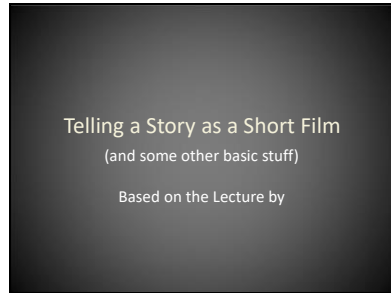
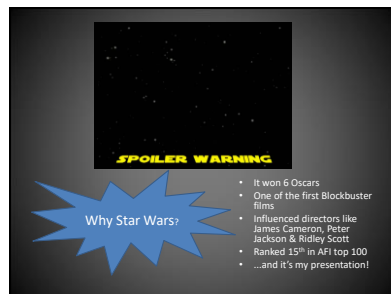


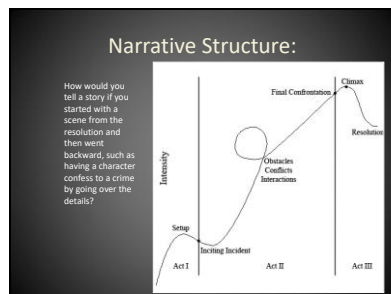
Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



- These plot points do not have to be in this order.
- Setup: How will you introduce us to your characters, film world, and story?
- Inciting incident: what event happens that forces your character to act by choosing a goal and committing to making it happen?
- Obstacles/conflicts/interactions – things that interfere and need to be overcome so the character can reach his/her goals.
- Final Confrontation: confrontation between two characters that has been building up.

- Climax: Highest point of audience interest where the plot reaches a crescendo (build-up).
- Resolution: ties up the loose ends in the story, such as who lives, who dies, who gets the girl, and who lives happily ever after.

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Classical Narrative Structure Overview

- Each script has a beginning, middle, and end (3 act structure)
- Story is told from the protagonist's POV
- Foundation of story is CONFLICT between protagonist and antagonist
- Conflict is resolved in the climax
- Protagonist is changed (or perhaps not, but this usually happens to stress a thematic)

One could argue that one of the main themes of MEMENTO is what the obsessive nature of revenge can do to a person. More on themes later...

Slide 5

About The 3 Act Structure:

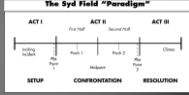
- We are used to the 3 Act Structure because it works really well
- Been around since Aristotle
- Used in most feature films we are familiar with.
- You don't have true 3-act structure unless you have a protagonist. The end of Act 1 occurs when the protagonist makes a commitment that leads to the main action of the movie: Acts 2 and 3.

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3 Act Structure Overview

(with help from Syd Field)


- Act 1: Set Up
 - Status quo/ protagonist's normal life
 - Inciting Incident
 - Plot Point 1
- Act 2: Rising Conflict
 - Pinch 1
 - Midpoint
 - Pinch 2
 - Plot Point 2
- Act 3: Conflict and Resolution
 - Showdown
 - Resolution
 - Denouement



Plot Point: occurs twice, once to finish act 1 and start act 2 and the second finishes act 2 and starts act 3. Plot point one is where the main character accepts the mission/quest. Plot point 2 gets us to the climax – things look bad, but there is a glimmer of home.

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3 Act Structure in Star Wars



Star Wars: A New Hope Timeline

Act	Start	End	Key Events
Act 1	00:00	01:00	Opening crawl, Luke Skywalker's introduction, the droids arrive, the message from R2-D2, the flight to Tatooine.
Act 2	01:00	02:00	The flight to Tatooine, the arrival at the Lars homestead, the discovery of the message, the flight to the Death Star.
Act 3	02:00	03:00	The flight to the Death Star, the attack on the Death Star, the escape from the planet.

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Act 1

Status quo: Early series of scenes that set up what the normal world is like for protagonist.

Inciting Incident: This is the point in the story when the Protagonist encounters the problem that will change their life. Protagonist must make a choice.

Plot Point 1: The last scene in Act 1, it is a surprising development that radically changes the Protagonist's life, and forces him to confront the Opponent. Protagonist accepts the challenge.

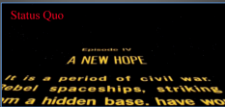
Status quo: the opening scrawl sets up the state of the universe, following scenes set up Luke is a bored farmboy

Inciting incident: Luke finds message in R2, R2 runs off. Luke DECIDES to find him.

