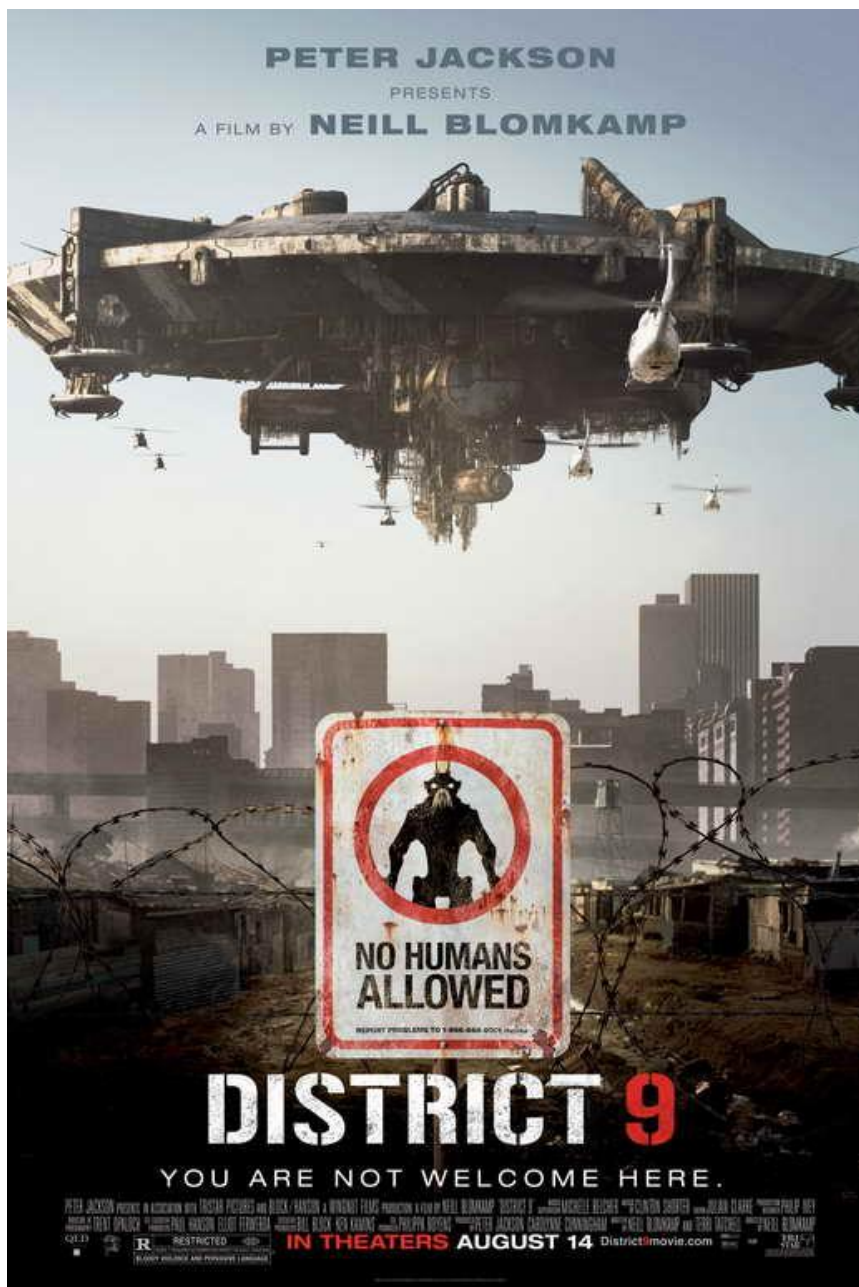


DISTRICT 9 (2009)

Dir. Neil Blomkamp

Eduqas GCSE Film Studies
Component 2, Section A: Global English language films (produced outside US)
Question 1 focus: Narrative - structural element of film form



DISTRICT 9: RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

DISTRICT 9 is a hugely enjoyable sci-fi film directed by Neil Blomkamp and released in 2009. Whilst it is primarily a sci-fi film, it's a unique film in that there are clear elements from the action genre, horror genre as well as comedic moments throughout. Its formal style also owes a lot to the *found footage* style of filmmaking in its use of fictional interviews that book-end the film. In this regard, it is a rich text, full of interesting creative choices.

Written by Blomkamp alongside his wife Terri Tatchell, the film is a co-production of South Africa, New Zealand and the United States as it was produced by Peter Jackson (director of, amongst others, the LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy) and distributed by TriStar Pictures.

The film is adapted from Blomkamp's 2006 short film ALIVE IN JOBURG and was developed after he and Peter Jackson worked together on a feature-length adaptation of the HALO series of video games. Having spent years working in advertising and developing a significant reputation as a special effects artist of some repute, Blomkamp produced ALIVE IN JOBURG in 2006. After funding for his HALO film was pulled by 20th Century Fox, he was hired by Peter Jackson to make a full-length film that expanded on the themes in the short film. As a result, DISTRICT 9 was made for a reported \$30million and eventually made \$210.8million at the box office. Perhaps more impressively, especially for a debut film, it garnered Academy Award nominations for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Visual Effects and Best Film Editing.

Partially presented in a found footage format using fictional interviews, news footage and surveillance footage, the story begins in 1982 when an alien spaceship appears over Johannesburg, South Africa. Aboard the ship are sick and malnourished aliens that the South African Government confine to an internment camp called District 9. Years later one of the aliens, given the human name of Christopher Johnson, attempts to escape and return home. As he does, he meets a Government employee called Wikus van der Mewe who is attempting to move the aliens to a new camp.

Inspired by events in District Six, Cape Town during apartheid, the film explores themes of humanity, xenophobia and social segregation. It is strongly influenced by historical events during apartheid era in South Africa, especially the area known as District Six which was declared "whites only" by the Government in 1966 and 60,000 people were forcibly removed to Cape Flats, 15 miles away. Of course, the treatment of the aliens, referred to using the pejorative term '*prawn*', is also deeply allegorical for the treatment of any number of minority groups across the world. Many have drawn comparisons with the treatment of asylum seekers and how governments and the media portray groups of people seeking help. It also offers a scathing depiction of multinational companies and their exploitation of people to enable them to make a profit.

So why study DISTRICT 9? Fundamentally, the film is an enjoyable and at times innovative film. It's use of CGI is truly excellent and helps to create a film that is enjoyably *escapist*. The interesting production details and the varied context make for a film that is rich in background information and in its use of allegory, provide a unique perspective on a range of important political, historical and social issues of context. As a result, the focus of narrative for this Component is one that works well for this film and allow for a wide-range of interpretations and explorations of how the construction of the film works.

DISTRICT 9 (Neil Blomkamp 2009)
Knowledge Organiser

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Institutional information | |
| Director: | Neil Blomkamp |
| Release: | 2009 (UK) |
| Production company: | Wingnut Films, TriStar, Sony Pictures |
| Country of production: | South Africa, US |
| Starring: | Shalho Copley, Jason Cope, Nathalie Boltt, David James, Louis Minnaar, |
| Genres: | Sci-fi; comedy; action; horror. |
| Other information: | Produced by Peter Jackson; written by Neil Blomkamp with his wife Terri Tatchell; feature-film directing debut; adapted from 2006 short film called ALIVE IN JO'BURG. |
| Award nominations: | BAFTA nominated; outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer |

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| Links to technology timeline: | |
| Soundtrack | Featuring a Dolby Digital soundtrack which features dialogue, a score and makes wide use of digital sound production. |
| Colour | Mostly in colour but some black & white to imitate style of cheap CCTV footage. |
| Widescreen, not 3D | Shot and presented in 1.85:1 widescreen aspect ratio. |
| CGI: | Used to create new objects & characters as well as used to enhance action. |
| Steadicam: | Steadicam is used in many action scenes but also NOT used at times to create found-footage style. |

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| Narrative Theorists | |
| Aristotle: | Greek philosopher. 3 Act structure; beginning, middle and end. Later developed to be a 5 Act structure. Can be applied to many films including D9. |
| Tzvetan Todorov: | French-Bulgarian critic. Suggested that the narrative of all films go through 5 main stages: Equilibrium, Disruption, Recognition/Quest, Repair & New equilibrium. |
| Vladimir Propp: | Russian scholar. Analysed the basic plot components of Russian Folk tales to identify the most 'repeatable' narrative elements. Identified 31 functions of narrative and 7 typical characters. |
| Claude Levi-Strauss | French anthropologist who proposed a theory of 'binary opposites' which suggested that the majority of narratives in media forms such as books and film contain opposing main characters. These binary opposites help to thicken the plot and further the narrative; and introduce contrast. |

| | |
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| Characters | |
| Wikus van der Mewe: | Protagonist: Wikus is the first character we see on screen & is the character who we experience the narrative with. He is a sympathetic if somewhat selfish character to begin with. As the film progresses he transforms from human to alien and in doing so, becomes less selfish and more empathetic as a character. |
| Christopher Johnson: | Protagonist: aka CJ, is the alien character who acts as both a sidekick, a mentor & a scientist. Wikus knocking on his door is the inciting incident for CJ as he is bought into the main narrative and therefore, his goal of trying to get the aliens home becomes a key story which intertwines with Wikus' started goals of becoming human with both seeking the same black liquid. |
| Piet Smith: | Antagonist: Piet is Wikus' father-in-law and the head of MNU. At the start of the film he is introduced as a person of power and promotes Wikus, seemingly out of nepotism. However, Piet soon begins to see Wikus as a commodity and is quite serene when he condemns Wikus to death, lying to his daughter as he does. All of the negative aspects of Wikus' existence after the initial liquid accident are as direct result of Piet's decisions. |
| Koobus: | Antagonist: The most obvious example of a protagonist is Koobus. As the leader of the MNU 'military force', his character is firmly established when we first meet him when he aggressively talks to Wikus and then pushes the cameraman filming the events for MNU. |
| Obesandjo: | Antagonist: His story and Wikus' crosses when Wikus goes to him seeking to buy weapons established earlier in the narrative. He is the character who wants to transform in the way that Wikus does and who has the power to capture Wikus when he escapes. In this way, he is also an antagonist seeking to capture Wikus. |
| Sarah Livingston: | Narrator: One of the talking heads in the film who provide backstory to the aliens' arrival, MNU and other details. Her monologues to camera help provide important detail and shape to the overall narrative. |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Narrative | |
| Narrative structures: | Linear narrative, 3 and 5 act structure ; |
| Narrative viewpoint: | We align with Wikus helping to provide a restricted viewpoint. Some of the other characters such as Sarah have an omniscient viewpoint however. |
| Ellipsis: | Used to show 72 hours in just 2 via techniques such as montage; editing transitions like fade to black are also used. |
| Binary oppositions: | Create conflict. Key oppositions are aliens vs. humans, Wikus vs. Piet and young particular minorities being oppressed by the white people in power. |
| Exposition: | Taking heads; improvised dialogue; dialogue; news footage. |
| Foreshadowing/ Chekov's Gun: | Key moments involving props like alien weaponry and locations such as the Nigerian gang's 'shop' is set up early on. |
| Framing device: | The talking heads & found footage create an omniscient viewpoint. |
| Withholding & releasing | Used for tension, Wikus' fate is suggested but never revealed until late on. Similarly, the 'power' of the black liquid is not revealed until later on in the film. |
| Cause and effect: | Many moments in the opening 20 minutes of the film establish key plot points and moments that will have an effect later. For example, key characters involved in moments that cause changes to them & others. |

DISTRICT 9: KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

DISTRICT 9: KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

| Key scenes | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>The Opening 3/10 mins: http://bit.ly/D9clip1 (N.B: The opening 10 mins cannot be hosted on YT. Please use own copy of the film in regards to the first 10 minutes)</p> | <p>Film opens with a 'talking head' style interview with Wikus, our protagonist. He introduces himself and MNU briefly via a brief monologue that provides exposition in a montage style using ellipsis in the editing. We then have a voice over of Grey Bradnam who provides further exposition as we see images from Johannesburg before we see Grey on screen again as a talking head. We then have 'found footage' as a flashback of the time the humans met the aliens. Another talking head from Sarah Livingstone helps to provide further exposition before we see more archive footage that helps to establish the first act.</p> | <p>The rising action of this scene is still part of the first act as we learn how Wikus and MNU go about their jobs and how the aliens are treated. We also see what District 9 itself is like. This is presented in a montage style as we see key 'moments' from the morning in a variety of perspectives. We also discover key exposition about cat food and the aliens via the talking heads and voice overs. At this point, there is little being withheld in the narrative but plenty being established for cause and effect. Some of Wikus' dialogue is likely to have been improvised here.</p> |
| <p>The final scene http://bit.ly/D9clip3</p> | <p>The first evictions: http://bit.ly/D9clip2 (N.B: I'd recommend watching a slightly longer version of this clip if possible - ideally from approximately 00:10:17-00:15:12)</p> | <p>This scene is the 3rd act of the 5th act depending on your narrative structure of choice. Either way, this denouement presents the finale to the main story of the film highlighting how it is a linear narrative structure. Throughout this scene, intercutting is used to show the different perspectives of the alien ship leaving and we get the framing device of the talking heads again explaining the possible fate of Wikus. On screen text provides further details and the omniscient viewpoint is shown through the use of many very high angle shots of the city and the population. The end of the scene provides a new equilibrium as we discover that Wikus has become an alien and has left a metal flower for his wife Tania.</p> |
| <p>Wikus and CJ break into MNU http://bit.ly/D9clip4</p> | <p>Wikus sacrifices himself http://bit.ly/D9clip5</p> | <p>As with many other scenes, this features plenty of 'steadicam' movements to provide an intimate, 'found footage'/'documentary' style to the scene. It is also intercut with plenty of static images from a high angle in black and white that use the stereotypical visual cues of a CCTV camera. The scene is certainly part of the middle of the film and would fit into either the 2nd Act if you were to apply the 3 Act structure, or the 2nd and perhaps the 3rd act if applying the 5 Act structure. We see a key plot point established using cause and effect; CJ notices the tortured aliens and therefore eventually decides that he has to leave Earth asap.</p> <p>We see a transformation in Wikus's character here as he ultimately decides to sacrifice himself for CJ. In a 5 Act structure you may refer to this as Wikus's narrative as a human reach a Climax. In the film overall, it is closer to fitting into a 4th Act; falling action.</p> |

