THEORY: VLADIMIR PROPP

H/N5 Media

VLADIMIR PROPP

➤ In the 1920s, **Vladimir Propp**, was a Russian critic. Whilst the studios were producing many films, Propp was essentially interested in the narrative of **folk tales**.

➤ He noticed that often many folk tales were similar in a variety areas. He identified a **theory** about characters and actions as **narrative functions**.

➤ According to Propp, characters have a **narrative function**; they provide a **structure** for the text.

A full description of the theory can be found: http://mediaknowall.com

THE TYPICAL CHARACTERS HE FOUND WERE:

The **Hero** – a character that seeks something

The **Villain** – who opposes or actively blocks the hero's quest

The **Donor** – who provides an object with magical properties

The **Dispatcher** – who sends the hero on his/her quest via a message

The **False Hero** – who disrupts the hero's success by making false claims

The **Helper** – who aids the hero

The **Princess** – acts as the reward for the hero and the object of the villain's plots

STAR WARS

STAR WARS

SO… WHO'S WHO?

Hero	**Luke Skywalker**
Villain	**Darth Vader**
Donor	**Donor**
Dispatcher	**Dispatcher**
Helper	**Helper**
Princess	**Princess**
False Hero	**Darth Vader**

CHARACTER TYPES

➤ One good reason for using **STAR WARS** *: Episode IV - A New Hope* (George Lucas, USA, 1977) to exemplify the theory is that Darth Vader fulfils **two** different roles. He is both the **villain** *and* the **false hero**.

➤ This is possible because the character types are used by the creator of the text to fulfil a specific role. And this role can *(and often does)* **change** according to the demands of the **narrative**.

TASK

➤ Take a film you know well and apply **Propp's** theory to it.

➤ Which **character** in the film fulfils which **role**… and do any of them change roles during the film?

➤ *You can carry this out in your jotters, but a more interesting way of doing it is by creating a **Keynote/Powerpoint** slideshow. There are plenty of them online if you wish to do a quick search, but please…* *No copying**!*