Plot Point 1: Luke discovers that his aunt and uncle have been murdered by the Empire, and has no life or future left at home, and decides to join Ben and fight the Empire.

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Act 1: Star Wars – A New Hope



Status Quo: the opening crawl sets up the state of the universe, following scenes set up Luke as a bored farm boy

Inciting Incident: Luke finds message in R2, R2 runs off; Luke DECIDES to find him.

Plot Point 1: Luke discovers that his aunt and uncle have been murdered by the Empire, and has no life or future left at home, and decides to join Ben and fight the Empire.

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Act 2:

Pinch 1: A small conflict early on in Act 2 that reminds audience of the overall conflict.

Midpoint: A reversal of fortune or revelation that changes direction of story slightly. Keeps Act 2 from getting boring.

Pinch 2: Same as Pinch 1, but later.

Plot Point 2: A dramatic reversal that ends Act 2. Plot Point 2 is either the moment when the Hero has had enough and is finally going to face the Opponent, or the low-point for the Hero, and he must bounce back to overcome the odds.

Pinch 1: attack on Millenium Falcon on Mos Eisley reminds us that the Empire is bad, and that they are looking for the stolen plans


Midpoint: Hey, turns out Alderaan is destroyed, and that small moon is actually a giant space station. Oh, but it turns out that Princess Leia is on it, let's go rescue her.

Pinch 2: storm trooper attack in jail cel reminds us that the Empire is always a few steps behind the good guys.

Plot Point 2: example of first situation is when the Connors and Terminator decide to take on Skynet instead of running; example of situation 2 is when Ben is killed, and Luke is totally depressed, needing to bounce back in Act 3.

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Act 2: Star Wars – A New Hope



A. Pinch 1: attack on Millenium Falcon on Mos Eisley reminds us that the Empire is bad, and that they are looking for the stolen plans

C. Pinch 2: storm trooper attack in jail cell reminds us that the Empire is always a few steps behind the good guys.

B. Midpoint: Alderaan is destroyed, and that small moon is actually a giant space station. It turns out that Princess Leia is on it, let's go rescue her.

D. Plot Point 2: Ben is killed, and Luke is totally depressed, needing to bounce back in Act 3.

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Act 3:

Showdown/Climax: Midway through Act 3, the Protagonist will confront Antagonist and either overcome it, or come to a tragic end.


Resolution: The issues of the story are resolved.

Denouement: A French word meaning "the unknotting." An epilogue, or further scenes to take care of loose ends, to give closure.

Showdown: Attack on Death Star
Resolution: Death Star is destroyed, Rebels celebrate
Denouement: Star Wars didn't really have one, as third acts were shorter back then. Think Dark Knight's monologue by Gordon.

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Act 3: Star Wars – A New Hope



Climax: Attack on Death Star

Resolution: Death Star is destroyed, Rebels celebrate

Denouement: Star Wars didn't really have one, as third acts were shorter back then. Think Dark Knight's monologue by Gordon.

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3 Act Structure: Short Film

- Due to structure of timing, shorts do not always fit into this 3 Act structure (but they still can)
- Shorts can bend the rules of narrative structure because they are under less stress to keep the action moving.
- Shorts are very effective when they show us a slice of life (or a small section within the larger 3 Act structure)
- The best short films are often a small moment that is played out, but one that has a story at its heart

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Protagonist

- The character in the story that goes through the **most change** (character arc)
- Spider-man, Luke Skywalker, Juno
- Not always a “good-guy” (Daniel Plainview, *There Will Be Blood*)



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Protagonist

- Protagonist has a definable goal or want
- A choice at every juncture: will this get him/her closer to goal?
- Every choice/action has risk of failure
- Unexpected results: the GAP opens
- Character struggles to close the gap and attain the goal.

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Protagonist's Goal

- The protagonist can often be defined by his/her goal
- This goal may come true in Act 3



Luke's Goal:
Luke Skywalker is a farm boy who dreams of being a Fighter Pilot.

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Protagonist: Combine Traits

A simple way of creating a character may include combining traits of other characters. That way, you can easily explain to your actors who the character is.




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Your Turn!

Your Protagonist:

- You need to get your audience to identify and care about your characters. Great characters are original. Everyone relates to them, but they come in forms we have never seen before.