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| <p>Context:</p> | <p>Society structured in terms of class & privilege with the white men at MNU being the most 'power', whilst the refugee aliens having the least autonomy.</p> |
| <p>Social</p> | <p>Political decisions drive the narrative; those in power such as the Government, MNU & even Obesandjo seek to oppress & further their own causes by exploiting those who have no power.</p> |
| <p>Political:</p> | <p>The film establishes a world where the aliens are seen as outsiders & scavengers; they are segregated and demonised. The aliens idea of fun; de-railing trains, starting fires & eating rubber, are all seen as savage in the same way that the Nigerian gangs once were.</p> |
| <p>Cultural:</p> | <p>Film is allegorical & metaphorical examination of apartheid. 'White' & 'black' segregation and discrimination is broadly replaced with humans & 'prawns'.</p> |
| <p>Historical:</p> | <p>Blomkamp was originally due to make a film adapting the Halo video game series, but instead was hired by Jackson to create a feature-length version of ALIVE IN JO'BURG. DISTRICT 9 was made for \$30m.</p> |
| <p>Institutional:</p> | <p>CGI used throughout the film however, many practical effects were also used in creating props such as alien weaponry.</p> |
| <p>Technological:</p> | <p>Seen all the way through the film, conflict is key in driving the narrative.</p> |
| <p>Themes/issues:</p> | <p>Whilst the aliens are the most obvious example of 'invasion', this can also be seen via MNU 'invading' DISTRICT 9 and anyone 'invading' the Nigerian's shop.</p> |
| <p>Conflict:</p> | <p>MNU are seen as bullies and bureaucrats who have no empathy for others. Wikus starts off as having authority and as a result, no empathy, but as he becomes less human his humanity for others increases. Authority is also seen in social class, as everyone who has more power or privilege, believes they have authority over someone they deem to be below them, for example, black South African's have authority over the alien refugees.</p> |
| <p>Invasion:</p> | <p>Segregation features heavily throughout the film as a narrative device to create conflict when one group enters an area designated for another group or when a group are forced into a specific area. Segregation is also used in the film as a metaphor to reflect real-life segregation in apartheid.</p> |
| <p>Authority:</p> | <p>Xenophobia is the fear and distrust of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Often explained as the dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries, this would also apply to the distrust and dislike people have of the aliens. Of course, this is also something which is a metaphor for the xenophobic actions taken by the Government during apartheid.</p> |
| <p>Segregation:</p> | <p>MNU stands for Multi-National United. The film establishes them as a company who are going to move the aliens into District 10 but we later learn that they are also the world's second largest weapons manufacturer. This creates a conflict of interests in that what they are really seeking is a way to use the alien technology, rather than 'helping' the aliens. They are symbolic and representative of real-life 'big-business' companies who carry out work on behalf of Governments around the world, but often simply to make money, rather than help people.</p> |
| <p>Xenophobia:</p> | |
| <p>Big-business:</p> | |

AREAS OF ASSESSMENT FOR DISTRICT 9

DISTRICT 9 is part of Component 2, Section A: Global English language films produced outside US. The specific focus of this film is on how the narrative of the film, the structure of the film and how the narrative of the film is constructed. You will also need to be able to recognise the role of the screenplay in establishing the main features of DISTRICT 9 in terms of the list below. One way of tackling this guide could be to tick these off as you complete the work for each.

- the distinction between plot and story
- the role of the screenplay in conveying plot and its realisation in visual terms
- cause and effect as a structural principle of narrative
- narrative techniques including ellipsis and withholding/releasing
- narrative conventions in screenwriting including three act structure, plot points, etc.
- inciting incident and climax
- an interpretation of the narrative
- the role of character and character function in narrative
- how all of the above bullet points contribute to narrative development
- the themes and issues raised by narrative
- how narrative generates spectator responses.

You will explore these ideas through the use of film language

Comp

Cinematography, including lighting

- camera shots, including extreme close-ups, close-ups, medium shots, long shots, extreme long shots, high, low and 60° angle shots (off-centre shots), tilt and aerial shots
- camera movement, including pan, tracking, dolly and the use of Steadicam technology
- Lighting, including position and intensity
- framing created through distance, angle, level and mobility and how it directs spectator attention
- the typical meanings associated with all of the above aspects of cinematography including lighting
- how each of the above contributes to the portrayal of characters and settings
- how cinematography can combine with mise-en-scène or sound to underline meaning
- how each of the above generates spectator responses

Mise-en-scène

- settings, props, costume and make-up
- the typical meanings associated with each of the above aspects of mise-en-scène
- how mise-en-scène conventionally conveys realism
- how settings contribute to the themes and issues a film raises
- how props contribute to character and/or narrative development in the films studied
- how costume and make-up convey character
- how each of the above aspects of mise-en-scène generates spectator responses

Editing

- types of edit (cut, dissolve, fade)
- the principles of continuity editing (shot-reverse shot)
- cross-cutting
- pace of editing
- visual effects (created in post-production)
- the typical meanings associated with all of the above aspects of editing
- how continuity editing establishes relationships between characters
- how cross-cutting contributes to the portrayal of character
- how editing contributes to narrative development in the films studied
- how editing, including visual effects, generates spectator responses

Sound

- diegetic and non-diegetic sound, including ambient sound, sound effects and sound bridges
- the typical meanings associated with diegetic sound including how it contributes to character and narrative development
- the typical meanings associated with non-diegetic sound including how music motifs convey character and different types of music contribute to the narrative
- how non-diegetic sound in particular contributes to the themes and issues a film raises
- how sound, particularly music, whether diegetic or non-diegetic, generates spectator responses in the films studied.

DISTRICT 9 - CONTEXT

Context is the the social, political, institutional and historical background details of the film.

For DISTRICT 9 you'll need to know details of each of these. As a reminder, the context above can be defined as:

Social: aspects of society and its structure reflected in the film;

Cultural: aspects of culture – ways of living, beliefs and values of groups of people – reflected in the film;

Political: the way political issues, when relevant to the film chosen, are reflected in a film;

Institutional: how films are funded, how the level of production budget affects the kind of film made and the main stages of film production;

Historical: aspects of the society and culture at the time when films are made and, where relevant, when they are set and

Technological: the technologies reflected in a film's production and, in some cases, in its narrative.

The key areas of context you need to be able to recall and apply to this film are listed on your Knowledge Organiser on previous pages.

PAIRED TASK

Over the next few pages you will find a series of anecdotes that each relate to a different aspect of context for the film. Working in pairs:

- Read each anecdote.
- Work out which of the 6 different categories of context it falls into.
- Write each anecdote into the correct section boxes on the pages below.
- If you're short of time, simply write the number of each anecdote into the correct section box instead.
- Some anecdotes may apply to more than one type of context. Choose the section you think suits it best. Aim to write at least one anecdote per category but try to add as many as possible.
- Finally, feel free to add any extra anecdotes or information you may have found elsewhere (such as page 2 of this guide) to the relevant boxes.

CONTEXT

1. The film was shot on location in Chiawelo, Soweto during a time of violent unrest in South African townships involving clashes between native South Africans and Africans born in other countries.
2. Sophiatown is a suburb of Johannesburg in South Africa. It was famous for the government trying to violently remove the black people from this area as part of apartheid.
3. Sophiatown was an important centre of jazz and blues in the 1940s and 50s and produced some of South Africa's most famous writers, musicians and artists.
4. The Sophiatown suburb became overpopulated with many people being forced to live in their gardens or build small houses out of metal sheets as 60,000 people lived there in a relatively small space.
5. By 1955, there was a significant opposition to Sophiatown from local white-only areas were close to the township. As a result, on the 9th February 1955 2,000 policemen came with guns and destroyed Sophiatown, removing 60,000 people from the suburb in the process.
6. The 60,000 residents of Sophiatown were moved to Meadowlands, Soweto where the houses had no water or electricity.
7. The film shares a narrative with early sci-fi/horror films that have very simplistic narratives in which humans fight an alien or 'other'.
8. Gory films such as *THE THING* (1982) and *THE FLY* (1986) are often known as 'body horror' films for their emphasis on human's being physically mutated or harmed due to an outside influence.
9. Throughout the film, as protagonist Wikus transforms, he becomes more heroic and by contrast the other humans become more inhumane.
10. The design of the aliens in the film is meant to alienate them from us as humans. This is designed so that as humans we may find it difficult to initially empathise with them, given that they look different to us.
11. The treatment of the aliens is an obvious metaphor for the South African apartheid system that functioned between 1948 and 1991.
12. Apartheid was racial segregation and discrimination that treated black Africans as a lower class and prevented them from mixing with white South Africans socially or publicly. It also prevented black people from accessing housing, employment or educational opportunities.
13. Between 1960 and 1983 over 3.5 million non-white South Africans were forced to leave their homes and were 'resettled' in segregated neighbourhoods where poverty and crime were rife.
14. The name District 9 is also a reference to an area called District 6 near Cape Town that was also the scene of a mass 'resettlement' in the 1960s.

15. One of the main languages of areas such as District 6 was Xhosa, which incorporates many vocal 'clicks', similar to the aliens in the film.
16. Filming for DISTRICT 9 took place during the winter in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to director Neill Blomkamp, during the winter season, Johannesburg "actually looks like Chernobyl" and a "nuclear apocalyptic wasteland".
17. The film took a total of 60 days of shooting.
18. Due to rain during shooting, there was a lot of greenery which Blomkamp did not want and so had to cut some of the vegetation in the scenery to portray the setting as desolate and dark.
19. Blomkamp said no single film influenced DISTRICT 9, but cited the 1980s "hardcore sci-fi/action" films such as ALIEN, ALIENS, THE TERMINATOR, TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY, PREDATOR and ROBOCOP as subconscious influences.
20. Sony Pictures launched a "Humans Only" marketing campaign to promote DISTRICT 9. Sony's marketing team designed its promotional material to emulate the segregational billboards that appear throughout the film.
21. The 'Humans Only' signs used to promote the film are also a reference to the 'Whites Only' signs from the apartheid era.
22. Promotional material was also presented at the 2008 San Diego Comic-Con, advertising the website d-9.com, which had an application presented by the fictional Multi-National United (MNU).
23. The promotional website for the film had a local alert system for Johannesburg, news feeds, behaviour recommendations, and rules and regulations.
24. Other viral websites for the film were also launched, including an MNU website with a countdown timer for the film's release, an anti-MNU blog run by fictional alien character Christopher Johnson and an MNU-sponsored educational website.
25. The film is a co-production of South Africa, New Zealand and the United States as it was shot in South Africa, produced by Peter Jackson (director of, amongst others, the LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy) and distributed by American company TriStar Pictures.
26. The film was shot in a 1.85:1 Widescreen aspect ratio with a multi-channel surround sound Dolby Digital mix.
27. Because of the amount of hand-held shooting required for the film, the producers and crew decided to shoot using the digital Red One 4K camera. Filming was completed using nine digital Red Ones owned by Peter Jackson.
28. The aliens in *District 9* were designed by Weta Workshop, who came to worldwide prominence with director Peter Jackson's film trilogy THE LORD OF THE RINGS, producing sets, costumes, armour, weapons, creatures and miniatures.
29. DISTRICT 9 was made for a reported \$30million and eventually made \$210.8million at the box office.

30. It was nominated for the Academy Award of Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Visual Effects and Best Film Editing.

CONTEXT

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Historical context | Institutional context |
| Technological context | Cultural context |
| Social context | Political context |
| Historical context | Institutional context |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Social context | Political context |
| Historical context | Institutional context |
| Technological context | Cultural context |
| Social context | Political context |

CONTEXT QUESTIONS

PAIRED TASK

What is social context?

What is historical context?

What is cultural context?

What is institutional context?

What is political context?

What is technological context?

Give at least 1 example of social context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example cultural context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example institutional context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example of political context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example of technological context involving DISTRICT 9, related to the film history timeline.

Give at least 1 example of social context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example of historical context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example cultural context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example of institutional context involving DISTRICT 9.

Give at least 1 example of political context involving DISTRICT 9, related to the film history timeline.

Referring to film language involving MISE-EN-SCENE and CINEMATOGRAPHY, give at least 2 examples of social context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Referring to film language involving EDITING and CINEMATOGRAPHY, give at least 2 examples of historical context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Referring to film language involving SOUND and MISE-EN-SCENE, give at least 2 examples of cultural context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Referring to film language involving EDITING and MISE-EN-PLACE, give at least 2 examples of political context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9.

Referring to film language involving CINEMATOGRAPHY and SPECIAL EFFECTS, give at least 2 examples of technological context in the narrative of DISTRICT 9

MORE CONTEXT QUESTIONS

SOLO TASK

How much did the film cost to make? Where do you think the costs went?

What is social context?

What is historical context?

What is institutional context?

What is cultural context?

What is political context?

The film was filmed on location in Johannesburg. What reasons do you think there were for this?

What reasons can you think of as to why the film made a good profit?

How do we know that the film was a 'critical' success?

In what ways does this film use allegory to show what apartheid meant for the people of South Africa?

What contemporary political events does the film deal with?

The film is based on a short film. What is the name of the book and who directed it?

What contextual issues can you think of that have influence the narrative of the film?

What reasons are there for why the film took until 2009 to be made, rather than when apartheid was happening? Consider the technological context.

Why do you think the design of the aliens was supposed to make them unappealing and unpleasant?

Peter Jackson was involved as a producer on the film. How do you think he might have been of use to the Director Neil Blomkamp?

How is the story of Sophiatown similar to the story in the film?

Why did Neil Blomkamp remove green vegetation from the areas they filmed in?

Give two reasons why the film was called District 9.

Give as many reasons as possible to explain why you think the film was shot in widescreen, using colour and in surround sound.

THE POSTERS

SOLO TASK

Over the next two pages are 3 of the posters from the marketing campaign for the film. Use the space around them and annotate the images. For every aspect of the poster consider two things; what can we see (the explicit details) and then what does each thing suggest (the implicit suggestion)? To include detailed annotations, consider the context of the film and of South Africa to help explain some of the design choices made.



THE POSTERS



WATCH THE FILM

SOLO TASK - CORNELL NOTES EXPLANATION

Now it's time to watch the film!

Use the note sheet below to make notes either on your first or second watch. The note sheet is specifically designed to allow you to focus on the film, but make brief notes on the left hand side; your teacher may instruct you as to when a key scene starts or finishes or they may leave that up to you.

When you have finished watching, use the space on the right hand side to write more detailed notes. These notes may be the expanded versions of your notes on the left, or about something more specific which you've been asked to write about. If unsure, make notes specifically on the characters and how they look, what they do and why you think they act in certain ways at certain times.

The space on the left has space for specific elements of film language that you need to look at and make notes on. Be specific in describing where/when you see this element of film language being used.

On the right hand side is a larger space. Use this to write a detailed explanation of how the scene looks, using film language and your notes on the left hand side.

Finally, the space at the bottom is for you to add any additional notes, instructions from your teacher or feedback from teacher, peers or yourself.

