid Hero
Det 3.1 — Determinator
Gun .67 — The Gunslinger
Jhg 3.7 — Jerk With a Heart of Gold
Fla .34 — Flat Character
Mug .90 — Muggles
Gia 1.3 — Gentle Giant
Kz .27 — The Klutz
Mon 7.5 — Complete Monster
Ws .26 — Wicked Stepmother
Eld 5.6 — Eldritch Abomination
Lol 1.9 — Evil Laugh
Rof 3.1 — Rule of Funny
Lah .46 — Literary Agent Hypothesis
Rad 2.5 — Getting Crap Past The Radar
Mst .92 — MST3K Mantra

Tri 1.5 —
Stw .26 —
Jts .74 —
Kik 3.1 —
Gh .60 —
Gb 1.1 —
Ir .57 —
Ja 9.0 —
Dyn .04 —
Scr 2.8 —
Foo .44 —
Lrg .77 —
Om 1.7 —
Bru .85 —
1wa 1.9 —
Fai .51 —
Rod 3.1 —
Md .71 —
Dh .72 —
Sqi

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

- *Narrative* plays an important part in our lives

- *Narrative* acts as an **organising principle** that allows us to make sense of the world

- *Narrative* also has the potential to *shape and influence our behaviour* (take sides)

- *Narrative* allows people within media to shape and organise sometimes random and incoherent events into a **logical form that the audience can understand**

RECAP:
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)

TRAILERS:

TITLE	DIRECTOR	COUNTRY	YEAR
The Untouchables	Brian de Palma	USA	1987
Manhattan	Woody Allen	USA	1979
Memento	Christopher Nolan	USA	2000
Pulp Fiction	Quentin Tarantino	USA	1994
Babel	Alejandro G. Iñárritu	France/ USA/ Mexico	2006
Star Wars: The Force Awakens	J.J. Abrams	USA	2015
The Act Of Killing	Joshua Oppenheimer, Anonymous	UK/ Denmark/ Norway	2012