On the scrap piece of paper create a character of your own. Who is this person? What might be this character's goal or dream?


- Your film becomes a vicarious emotional experience for the audience members. They feel what the characters feel. They see their own lives and struggles on the screen and look for answers on how to live better.
- “That which does not kill me makes me stronger.” Serves as a good lesson for piling up the obstacles between your characters and their goals in your story.
- Short films are often about fast changes in characters. People like to see characters transform before their eyes after going through intense life-altering situations.

- Short films tend to have big emotional switches and few locations, which means that you really have to work the character angle. Some characters do not change, but cause the audience to undergo a change by watching what the characters experience onscreen. When characters do not change and fail to meet their goals, it is called a tragedy.

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Antagonist

- Character or force that opposes/challenges the protagonist
- Spider-man: Green Goblin or Dr. Octopus
- Luke: The Empire, Darth Vader, The Darkside
- Juno: Herself (expressed through other characters; dad, Bleeker, etc)
- Doesn't have to be a person: The Darkside, tornados, global warming, meteors, etc.)



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Antagonist Formula



Anti-Plot + Anti-Theme = Antagonist




- Often the antagonist does not believe that they are bad – they rationalize their behaviour.
- Hannibal Lector in Silence of the Lambs does not see himself as a monster.

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Antagonist

- Who or what could be standing in the way of your character accomplishing his/her goal?
- Does not need to be a evil or bad character.

Think about your favourite villains. What qualities do they possess and what do they stand for?



- Antagonist could be a tornado, organization, or even the protagonist herself (her own worst enemy).
- Antagonists don't have separate theme goals – they represent the anti-theme. Eg: if your theme is that greed destroys then the antagonist is the greediest person in the film.

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Your Turn!

Antagonist

- Create a villain!

On a sheet of paper, create a villain for a story.



- Antagonist could be a tornado, organization, or even the protagonist herself (her own worst enemy).
- Antagonists don't have separate theme goals – they represent the anti-theme. Eg: if your theme is that greed destroys then the antagonist is the greediest person in the film.

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Plot

Plot is a series of events that happen in a story unfolding in a linear fashion. Narrative films feature life with all the boring parts cut out, presented in a three-act structure.


Three-Act structure	Concepts Covered	Short Films	Feature Films
Act One	Beginning/establishment	1/6	1/4
Act Two	Middle/Development	2/3	1/2
Act Three	End/Resolution	1/6	1/4

- In short films, acts one and three each tend to take up about 1/6 of the total screen time, with act two comprising 2/3. Quick setups and fast resolutions work better when you have less time to tell a story.

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Plot Goals

The plot goal is often the desired outcome of the protagonist. The plot goal may come true (narrative) or not (tragedy).



What is your life plot goal?


- Longer films may have several plot goals; your film shorts will most likely only contain one.
- Be specific: “to not get caught” is too vague; try “to not get caught from sneaking into the aquarium.”

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• To slay a monster	• To get rich
• To win the race	• To advance spirituality
• To rule the world	• To become famous
• To stop a bomb	• To become successful
• To defeat the enemy	• To blackmail someone
• To win political office	• To get someone to do something
• To become king/queen	• To trick someone
• To get revenge	• To find meaning in life
• To save the world/land	• To solve a murder
• To cure disease	• To catch a killer
• To stop a natural disaster	• To solve/fix a problem
• To fall in love	• To understand something
• To get the girl/guy	• To learn a new skill
• To solve a crime	• To become a top warrior
• To solve a mystery	• To become a leader
• To win a war	• To fight for a just cause
• To stop a war	• To do what is right

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Your Turn!



Record one possible plot goal for a main character to try and achieve.

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Film Setting

Factors to consider:

- Access & Availability
- Control
- Lighting
- Sound
- Mood
- Safety



Eg: Setting/World
Big foot forest. Massive trees, dark canopy.
Boiler room of school


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Our School?



Slide 30

Your Turn!

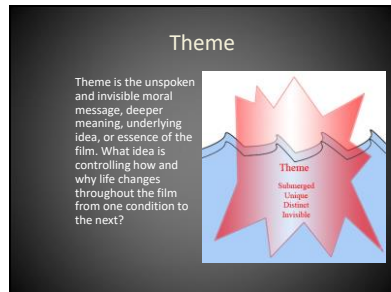


What locations do you have access to film? Anything that would be really interesting? Put one on the scrap piece of paper.