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of film / location of scene: Focus / overall purpose of notes: | |
| Key idea or scene 1: | |
| Key idea or scene 2: | |
| Key idea or scene 3: | |
| Key idea or scene 4: | |
| Key idea or scene 5: | |
| Key idea or scene 6: | |
| | |

WATCH THE FILM

SOLO TASK - CORNELL NOTES 1

Name of film / location of scene:

Focus / overall purpose of notes:

Key idea or scene 1:

Key idea or scene 2:

Key idea or scene 3:

Key idea or scene 4:

Key idea or scene 5:

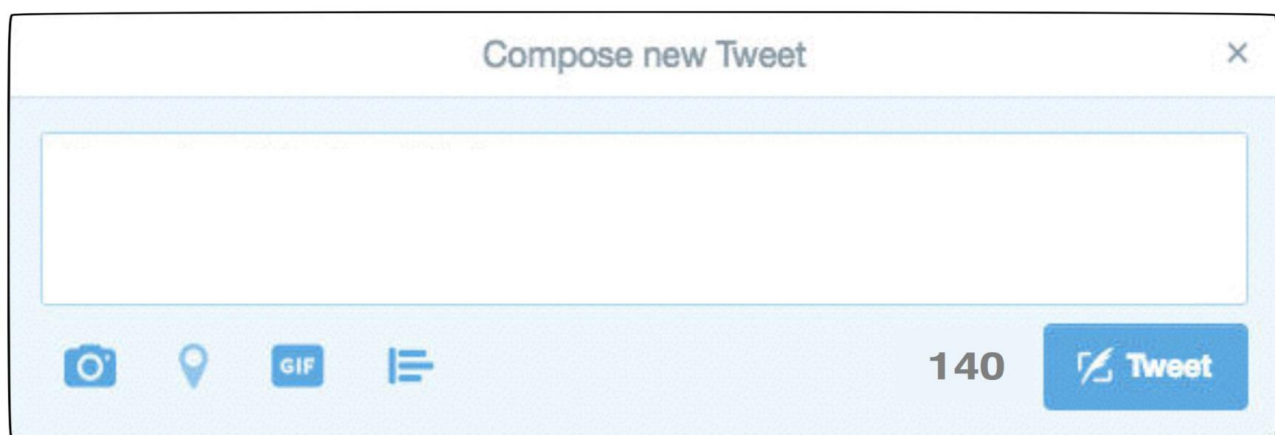
Key idea or scene 6:

TWITTER REACTIONS

SOLO TASK

Having just watched the film, use the Twitter reaction box below to record your immediate thoughts and reaction to the film. These will be useful later on when you will need to consider how the film has a range of affects on different people. To help, your teacher will collate all of the reactions in the class and give you copies of these to stick into the next page of your booklet.

Aiming to keep in the style of a tweet, try to keep your ideas relatively brief, using only the space provided. **HOWEVER**, given that the focus of this film is narrative, you **MUST** give a brief explanation of how at least **ONE** aspect of the narrative has affected your judgement and created your opinion.



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Compose new Tweet' interface. At the top, it says 'Compose new Tweet' with a close button (X) on the right. Below this is a large text input area. At the bottom, there are icons for adding a photo, location, GIF, and a list icon. To the right of these icons, the character count '140' is displayed. On the far right, there is a blue button with a white paper plane icon and the word 'Tweet'.

TWITTER REACTIONS

GROUP TASK-COLLECT REACTIONS

Next: read the reactions of others (or indeed, discuss with them) based on their Twitter reactions. When looking at the reactions of others, look closely at how the narrative has affected other peoples opinions; did people feel the same about the film and if so, did you share the same opinion about the same plot points? Was there one part of the story or plot that people kept referring to? Was there one thing that happened that stood out to you but no one else has mentioned? Is there a key plot point that really stood out for people who disliked the film?

Use the spaces below to help note key ideas and thoughts:

Overall, most people...
...because...

The scene/s people really liked were...

Things that stood out but people didn't agree with...

People who disliked the film didn't like...

FILM REVIEW

SOLO TASK

Use the template below to write a review of DISTRICT 9, aiming to create 7 paragraphs and writing

You can find much of the background information you need on www.imdb.com, wikipedia.org, rottentomatoes.com and boxofficemojo.com
However, MOST of the information you will need will come from you watching the film and paying close attention to the characters and narrative.

1. **Title** – Try to start your review with a one-sentence (or shorter!) summary of the film and what you thought of it. Try to make it catchy and it can certainly indicate if review overall will be positive or negative. You can play with words to make it funny or different, for example:

*"BULLET BOY fires upon your emotions" or
"POSEIDON sinks and stinks"*

Remember: film titles should be in capital letters.

2. **Paragraph 1** – Begin your review by summarising the film's narrative, WITHOUT giving away what happens in the end of the film. This is also a good place to start offering some ideas about whether you generally liked or disliked the film. You'll go into more detail about this later on.

3. **Paragraphs 2 and 3** – Write about the characters, did you like them? Did the actors play them well? What was it about their portrayal that you liked or didn't like? Other impressions of the characters, will certain audience members be able to relate to certain characters? How? Will certain audience members not like certain characters? Why not?

4. **Paragraph 4 and 5** – Positive things you thought about the film such as what did you like? Why? This should be TWO paragraphs long because you need to not only use descriptive words, but to think about the **story, setting, effects used, music used** and any other aspects of filmmaking that stood out for you.

5. **Paragraph 6** – This is where you write about the negative things you thought about the film, what didn't you like? Remember to explain **why**. You could also comment on the same type of things that you mentioned in paragraphs 4 and 5.

7. **Paragraph 7** – Finally, give your general comments that summarise your view of the film. You may want to say something inspiring to get the reader to want to go out and see the film or you might say something that would want them not to go and see it!

After the paragraph you would give it a star rating out of 5 to indicate your rating for it.

Common words and phrases used in film reviews that you might want to use in your own reviews

spectacular visual effects, excessive violence, breathtaking, evocative, mood, atmosphere, poorly, unsuccessful, detail, scenery, irresistible, perfect, moments, plot, this movie has been compared to ___ because, wonderful, hilarious, momentum, unexpected plot twists, unbelievable, phenomenal, hype, suspense, disappointing, confusion/confused, fake, imitation, genre, unoriginal, typical, thrilled, was a very moving portrayal, quality of the film, I was impressed by, credible, cliché, a mixture of, classic, captivating

CHARACTERS

SOLO TASK

Next to each picture, add the name of each character and then 3 things you know about each of them.



Wikus van der Mewe

-
-
-



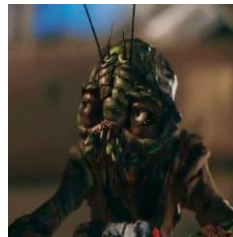
Gary Branan

-
-
-



Christopher Johnson

-
-
-



Little CJ

-
-
-



Fundiswa Mhlanga

-
-
-



Obesandjo

-
-
-



Tania van de Merwe

-
-
-



Koobus Venter

-
-
-



Piet Smith

-
-
-



Sarah Livingston

-
-
-

THE LOCATIONS

PAIRED TASK

Over the next few pages are a selection of images from some of main locations in the film; District 9, Christopher Johnson's shack and MNU.

For each location, describe what the scene is that is happening in EACH screenshot. Then, describe each using as much detail as you can, using words related to cinematography and mise-en-scene.

District 9



THE LOCATIONS

Christopher Johnson's shack



THE LOCATIONS

MNU



THE LOCATIONS

On the next two pages are three images from the film; two are establishing shots and one is a screencap from a crucial scene near the beginning of the film when Wikus is working for MNU to evict aliens from District 9.

For comparison, each image also has a photo below from news reports in recent years.

For each screencap, describe it using a range of film language using as much detail as you can to complete the boxes below each image. As well as this, make notes on how each screencap (even though they predate the 'real' images) highlights the 'realistic' nature of the film and how they reflect the possible historical context of South Africa.

Finally, each screencap is then shown on one page with a blank box next to them, so that you can summarise your ideas and findings on one page.



Greek-Macedonian border, 2016



French police evict migrants from the 'Jungle', Calais, 2016



Dadaab, the world's largest refugee complex, Kenya, 2016



Lighting

Colour

Composition

Props

Depth of field

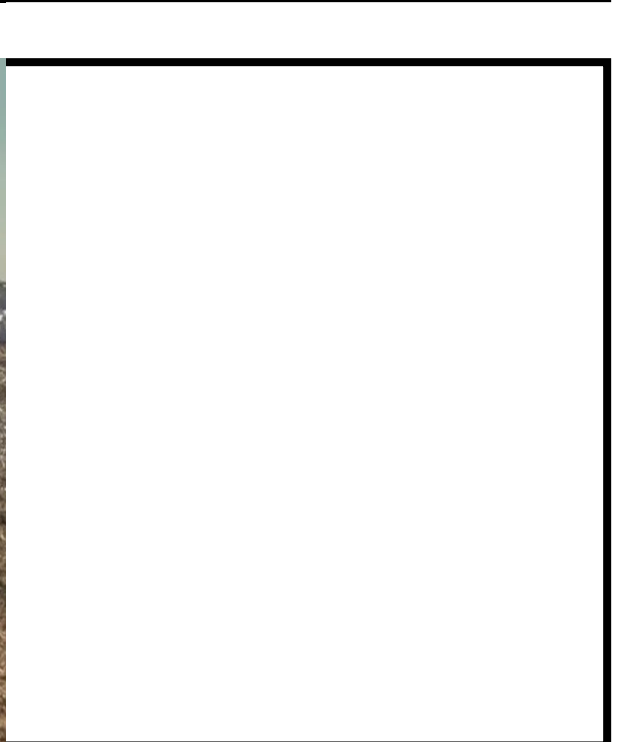
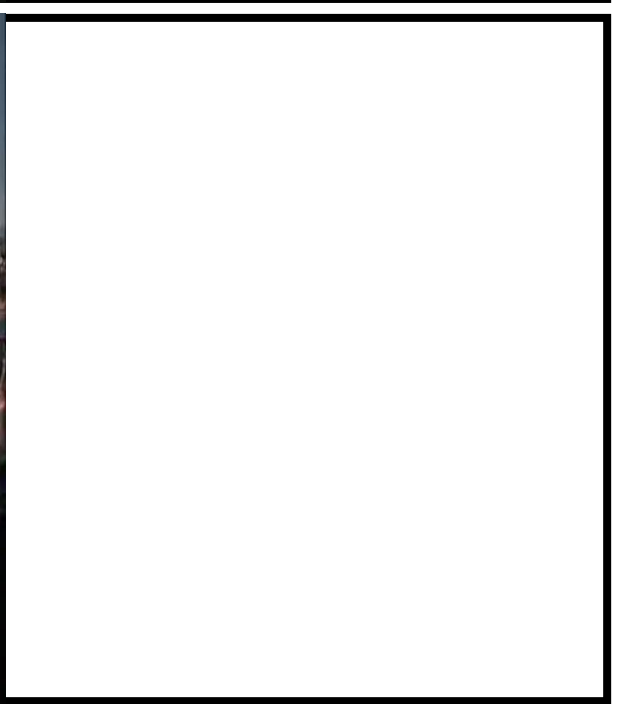
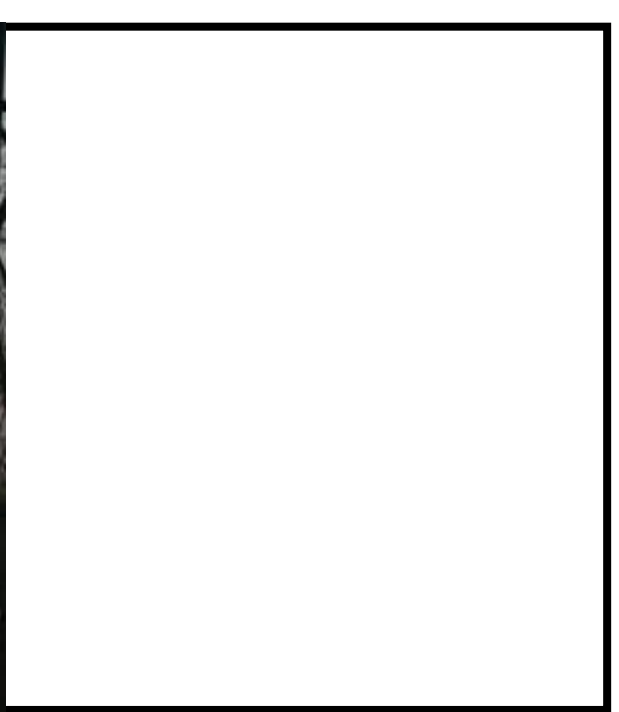
Context



| Lighting | Colour | Composition |
|----------|----------------|-------------|
| | | |
| Props | Depth of field | Context |
| | | |



| Lighting | Colour | Composition |
|----------|----------------|-------------|
| | | |
| Props | Depth of field | Context |
| | | |



NARRATIVE - DEFINITION

The key focus of this Section is about Narrative. Over the next few pages we'll cover what this means in a range of different ways, but it's important to know what narrative means.

NARRATIVE DEFINITION

Narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events otherwise known as a story. A narrative or story is a report of connected events, real or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images, or both. If you see the word **narrative**, it means **story**. If you see the word **story**, it means **narrative**. If you see the word *plot* this is how the story is organised and presented.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Narrative *structure* is about two things:

1. **Story**. This is the content of a story and
2. **Plot**. This is the way that a story is told.

Story then, refers to the dramatic action as they might be described in chronological order. The key details, the characters, the locations, the main events, the overall *thing* that the film is *about*.

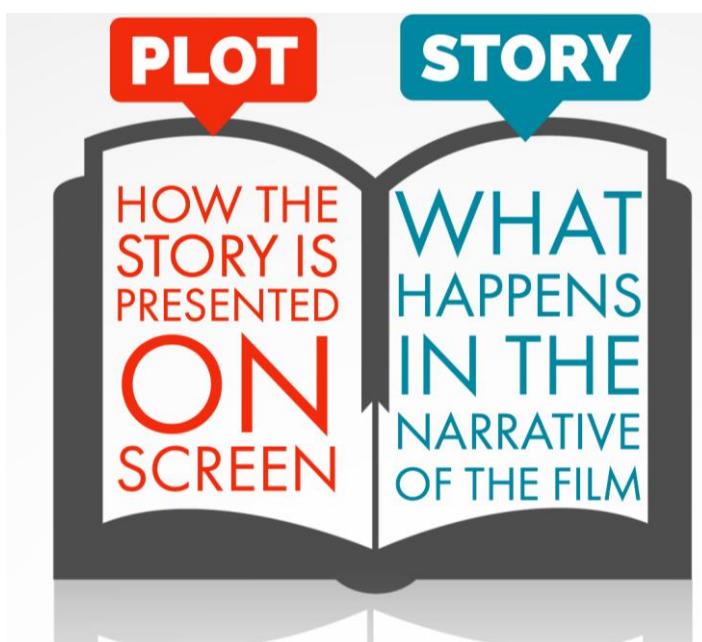
Plot is the way in which the story is told. How the story is presented. In what order the story is presented. What techniques, such as editing, are used to present the story.

STORY OR PLOT?

Often, when we tell someone that we have seen a film, someone might ask “what was the film about.” This relates to story; what the contents of the film was-what a character did, where they went, the beginning, the middle and the end of the film.

This is different to plot, which is the order that the story is told. A film can tell a story in a variety of ways-a story can be presented in all sorts of strange and clever ways to create interesting plots for films. However, most films use one of three narrative structures to help create the plot. This is often done to suit the types of stories in the film.

There is more on this later on in the guide.



LINEAR, CIRCULAR AND EPISODIC

Most films use 3 main narrative structures to 'shape' the way that a story is told. These are:

A **linear** narrative structure is used in the majority of films. In a linear narrative, the *plot* begins with the beginning of the *story*. Typically, this might be the start of a day, a journey, a new job, a quest-anything which is a fresh start. A **linear** narrative then follows the main character/s on their journey, through a time period that follows a standard and recognisable format, from beginning to end, from start to finish.

A **circular** narrative is the next most common narrative structure. With a **circular** narrative, the *plot* begins with the end of the *story*. We then watch and discover how the story unfolded so that the end of the film (the end of the *plot*) goes back to the start of the story. A typical way of presenting a circular plot therefore, is to use flashbacks. These can sometimes

An **episodic** narrative divides the *story* into sections, segments or different time frames so that the *plot* is presented in an **episodic** manner. The *plot* may be presented in any time frame or order and can be quite complicated in some films. As a result, these can also be called interlocked narratives, or confusingly, non-linear narratives.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE TASK

GROUP TASK

The key focus of this Section is about Narrative. Over the next few pages we'll cover what this means in a range of different ways, but it's important to know what narrative means. Try to think of as many examples of films that fit the narrative structures above. You may need to conduct some research online for this and some films may fit into more than one structure at a time! An example has been added for each type for you.

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| Linear | Attack the Block |
| Circular | Saving Private Ryan |
| Episodic | Love Actually |

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF DISTRICT 9

PAIRED TASK

To begin, read the plot of DISTRICT 9. Read it carefully as you will working with it over a series of activities on the next few pages. Crucially, you will also need to know it off by heart for the exam!

In 1982, an alien ship hovers over Johannesburg. When investigation teams enter, they discover a population of malnourished extraterrestrials, thereafter nicknamed "prawns". The South African government confines the aliens to District 9, a government camp. In 2010, following unrest between the aliens and locals, the government hires private military company Multinational United (MNU) to relocate the aliens to a new camp. Piet Smit, an MNU executive, appoints Wikus van de Merwe, a nebbish Afrikaner bureaucrat, to lead the relocation. The relocation uses bribes of cat food, which is addictive for the aliens.

Three aliens — Christopher Johnson, his son, and a friend — are seen scavenging pieces of alien technology, from which they finish distilling a fluid which they collect in a small canister. During an inspection, Wikus discovers and confiscates the canister from the shack of Christopher's friend, but accidentally sprays some of the fluid onto his own face, which causes him to have a momentary seizure. Christopher's friend is subsequently killed by Koobus Venter, a mercenary soldier employed by MNU.

Wikus' body tissue begins to mutate into alien tissue. He is detained and transported to MNU headquarters for brutal experimentation, where researchers and officials discover that his chimeric DNA grants him the ability to use his transformed arm to wield alien weapons. Wikus overpowers them and escapes the facility. Venter and his men hunt Wikus down, while a smear story is broadcast, one that reaches his wife, Tania, claiming that Wikus is a wanted fugitive who has contracted a sexually transmitted disease from anal intercourse with prawns.

Wikus finds refuge in District 9 and learns that Christopher is hiding the command module of their spacecraft and the canister's fluid would be able to reactivate the command module and the dormant mothership. He claims he can reverse Wikus' mutation in the mothership. To recover the canister from MNU headquarters, Wikus obtains alien weapons from District 9 Nigerian arms dealer Obesandjo and his gang. They use these to assault the headquarters, retrieve the canister, and flee to District 9.

Christopher decides to return to his home planet for help and explains that he cannot undo Wikus' mutation until he returns in three years. Enraged, Wikus knocks Christopher out and attempts to fly the command module to the mothership, but is almost immediately shot down by Venter and his men. They capture Wikus and Christopher, but Obesandjo's gang attacks the convoy and seize Wikus.

Christopher's son activates the mothership and an alien mechanised battle suit in Obesandjo's base, using it to kill Obesandjo and his men. Wikus uses the suit to rescue Christopher, who promises to return in three years with a cure for Wikus. Wikus kills all the attacking soldiers before Venter cripples the suit; ejecting Wikus. As he corners a heavily injured Wikus, a group of aliens protect Wikus by killing Venter. The command module is lifted into the mothership and Christopher and his son leave Earth.

A series of news broadcasts are shown about the potential return of the spacecraft and Wikus' whereabouts. MNU's illegal experiments are exposed and District 9 is demolished. Tania finds a metal flower on her doorstep, giving her hope that Wikus is still alive. The final scene shows a fully transformed Wikus in a junkyard, crafting a similar flower.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF DISTRICT 9

PAIRED TASK

First of all, do you think that the plot of DISTRICT 9 is a linear, circular or episodic narrative? To help do this, consider the summary of the plot above and write in the boxes below what you consider the beginning, the middle and the end of the film to be. You will need to summarise this in your own words, adding as much detail as possible, but without describing everything that happens in the film.

Beginning

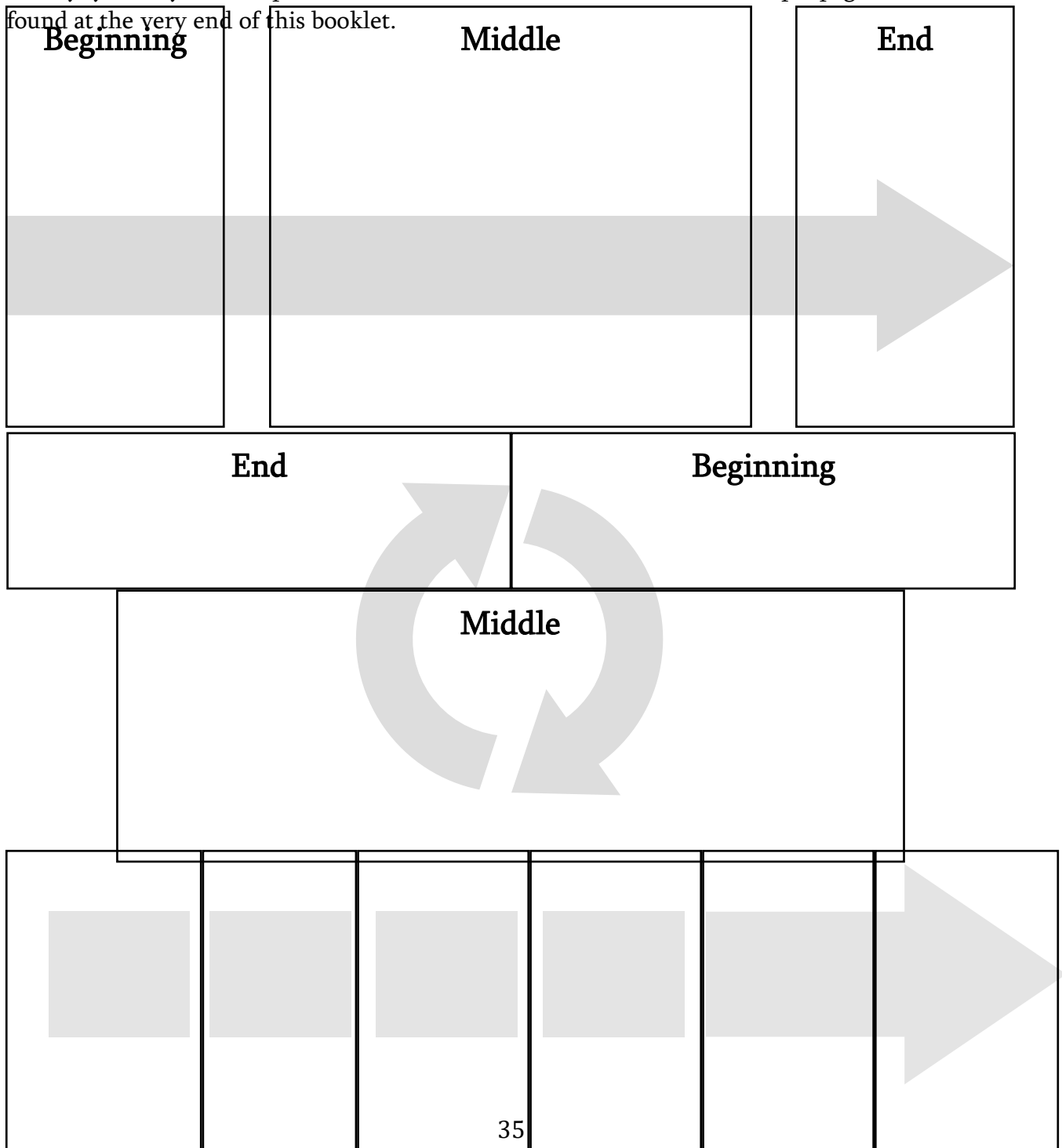
Middle

End

Next; look carefully at your summary of the plot and consider-which of the three typical narrative structures does the film fit best? It may not easily fit into any, or may fit into more than one, but consider your summary being suited the *best* to each one and make a decision based on your own opinions. Be prepared to give examples and feedback.

For each structure or shape, use the labels to write where the beginning, middle and end of the *story* fits with the *plot* that each of these structure uses. For episodic, you will need to label each 'episode' as beginning, middle or end.

Finally, you may wish to practice this first with other films, so some example pages of these can be found at the very end of this booklet.



The *plot* of District 9 is slightly different to the *story* of District 9.

PLOT or STORY

The *plot* of the film begins with a monologue from Wikus direct to camera in a found-footage montage where he introduces himself and MNU. The *plot* continues to then provide backstory from other characters and also intercuts footage from video footage from 1982 and the 'modern day' to help explain provide visual detail and information. However, the other characters are talking in the past tense about Wikus and it then appears that something has happened to Wikus; characters allude to a significant event or traumatic event happening to Wikus. These 'talking heads' are also intercut with the beginning of the story which is of Wikus and the MNU beginning to evict the aliens from District 9. Then, the evacuations, and the main *story* begins.



The beginning of the film.



One of the 'talking heads' describing events in 1982.



'Found footage' from 1982.



More 'found footage' from an older time period, but *after* 1982.



Discussing Wikus in the 'past tense' - suggesting the film *actually* takes further in the 'future'. Suggests the story isn't happening 'now', but instead, in the 'past'.



The evacuations, and the *story* begins.

In DISTRICT 9, as in many films, there are various *stories* happening.

- One *story*, is about the arrival of the aliens and their removal from District 9 20 years later.
- Another story is about what happened when Wikus is infected with alien liquid.
- There is also a story about MNU trying to procure alien technology.

Can you identify any other stories? There are certainly a few more that take place throughout the

| Story | Image |
|-------|-------|
| | |
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PLOT or STORY: QUESTIONS

SOLO TASK

Answer the questions below to help you make sure that you know the difference between the *plot* and the *story* of District 9. As much as possible, refer to film language in your answers.

STORY

- Where are the stories set?
- When are the stories set?
- What event starts the main story?
- Who are the main characters?
- What conflict(s) do they face and what is at stake because of these conflicts?
- What happens to the characters as they face these conflicts?

PLOT

- How and when does the main the story begin? How can we tell?
- How and when are the main characters introduced?
- How is the story moved along so that the characters face problems or obstacles?

- How and when does the film resolve or conclude the main story?

THE STORY

SOLO TASKS:

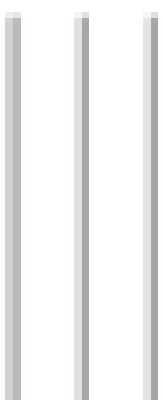
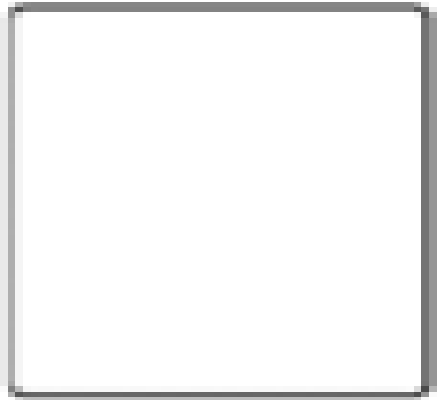
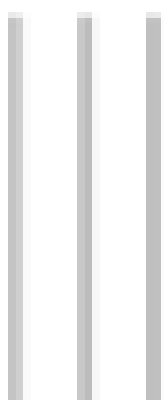
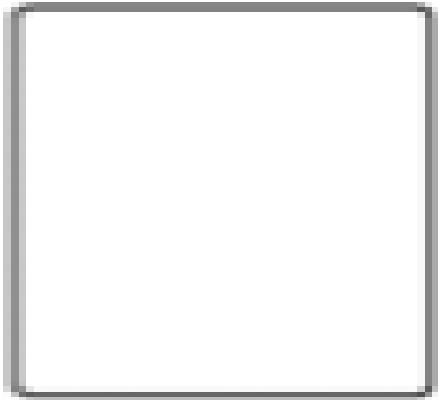
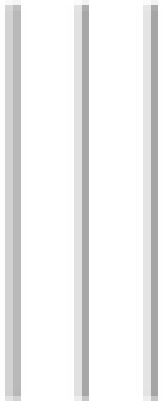
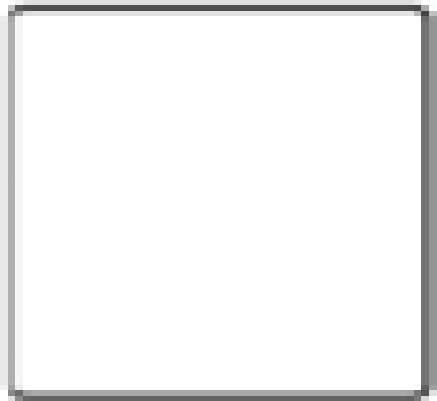
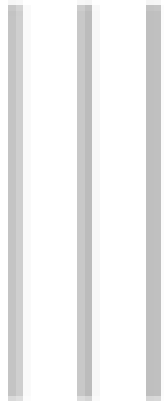
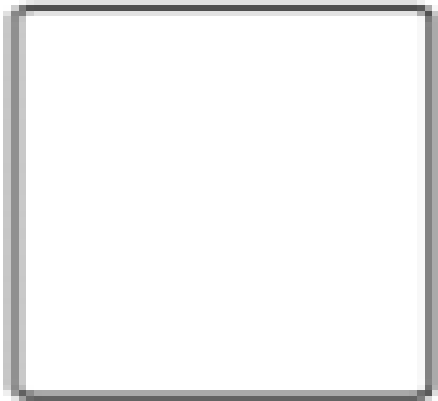
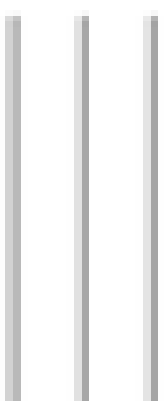
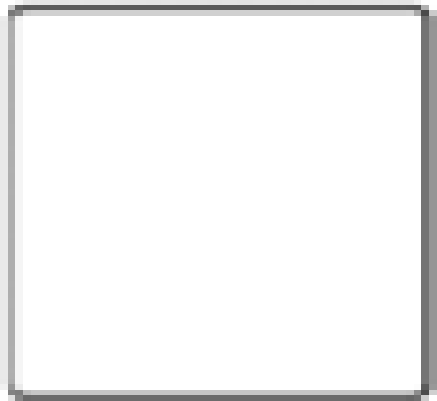
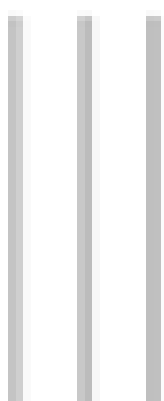
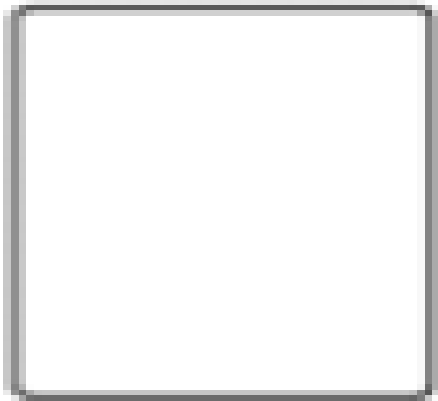
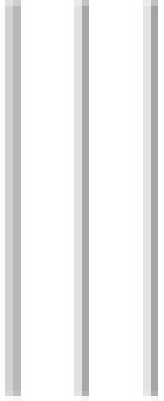
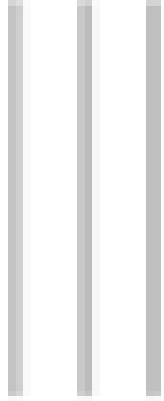
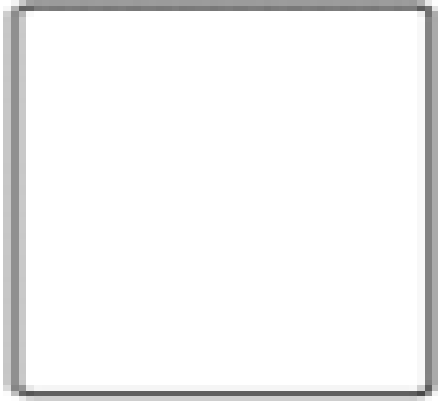
Task 1 (of 4) Using your summary of the film from previous tasks, draw (or if you don't have the time or the skills, write) a key frame from the film that presents the narrative in a variety of ways, first in order of plot in 20 key frames or moments

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THE STORY

SOLO TASKS:

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THE STORY

SOLO TASKS:

3. Then summarise the *plot* in just 4 key frames or moments.

The form consists of a light gray background with a 2x2 grid of large, empty rectangular frames. Each frame is defined by a thick black border. To the right of each frame, there are three vertical lines of varying lengths, with a small square box at the bottom of the longest line, resembling a film strip or storyboard layout.

PLOT

SOLO TASKS:

4. Finally, use another 20 frame storyboard to draw/describe the the *story* of the film.

The *plot* will be much easier as it should be the exact same order as we see it on screen. The difficulty in this task is summarising and shortening the plot. This will help you to learn the narrative of the film off by heart, be able to summarise in a variety of ways AND help you to really clarify the

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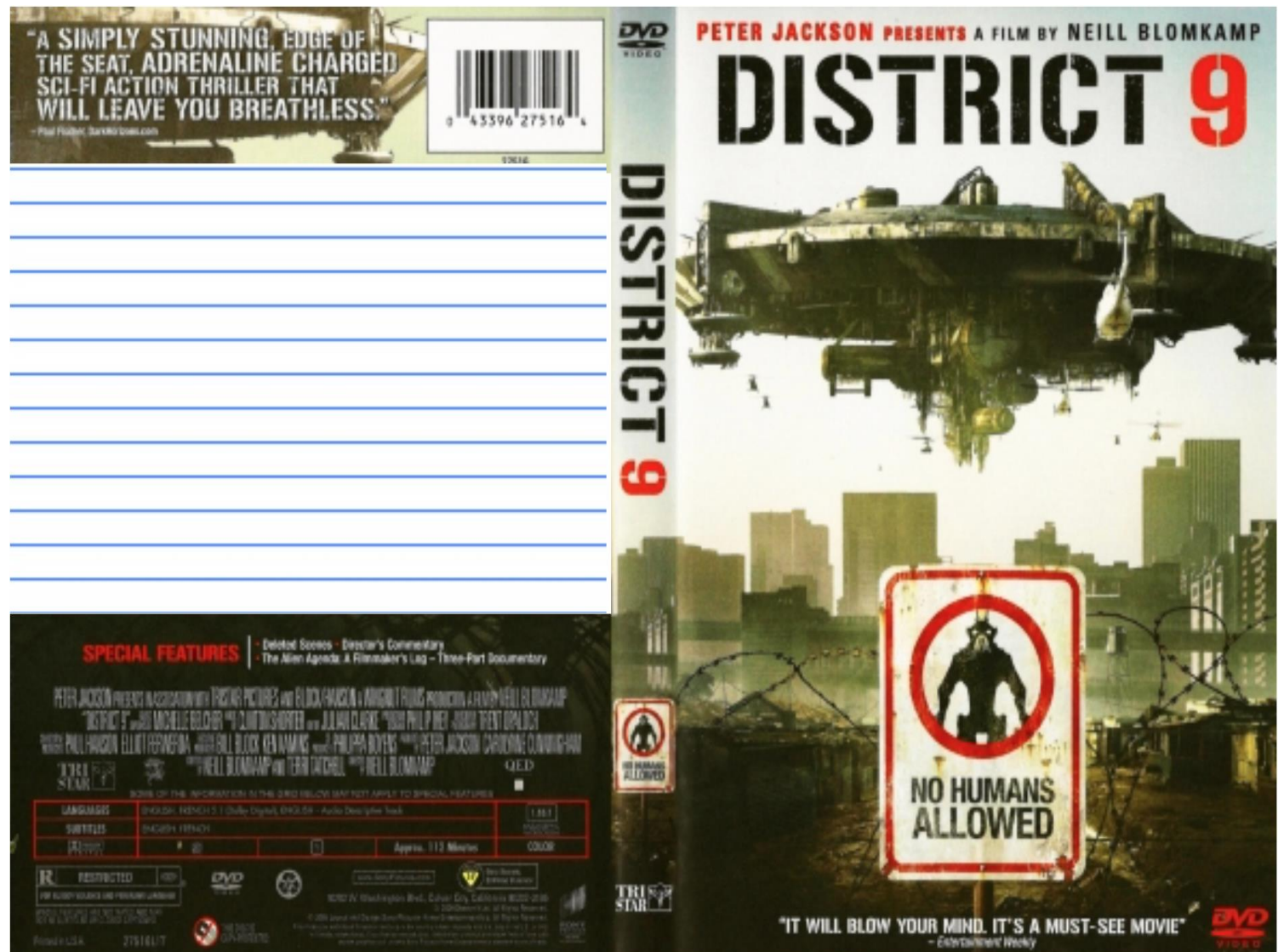
NARRATIVE:

SOLO TASKS:

Task 1 (of 3) Using your summaries of the film from previous tasks, create a summary that is suitable for each of the three different tasks below.

The first is a DVD case with some space left on the back of the case. You may wish to do some research first by reading and examining other DVD case summaries. You should notice that they aim to inform the potential audience about the film without reveal too much detail or anything that could be considered a spoiler. They sometimes include some Institutional context such as actors names and other films they've starred in and are generally quite brief.

Use the space on the back of the case, aiming to fill every space of each of the lines.

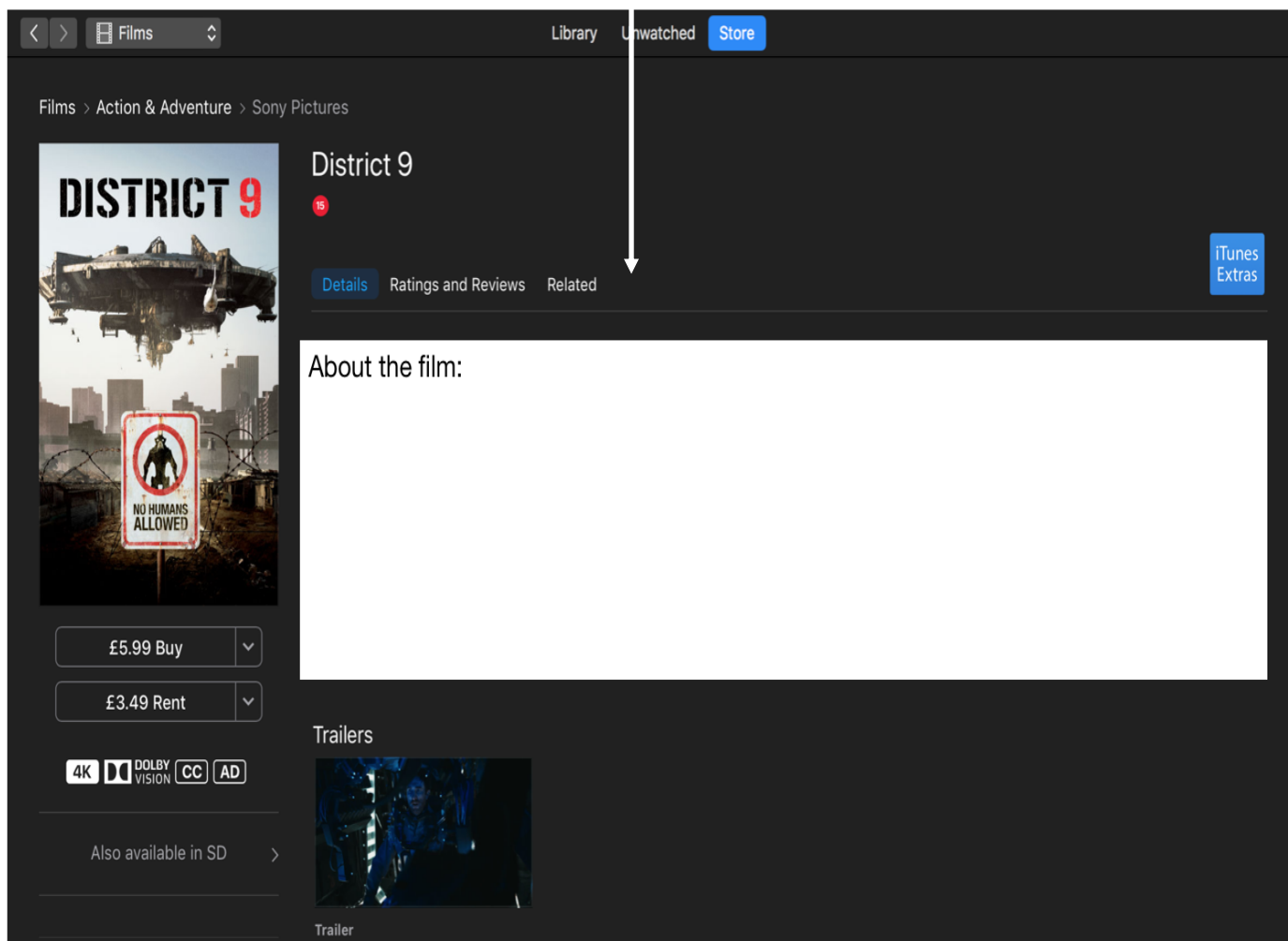


NARRATIVE:

SOLO TASK:

The second task is to create a summary suitable for an online digital distribution platform such as iTunes. Below is a screenshot from the iTunes store with most of the detail left in, but the summary of the film has been blanked out. You may wish to do some research first by reading and examining how the iTunes store or other online stores aim to promote the film through their synopsis. As with the DVD case, iTunes and other digital stores aim to inform the potential audience about the film without reveal too much detail or anything that could be considered a spoiler. They often set up key elements from the *story* but don't reveal how the story ends or what might happen in the story, aiming to convince the audience to pay to watch the film to find out how the film ends. In some cases, the synopsis may include some Institutional context such as actors names and other films they've starred in. Your synopsis of the narrative needs to be shorter than the DVD case synopsis on the previous page.