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Slide 32



- Some common themes are love conquers all, good triumphs over evil, greed destroys, loyalty, balancing compromise, redemption, the downside of runaway ambition or finding the meaning of life.
- Theme is what makes the movie memorable, and without it you will craft a soulless film that people forget right after they see it.
- Many Hollywood “summer” action movies have the theme of “let’s make money” and are ultra light on theme.
- Themes typically develop during the writing process (first draft).

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THEME

- Juno: finding your place in the world
- Batman Begins: what fear can drive men to do
- Lord of the Rings: even an ordinary person can do the extraordinary
- Up: If we let go of the past, we can find satisfaction in the present
- There Will Be Blood: The loneliness of godhood

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Other Feature Film Themes

Alien 2	The strength of motherhood
American Beauty	Desire leads to suffering
The Blair Witch Project	Arrogance of youth lacking respect for themselves, surroundings, and subject
Fargo	Treasure the little things in life.
Finding Nemo	Don't give up; "Just keep swimming"
Lord of the Rings	Even the smallest person can change the world. Pure heart needed to wield great power
The Matrix Reloaded	Choice versus Destiny
Pulp fiction	Seeking out redemption in the underworld with emphasis on loyalty
Shrek	Seeing inner beauty. When you can love someone else, you can love yourself
Terminator	Humans being destroyed by their own machines

- The Matrix: rise of a superman against the system of the future.
- Star Wars: A hero coming of age; taking on lost father's path.
- Toy Story: being the favorite toy.
- The Usual Suspects: Construction and reconstruction of memory and identity.
- Wizard of Oz: The importance of home and family.

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THEME


- Can't stress enough the importance of theme in shorts!!!
- It will guide all other decisions being made
- It's the Controlling Idea behind the film
- What it's **ABOUT**
- Provides unity of time, place, action
- Influences narrative structure & climax
- Imparts meaning and depth to script
- Induces emotional response to characters and images

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Apply Theme

What's important to you? What nuggets of wisdom do you have to share with the world? Themes grow out of who you are and how you believe life works.

What possible themes come out of the plot goals?




Slide 37

Your Turn!

On the same piece of paper you put your plot goal on, write down a theme that could be explored.

- What kind of themes would you like to explore?



- Your film becomes a vicarious emotional experience for the audience members. They feel what the characters feel. They see their own lives and struggles on the screen and look for answers on how to live better.
- “That which does not kill me makes me stronger.” Serves as a good lesson for piling up the obstacles between your characters and their goals in your story.
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Important Point!
Theme in Short Film

- Of course features explore theme as much as shorts do
- But with shorts, it can have more impact as there is less story "in the way".
- Less story affords the ability to explore themes in different and challenging ways.

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The More You Know...

- Now that you know the classic structures of feature-length story telling, you can make informed decisions about what elements to include, and which to omit.
- There is no right or wrong. Not all features follow these rules either.

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The More You Know...

- Short films aren't an excuse to break all the rules but they are an opportunity to push the boundaries of what cinematic storytelling can do.
- It's worth thinking about:
 - the simplicity, clarity and economy of the storytelling
 - The vision of the piece, and its visual images
 - Making every element pertinent
 - Making your story coherent.

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Being Economical with Time


- Film is a visual medium, so what can you show us about the world and its characters without telling us?
- Shorts don't need as much exposition (slice of life): So rely on your audience's suspension of disbelief to accept the world and its logic
- Less is more: less allows your audience to engage with the piece, and do the *work*

WORK: fill in the gaps, use their imaginations to fill in the backstories, etc

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The most important thing:

The first and primary goal of a filmmaker is to evoke a series of strong emotional responses from the audience throughout the entire story.



You engage the audience when you tell the truth emotionally based on your own experiences and original insights about life in your film. What were the emotional impacts of your favorite films?

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[Hotel Chevalier \(PG\)](#)

- I personally love the visual style
- Every element is carefully chosen and deliberate
- It challenges narrative structure by being a slice of life within a 3 Act structure (quite literally too: Darjeeling Limited)
- Short moment played out, with story and emotion at the heart.
- Very simple and very economic with dialogue and exposition
- Engages audience to do the work