This box is to explain the narrative. This could be the narrative as the *plot* or the *story*. A better description could also include details on context embedded into the synopsis



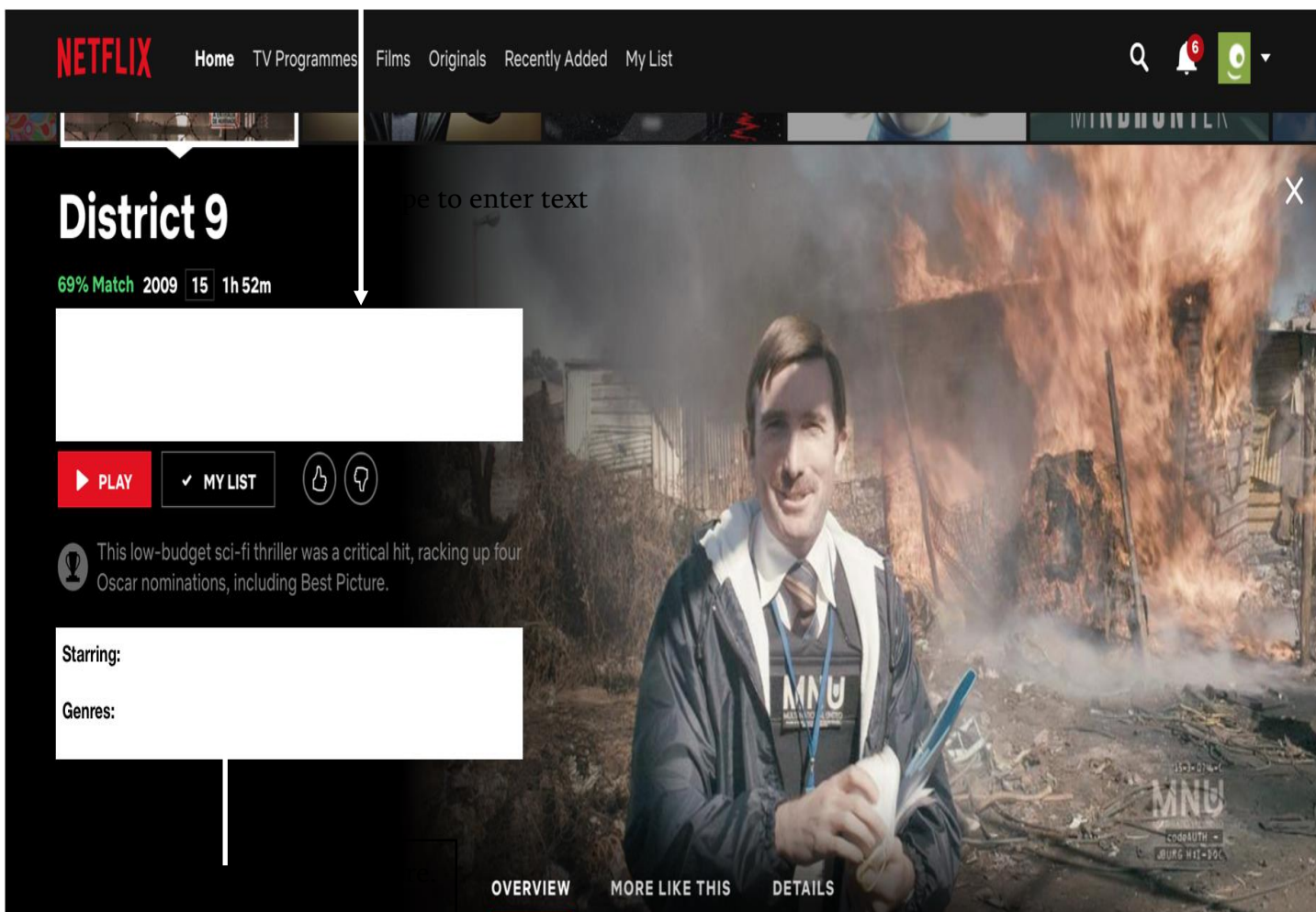
NARRATIVE

SOLO TASKS:

Your final synopsis task is to fill in the small spaces below, this time taken from Netflix. You may wish to do some research first by reading and examining how Netflix write their own synopsis which are generally very brief. Unlike the other tasks, these institutional information is kept separate and this time needs to be written in the small box below the synopsis.

This synopsis needs to reflect the real thing, so needs to be very brief and very persuasive in just a few words or sentences. With so many films to choose from quickly and easily, users of Netflix tend to flick between film choices very quickly and don't spend long reading the synopsis. For this reason, you need to entice a potential viewer quickly by making the film sound exciting and in just a few words. This might take some practice!

This box is to explain the narrative. This could be the narrative as the *plot* or the *story*.



NARRATIVE & SPECTATOR RESPONSE

When developing a film, the script will be written in a way that helps to not only tell the story, but the plot will be shaped and created so that it not only provides information but also creates

NARRATIVE & THE SCREENPLAY

To engage an audience, a film should make the audience react: feel something. If the audience feels something for a film or a character, they become invested in the narrative and the characters and this ultimately makes for a more interesting film.

This usually begins when the screenplay is written-the words in a script can be vital in making an audience react in a certain way, whether that's through the description of the action a character takes or the words a character uses. DISTRICT 9 had a very different screenplay however. As confirmed by Sharlto Copley in an Ask Me Anything session on the website reddit, much of the

↑ goatsgreetings 1.2k points · 4 years ago

↓ Hi Sharlto! I recall Neill Blomkamp saying in an interview that you improvised all your dialogue for District 9. Was this your choice or his? And how much of a challenge did it present in the context of being your first professional acting role?

Share Save

↑ SharltoCopley 2.0k points · 4 years ago

↓ it was neill's choice. he made the call i think after seeing me doing the improvised test i did for pete. i don't think it was always his plan for the lead to improvise, but in my specific case i think it began to make more and more sense to him that we go that route.

it wasn't actually much of a challenge - i had been fortunate enough to write scripts, make films etc. before so i had a good idea of what is needed in improvisation to ensure that you are improvising around the main issues/beats in the scene. neill and i would start by essentially saying "WHY IS THE SCENE IN THE FILM?" usually there are 2-4 fundamental reasons why the scene is important to the film and to driving the story forward and i would focus the improv around those.

In this respect, Sharlto would have to make up his lines as he was acting and reacting to the lines of other actors and characters. His performance and his choices of words and actions would be crucial to getting a reaction from the audience and making the audience engage with him as a character.

PAIRED TASK:

One of the things mentioned in the AMA that Sharlto Copley mentioned was Neil Blomkamp and Sharlto questioning every scene and asking “why is this scene in the film?” Every film was be significantly edited a lot of footage filmed won't be included in the final narrative, so as an audience member wanting to examine the narrative of the film, it's also worth asking the same question.

On the next page are the timestamps of some key scenes from the film. In pairs, watch these scenes and decide amongst yourself *why* the scene is included in the film; does the scene contribute to a *story* or the overall *plot*, or does it contribute to our understanding of a character? Next, decide whether you think the dialogue is scripted or improvised. Then, include some analysis of the most important aspect of film language. Finally, put these selections together and explain as a complete sentence. The first one has been done for you as an example.

SCENE



0:00:54 - 0:01:30

PURPOSE

To introduce Wikus and to introduce who MNU are and what they do.

PLANNED or IMPROVISED

Dialogue sounds very naturalistic so is probably improvised.

KEY FILM LANGUAGE

Medium close-up establishes relationship between Wikus and audience as he's nearly at eye level. Deep focus allows us to see MNU as a 'normal' place to work with a normal looking

Sentence to explain the above:

In the first scene from the film, it establishes that Wikus van de Merwe is the protagonist and that as an audience, we'll be seeing the film from his perspective. The use of the medium close-up establishes a relationship between Wikus and the audience as he's nearly at eye level. There is a deep focus allows us to see MNU as a 'normal' place to work with a normal looking office and this is reinforced with his use of relaxed body language and manner. The dialogue feels very personal and welcoming and not like it's rehearsed or planned, helping Wikus to seem natural and a person the audience will be happy to have as the protagonist and someone we like and don't want to see hurt or upset.

SCENE



0:29:30 - 0:30:00

PURPOSE

To show some of the technology that Christopher Johnson has in his shack.

PLANNED or IMPROVISED

KEY FILM LANGUAGE

Sentence to explain the above:

SCENE



0:33:00 - 0:34:13

PURPOSE

Sarah and Gary explain how the Nigerians have amassed alien weapons and are trying to gain the

PLANNED or IMPROVISED

KEY FILM LANGUAGE

Sentence to explain the above:

SCENE

PURPOSE

**PLANNED or
IMPROVISED**

**KEY FILM
LANGUAGE**

Sentence to explain the above:

GROUP TASK:

Look back to your notes and sentences from above and discuss these questions below. Aim to answer *individually* below or on separate paper:

Why might Neil Blomkamp and Terri Tatchell have not written any dialogue for Sharlto Copley?

Why might they have written dialogue for the other characters?

What scenes do you think was scripted? Do these scenes have anything in common?

Why do you think those scenes were scripted thinking about what they have in common?

Considering the style of 'found-footage' film making. In what way does this suit the idea of Wikus *not* having scripted dialogue?

Thinking about the use of the documentary style 'talking-heads', why do you think that these needed to have a clear script with planned dialogue for these scenes?

If some of the script was improvised, what do you think the script contained? Why do you think the script-writers couldn't have all parts of the film improvised?

What technological aspects of context meant that there would need to be quite a detailed screenplay in places?

CAUSE & EFFECT

Cause (action): something someone does.

Effect (event): something that happens, often to someone.

As a result of someone doing something to cause something later on, we see the effect.

This is the principle called *cause and effect*. Here are some typical, every day examples:

- Because the alarm was not set, we were late for school.
- John made a rude comment, so Elise hit him.
- There has been an increase in greenhouse gases, therefore global warming is happening.
- The weather forecast suggested rain, so she took her umbrella.

PAIRED TASK:

Have a go at creating some these yourself. You might even want to work with a partner on this,

creating the cause and then asking them to write the effect. You could also swap this around and ask your partner to create an effect and you then have to write what the cause was!

| Cause | Effect |
|-------|--------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |






SOLO TASK:

Below are a series of key events from a mix of classic films. Complete the missing side. If you haven't

| Film | Cause | Effect |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| seen the film you may be able to guess the missing side or ask a friend to help. Add two of your own as well. Perhaps test a partner or the class to complete the missing side? | | |
| JURASSIC PARK | There is a storm on the island... | |
| THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK | | ...Han is put into carbonite. |
| FINDING NEMO | | ...the water becomes stagnant and the water and the tank become dirty. |
| | | |
| | | |

PAIRED TASK:

It's time to consider h
Below are a series of screen
the film. Complete the missi
there is more than one effect

| Cause | Effect |
|--|---|
|  <p>The aliens are to be moved to a new area by MNU</p> | <p>Wikus is forced to go into District 9 and is infected with the black liquid.</p> |
|  <p>Little CJ finds more alien technology.</p> | |
|  <p>Wikus injures his arm.</p> | |
|  | <p>Wikus injures his arm.</p> |
|  <p>The aliens sell a giant mechanised weapon to the Nigerian gang.</p> | |
| | <p>Meaning that Wikus and Christopher Johnson have to break into MNU to retrieve the silver cylinder.</p> |



Wikus is hunted.

FORESHADOWING

DEFINITION:

Foreshadowing is later in the story. Fo helps the reader de

In this respect, fores
As on the previous p
each then *suggests* m
are, but remember tl

ie
it

What happens

What it suggests might happen later

How film language creates suggestion



The security team are carrying too many bullets.

Lots of bullets suggests lots of violence and deaths.

Props are of a cartridge full of bullets. Dialogue explains there's too many bullets in it. Medium shot allows us to see the difference between Wikus carrying a clipboard and the security officer carrying a gun. Their costumes are also different-Wikus wears a





FORESHADOWING: CHEKOV'S GUN

DEFINITION

"Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." - Anton Chekov

Russian author Anton Chekov developed the idea that anything used in a narrative needs to be there for a reason. As an author of short-fiction, he was keen on this idea as he didn't have 'space' or 'time' in his narratives to have things that weren't important. His comment about the rifle is a great example of this and has come to be known as Chekov's Gun; if there's a gun, it needs to be used!

This narrative technique can be seen in thousands of films and crucially does not have to be just a gun, rather anything which is referred to early on but proves to be crucial later on. As a result, it's a form of foreshadowing.

If done well, you may not even notice it and it will help an audience to learn more about a character as well as create foreshadowing. If done badly however, it can just feel as though it doesn't make sense when it's introduced. Consider the examples below, but warning-there are spoilers for ALIENS (1986), JAWS (1975) GOLDENEYE (1995) and PROMETHEUS (2012)!

In ALIENS, Ripley says "I can drive that loader. I have a level 6 rating". This tells us not only what she's good at now, but also provides a hint to the audience that her power-loader skills may be needed later on. In JAWS the use of Hooper saying "Dammit, Martin! This is compressed air! If you fool around with it, it'll blow up!" after an accident is not only natural to that scene but also foreshadows how they will eventually kill the shark.

However, this technique is often done badly in many James Bond films: Q gives Bond a range of gadgets that just so happen to coincide exactly with situation and events that Bond will need those gadgets for. For example, in GOLDENEYE Q gives Bond a watch that fires a laser-it's very handy later on when Bond is trapped in a train and the only way to escape is by cutting a hole through the metal floor. Similarly, in PROMETHEUS, a character is introduced to a machine which carries out specific surgeries at the touch of a button. It's no surprise then, that one of the characters needs to use this exact machine due to an emergency situation later on.

In terms of DISTRICT 9, many of the aspects we've looked at in terms of cause and effect and foreshadowing can be described as examples of Chekov's Gun. Choose when to use this term carefully and be sure to only describe something as an example of Chekov's Gun if you're sure it definitely is. One way to be sure is to consider the things which are generally either props or aspects of a location. Use the space below to list any examples that you think might be examples of Chekov's Gun from DISTRICT 9.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

So far, we've looked at a range of key ideas and definitions relating to narrative.

Below are a range of questions that could be answered as a range of essay questions to check and test your knowledge and understanding of the narrative of the film. You may not want, or be asked to, answer these questions by yourself as a series of essays and instead could use these as starting points for discussions, as homework or tests or revision.

What is foreshadowing? Give at least one example of foreshadowing in DISTRICT 9 in a key scene.

Why is foreshadowing an interesting way of giving a narrative structure? What does it help to do in terms of provide information to an audience?

In your opinion, what is the most effective use of foreshadowing in the film? Explain why using examples of film language in at least one key scene.

What is cause and effect? Give at least one example of cause and effect in DISTRICT 9 in a key scene.

How does cause and effect work in providing a structure to a narrative? How does it help to provide detail and information to an audience?

How does the opening 10 minutes of DISTRICT 9 establish a series of 'causes' that later create effect? Aim to identify and explain at least 3 things.

In terms of audience response, which key scenes or moments do you feel are the most effective? Give an example of a key scene with reference to film language.

ELLIPSIS

DEFINITION

Ellipsis is an editing technique which shortens the plot duration of a film. This is achieved by omitting intervals, sections or whole days of a story or an individual scene. These are often seen with the use of an editing transition such as a fade, dissolve, wipe or simply a jump or smash cut.

EXAMPLE

DISTRICT 9 is nearly 2 hours long, but the main story involving Wikus takes place over the course of around 3 days. During those 3 days we do not see every moment of Wikus and his story and because of this, the film uses ellipsis to omit parts of those days which are not interesting to the audience, relevant to the stories or useful in moving the plot along.

EXAMPLE IN A SCENE

0:30.00 Wikus is ill and throws up.

0:36.28 Wikus passes out and fades to black.

In the 6 minutes between Wikus becoming ill and him passing out, there is around 6 hours of time for Wikus that we do not see on screen. This is ellipsis.

PAIRED TASK:

Rewatch the scene above. As you watch, make a note of the different parts of the afternoon and evening that we see. For each thing we see, note what the *function* of that scene is- *why* have the filmmakers included that scene. For example, what does it tell us, what does it suggest or help us to understand? Finally, explain what you think the overall audience reaction is to each scene, referring to film language in as much detail as possible to help explain how that reaction is generated.

| What Wikus does | Our reaction | What do we learn? | Film language used |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

WITHHOLDING AND RELEASING

DEFINITION



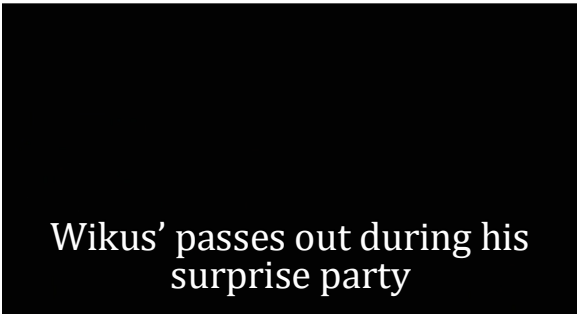
Withholding and releasing are concepts of narratives that function just as they suggest-by withholding information and then releasing it. These can be achieved in two main ways: using the screenplay to structure a story or plot so that a strand or aspect of a story can be set up but the ending or a key plot point is not immediately explained or revealed. The second method of doing this is to use editing to control the plot of the film so that something is withheld by cutting away. This information can then be released when it is then added back into the plot at a later time in the film. An easy way to remember these concepts then, is to remember that a film can *withhold information* and then *release information* later on.

EXAMPLE

DISTRICT 9, as with many films, sets up key ideas using foreshadowing and narrative structures but, for many reasons, then do not show or explain what happens immediately. There are numerous reasons why this might be, but the scene mentioned on the page above, from **0:30.00** to **0:36.28** also uses withholding and releasing as well as ellipsis.

GROUP TASK:

Below are some screencaps from the scene above which withhold information. For each image, explain what the part of the scene sets up and what information it then withholds. For this you will need to consider what happens to Wikus later in the film-what information it withholding now and what information it is going to have release later on.

| Moment | What information is withheld | When/how information is revealed |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|  <p>Black liquid falls from Wikus' nose</p> | | |
|  <p>Wikus' fingernails are beginning to fall off</p> | | |
|  <p>Wikus' passes out during his surprise party</p> | | |

ELLIPSIS, WITHHOLDING AND RELEASING

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

SOLO TASK:

In your own words, describe ellipsis.

Explain why ellipsis is used in terms of audience reaction in general.

Give at least ONE example of ellipsis from DISTRICT 9, but NOT from the scene from 0:30.00 - 0:36.28 by describing when and how it is used.

Explain *why* ellipsis is used in the scene you identified above.

In own your words, describe withholding and releasing.

Explain why withholding and releasing might be used in terms of audience reaction in general.

Give at least ONE example of withholding and releasing from DISTRICT 9, but NOT from the scene from 0:30.00 - 0:36.28 by describing when and how it is used.

Explain *why* withholding and releasing is used in the scene you identified above.

Explore how film language can be used to create ellipsis in a film.

Explore how film language can be used to create withholding and release.

DEFINITION

In a fiction narrative, the opening events that set a story in motion are pivotal. They set the tone and mood, establish key details of character and setting and also build intrigue. Without an inciting incident however, the characters would just sit around talking to each other. The inciting incident then, is a plot point, event or moment that hooks the reader into the story. An inciting incident will then thrust the protagonist into the main action of the story.

Inciting incidents come in all shapes and sizes and more than one can be seen in a narrative. Some examples of inciting incidents in other films include the moment when Katniss Everdeen's sister's name is drawn and she decides to take her place in *THE HUNGER GAMES*, the moment Dorothy is picked up by a cyclone in *THE WIZARD OF Oz* and the moment when Luke Skywalker receives Princess Leia's message in *STAR WARS*. In rom-coms, an inciting incident can be the moment that the couple-to-be meets for the first time. In this way, an inciting incident can be many different things, so long as it kickstarts a journey or a story within a narrative.

Inciting incidents also fits ARISTOTLE, TODOROV and PROPP'S narrative structures. Below is a brief task that asks you to consider how it does so.

PAIRED TASK

Answer the questions below, and use relevant copies of Freytag's pyramid at the end of this booklet to help label where the inciting incident takes place in a 3 and 5 Act narrative structure.

What is the main inciting incident in District 9?

Where does it fall in a 3 Act structure; beginning, middle or end? Identify on a copy of Freytag's Pyramid, or draw a small version below.

Where does it fall in a 5 Act structure? Identify on a copy or draw a small version below.

Looking at the 31 narrative functions as identified by Propp, what function suits the inciting incident the best? Write down the function and explain both what that function typically does and also how the main inciting incident fits this function.

Finally, list all of the inciting incidents in DISTRICT 9. To do so, you may need to consider each of the main characters and what key moment in the film changes their lives or what journeys they are 'sent on' by an event.

CLIMAX

DEFINITION

The climax of a narrative is the point of highest tension and drama. It can also be the time when the solution to the indicating incident is given.

A large narrative, built of many stories, may include more than one climax, but the 'main' or most important climax will often fit neatly into narrative structures set out by TODOROV and ARISTOTLE. The climax should, in terms of Freytag's Pyramid, sit at the peak of the pyramid and the task below will ask you to consider when the climax of District 9 takes place in terms of 3 Act and a 5 Act structure.

Vladimir Propp's narrative theory also supports a clear climax, given that for function 26 which is known as the Solution, as it's here in the narrative that the task is resolved.

PAIRED TASK

Answer the questions below, and use relevant copies of Freytag's pyramid at the end of this booklet to help label where the inciting incident takes place in a 3 and 5 Act narrative structure.

What is the main climax in District 9?

Where does this climax fall in a 3 Act structure; beginning, middle or end? Identify on a copy of Freytag's Pyramid, or draw a small version below.

Where does it fall in a 5 Act structure? Identify on a copy or draw a small version below.

Propp's narrative functions perhaps suit the climax best for function 26. What part of DISTRICT 9 would you say this is?

Describe the main climax of DISTRICT 9 using film language. Aim to focus on 2 or 3 aspects of film language and describe it in as much detail as possible.

THE 3 ACT STRUCTURE

DEFINITION

The **three-act structure** is a way of examining narrative fiction that divides a story into three parts or acts. These 3 acts are often called the Setup, the Confrontation and the Resolution.

It was Greek philosopher Aristotle who put forth the idea plays should form a single whole action or story. "A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end". Of course, he is here discussing a Three Act structure. One way of looking at this therefore, is to refer to the Beginning, the Middle and the End of the film. This usually refers to the *plot* of the film, but can also be used to describe the *stories* in the film.



FIRST ACT: THE SETUP or BEGINNING

To identify where the First Act, the Setup or Beginning starts and ends, it's perhaps best to consider what it is used for. The first act is usually used for *exposition*-another way of describing how important information such as main character names, locations and background details are explained to the audience. We also find that later in the first act, a on-screen incident occurs which forces the protagonist to deal with this situation. This is known as the *inciting incident*. This is where the first act ends; the protagonist has to set off on a quest or deal with something that ensures their life will never be the same again.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK:

Re-watch the opening of DISTRICT 9.

What exposition is given in the setup of DISTRICT 9 (what do we learn in the opening of DISTRICT 9?)

How does film language communicate some of this exposition? Aim to be specific in using a range of film language elements.

What is the *inciting incident* in the first act of DISTRICT 9?

How does film language show that this is something that the protagonist will have to deal with the situation and that their life will never be the same again?

SECOND ACT: RISING ACTION or THE MIDDLE

The second act, also referred to as Rising Action shows the protagonist's attempt to resolve the problem from the Inciting Incident. Often protagonists are unable to easily resolve their problems is because they do not yet have the skills or emotional development required to deal with the forces that confront them. The middle of the film then usually has the protagonist learning new skills but also learn about themselves. This is referred to as *character development* or a *character arc*. This usually cannot be achieved alone so the protagonist often will require help from mentors and other characters.

SECOND ACT: RISING ACTION or THE MIDDLE

KNOWLEDGE CHECK:

List the ways that the protagonist in DISTRICT 9 attempts to resolve the inciting incident during the rising action.

What skills or emotional change does the protagonist in DISTRICT 9 have to learn?

What does the protagonist learn about themselves and during the rising action of DISTRICT 9?

Who are some the characters who help the protagonist in DISTRICT 9?

THIRD ACT: THE RESOLUTION or THE ENDING

The third act features the *resolution* of most of the stories and the plot of the film. The *climax* is the scene or sequence in which the main problems of the story are brought to their most intense point, often through action or an intense meeting. The inciting incident is finally dealt with in some way, with the protagonist and other characters having changed and developed in some way.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK:

List the ways that the protagonist in DISTRICT 9 changes.

List the ways that other characters in DISTRICT 9 change.

Re-watch the climax of DISTRICT 9. Describe what happens in the main story and explain how it resolves the inciting incident.

Describe the narrative of the climax referring to film language as much as possible to help describe what happens.

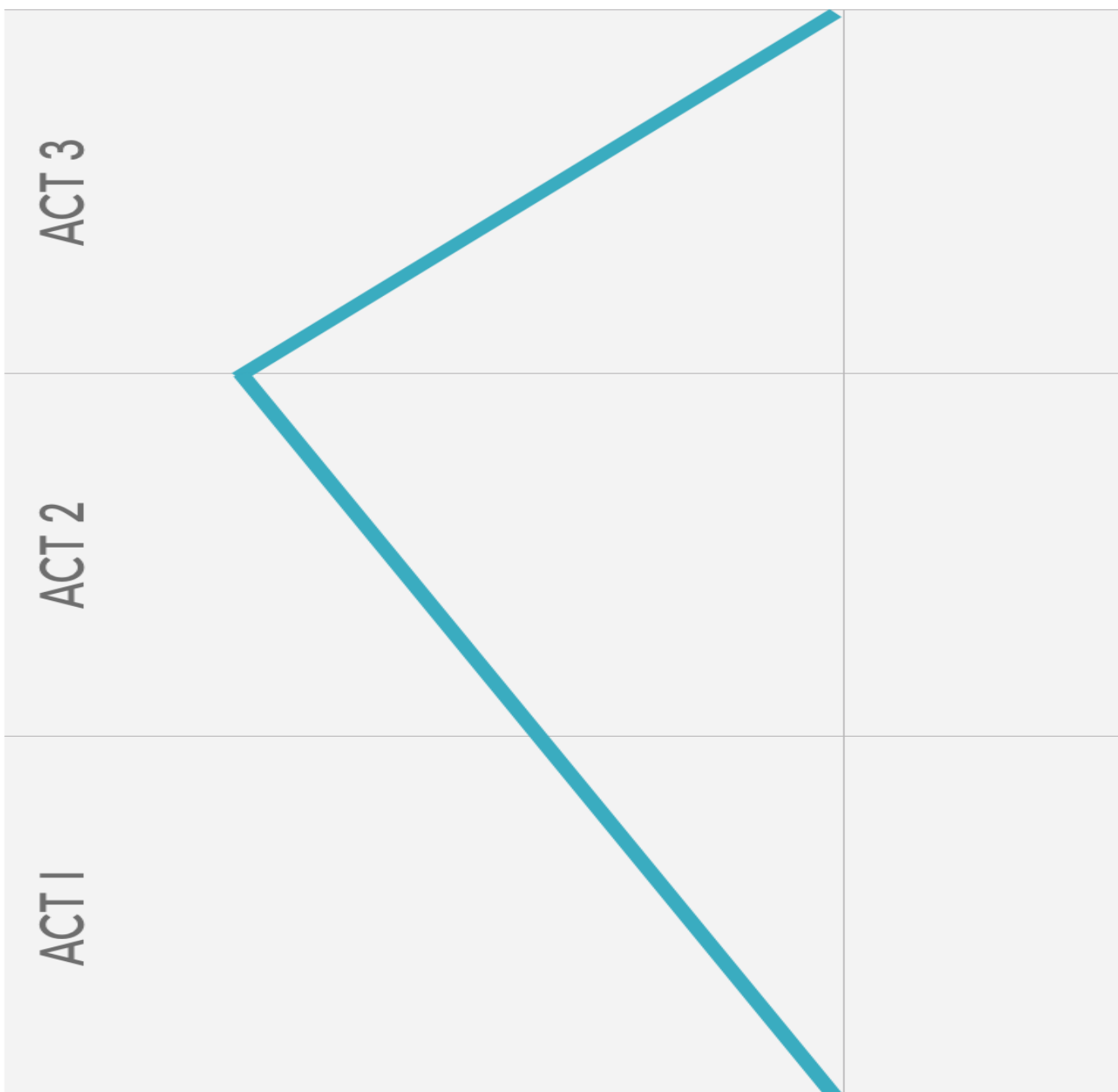
PAIRED WORK:

Below is a visual explanation of how the 3 Act structure typically works in films.

Task 1: In the boxes at the bottom of each Act, write in the various terms that can also be used to describe that act. You may need to use a dictionary to check the definition of others which have not yet been described.

Task 2: In the space in the top half of the Act boxes, label each act with the key plot points from DISTRICT 9 that fit into that Act.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Setup | Inciting incident | Midpoint | Finale | Obstacle |
| Denouement | End | Introduction | Struggle | Climax |
| Turning point | Crisis | Beginning | Middle | Resolution |



THE 5 ACT STRUCTURE

DEFINITION

The five-*act structure* is a slightly different way of examining narrative fiction that divides a story into five parts or acts. These 5 acts are often called Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Resolution. As with the 3 Act Structure, these different acts do have a range of names- we'll look at some of these shortly, but for now, we'll stick to Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Resolution. In many ways, they are very similar to the 3 Act structure, with the addition of the Rising and Falling Action.



The German playwright and novelist Gustav Freytag wrote the definitive study of the 5-act dramatic structure, in which he laid out what has come to be known as Freytag's Pyramid. Under Freytag's pyramid, the plot of a story consists of five parts: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution.

ACT 1: EXPOSITION

Here, the audience learns the setting (the time and the place), who the protagonist is and other main characters are. A conflict or inciting incident is introduced to propel the main story.

ACT 2: RISING ACTION

Here the protagonist is on a journey, quest or is aiming to achieve something set up by the inciting incident. The action of this act leads the audience to the climax. Complications or problems will arise and the protagonist will encounter obstacles which they can only overcome by learning new skills or developing as a person.

ACT 3. CLIMAX

This is the turning point of the film. A big moment of action or a big decision will usually occur here. This does NOT have to be in the middle of the plot however, and the climax is usually accompanied by the highest amount of suspense and/or tension.

ACT4: FALLING ACTION

This is the opposite of Rising Action, in that the Falling Action will see the story is coming to an end in some way. Unknown details or plot twists may be revealed but the goal of the protagonist is wrapped up at this point.

ACT 5: RESOLUTION

This is the final outcome of the narrative. Often a lesson is learned or a significant change has happened which is thought about and considered at this stage.

THE 5 ACT STRUCTURE

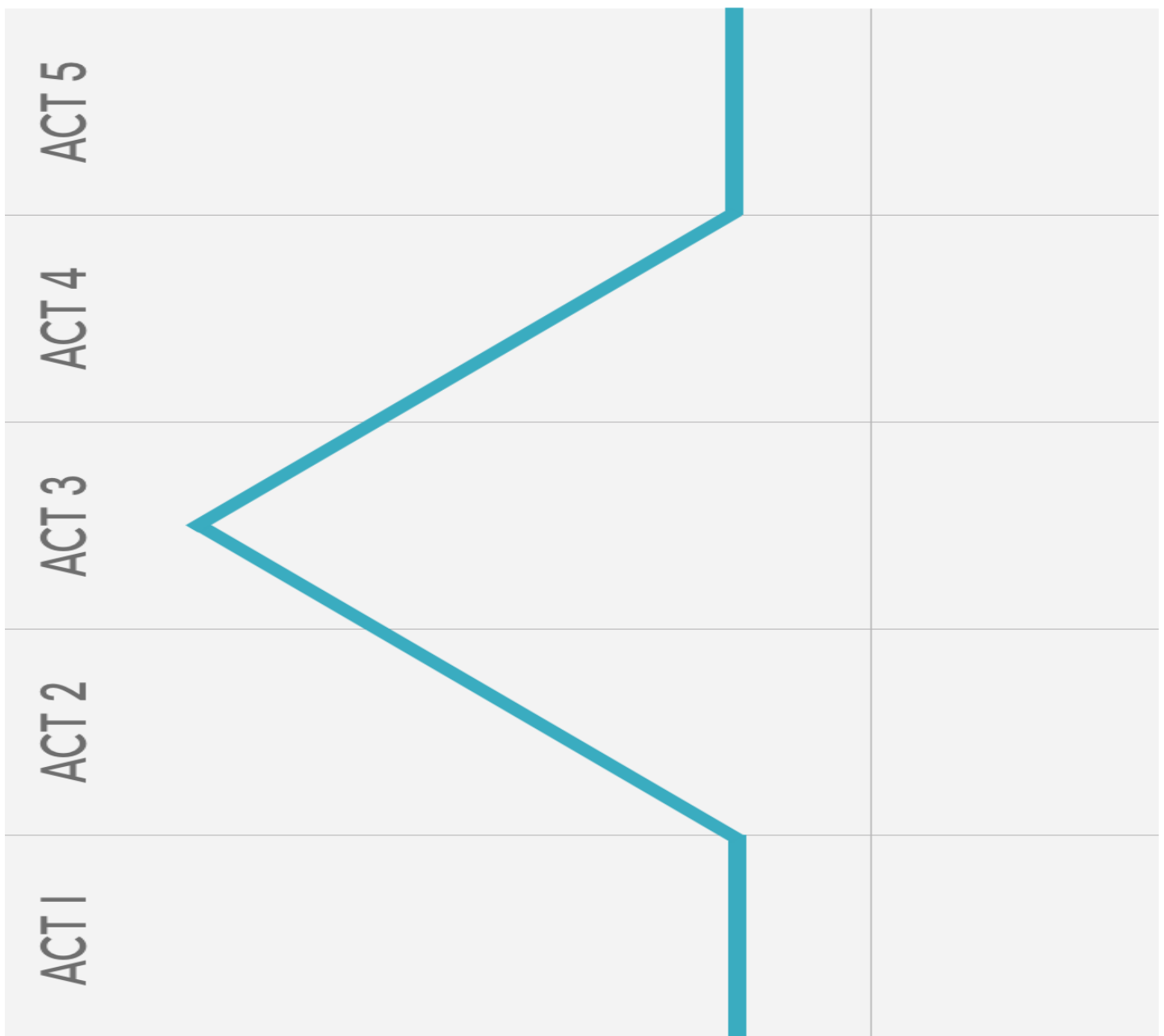
KNOWLEDGE CHECK:

Below is a visual explanation of how the 5 Act structure typically works in films.

Task 1: In the boxes at the bottom of each Act, write in the various terms that can also be used to describe that act. You may need to use a dictionary to check the definition of others which have not yet been described.

Task 2: In the space in the top half of the Act boxes, label each act with the key plot points from DISTRICT 9 that fit into that Act.

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Complication | Inciting incident | Conclusion | Finale | Obstacle |
| Denouement | Rising Action | Climax | Revelation | Introduction |
| Exposition | Opening | Falling Action | Middle | Resolution |



TZVETAN TODOROV

Tzvetan Todorov was a French-Bulgarian historian and literary critic. In 1969 he produced a theory which he believed could be applied to narratives. He suggested that the narrative of all films go through 5 main stages:

- **Equilibrium**
- **Disruption**
- **Recognition/Quest (sometimes called Realisation)**
- **Repair**
- **New equilibrium**



Equilibrium

This is the beginning of the story. Here, the main character is seen in their normal, everyday situation. We see what life is like for them and we discover key information such as setting including location, date and key relationships. The equilibrium may also offer a view of what the character is like as a person.

Disruption

As the name suggests, this stage features a disruption of some form to the equilibrium of the main character. This is often life-changing, perhaps catastrophic, event which significantly changes the equilibrium. If the equilibrium is, generally speaking, an insight to the protagonist's usually happy existence, the Disruption will stop this and cause unhappiness or an unwelcome change.

Recognition/Quest (sometimes called Realisation)

At this point in the story, the main character and perhaps those closest to them, realise and recognise that the equilibrium has been disrupted and that something needs to be done to sort this out. This usually forces the protagonist on a journey, seeking to find something or someone who can help repair the damage caused by the disruption.

Repair

Having recognised that the equilibrium was disrupted, the character/s attempt to repair the damage caused. This does not have to be literal damage and can be much more profound than this including a change in personality, a developing of skills or finding someone/something to attempt to put things back the way they were.

New equilibrium

Finally, the story will reach a stage where there is a new equilibrium is restored but, as things can never be the same again in the exact same way, a new equilibrium is established. Even in a story

where things appear to be the same, there will be some emotional changes and developments, so a new equilibrium is created.

TZVETAN TODOROV

PAIRED TASK

Having read about Todorov's narrative theory, you can hopefully begin to see how it might be able to be applied to many different films. It won't fit *every* film however, as films may choose to use an interesting or innovative plot structure. Often however, by examining the trajectory of a story, we can still witness how the main stories of most films can fit Todorov's narrative theory. Using the space below, aim to break down the stories of DISTRICT 9 and using the stages of Todorov's theory, see if you can describe an aspect of the film which suits each stage.

| |
|--------------------------|
| EQUILIBRIUM |
| |
| DISRUPTION |
| |
| RECOGNITION/QUEST |
| |
| REPAIR |
| |
| NEW EQUILIBRIUM |
| |

TZVETAN TODOROV

SOLO TASK

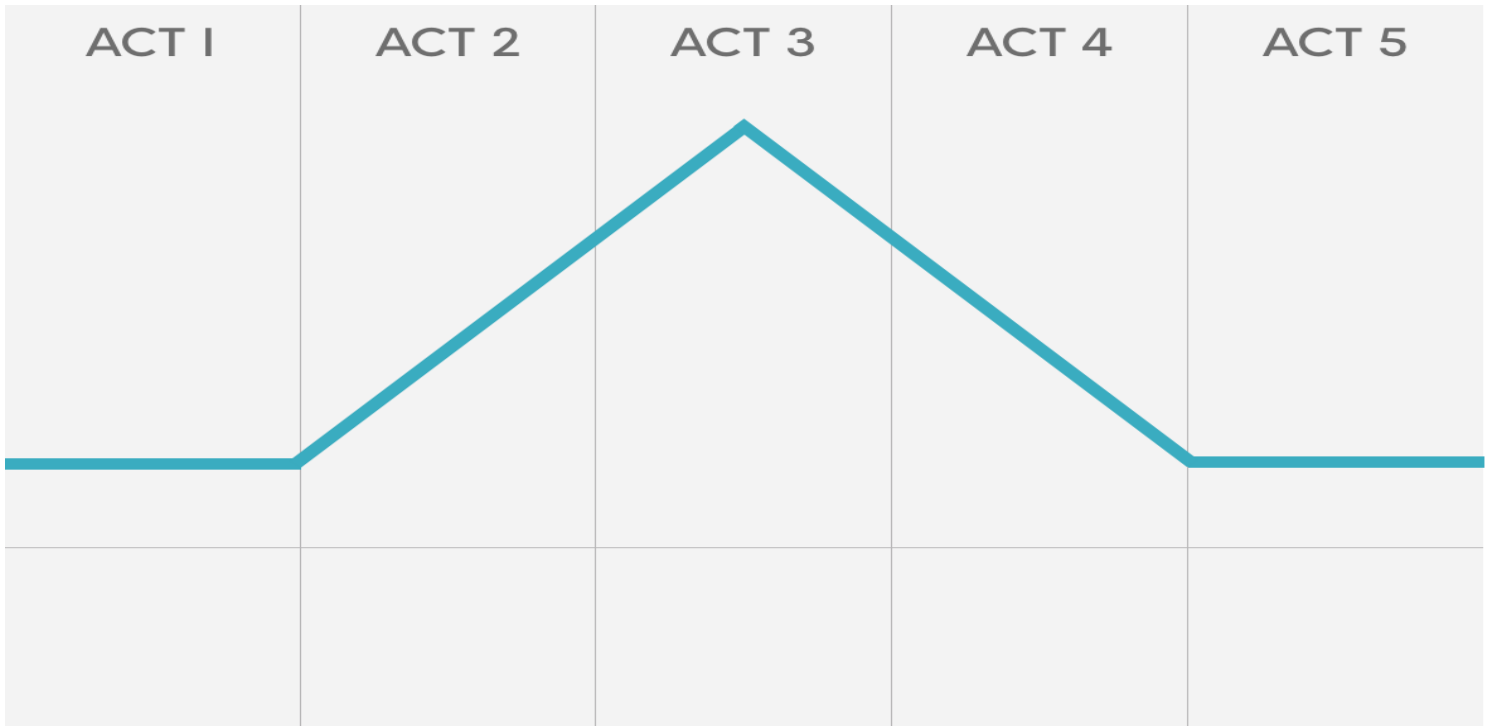
Take the 5 stages and descriptions from above. For each stage, select one scene from DISTRICT 9 (aim to select quite brief scenes, no more than 3 minutes in length) and in the white box briefly describe what happens in that scene. Then, in the grey box explain how the scene is presented on screen using film language. Aim to select a wide variety of film language examples.

| |
|---|
| KEY SCENE DESCRIPTION OF EQUILIBRIUM: |
| |
| KEY SCENE DESCRIPTION OF DISRUPTION: |
| |
| KEY SCENE DESCRIPTION OF <u>RECOGNITION/QUEST</u>: |
| |
| KEY SCENE DESCRIPTION OF REPAIR: |
| |
| KEY SCENE DESCRIPTION OF NEW EQUILIBRIUM: |
| |

TZVETAN TODOROV

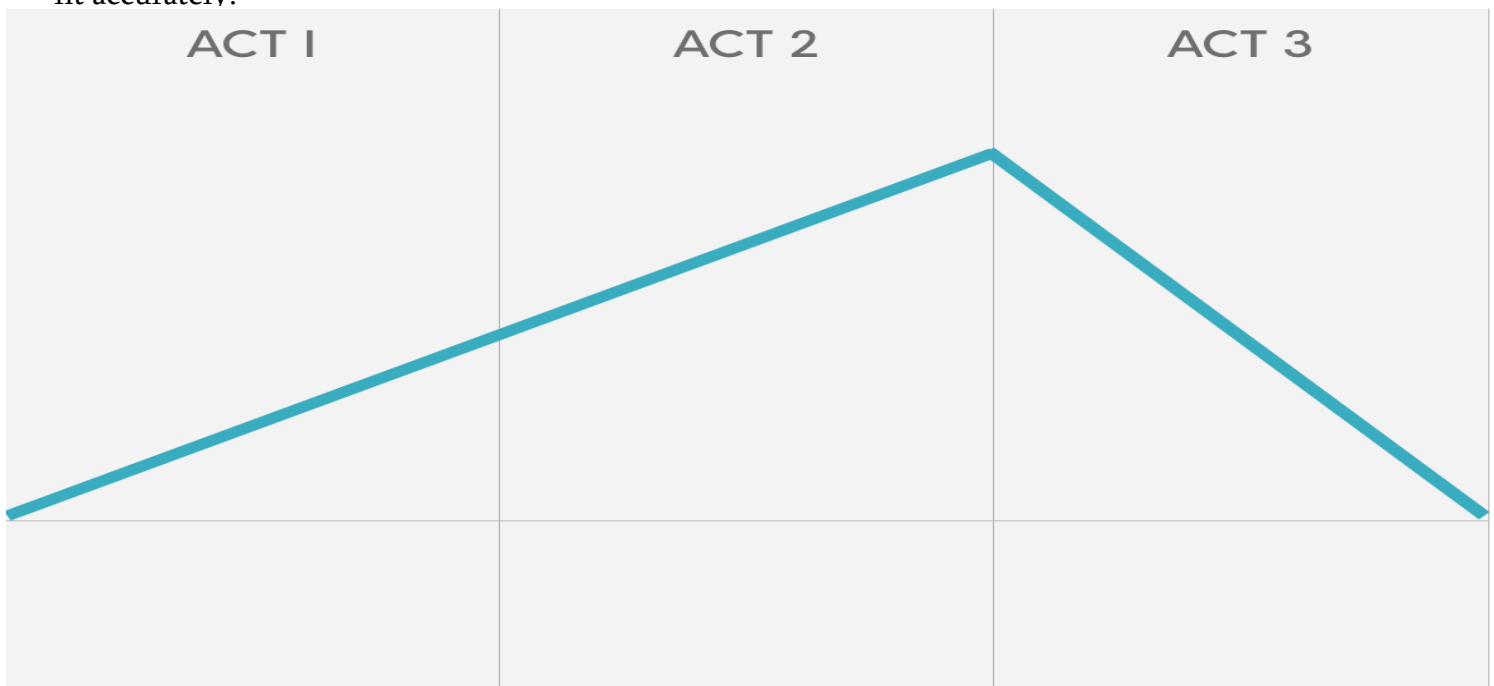
GROUP TASK

You may have noticed how Todorov's narrative theory uses 5 different stages and in this way, can be easily 'mapped' onto the 5 Act narrative structure. Using the 5 Act pyramid below, add your ideas of



the key scenes to the correct Acts in the boxes at the bottom of the pyramid, naming them using Todorov's stage names.

Slightly more complicated is being able to map Todorov's 5 stages onto a Freytag pyramid for Aristotle's 3 Act structure. Work in a small group to debate where you think the 5 stages could fit, giving examples as you write them on. You may need to write across more than one act to get all 5 to fit accurately.



TZVETAN TODOROV

SOLO TASK

Below are a range of questions that could be answered as essay questions to check and test your knowledge and understanding of the narrative of the film. You may not want, or be asked to, answer these questions by yourself as a series of essays and instead could use these as starting points for discussions, as homework or tests or revision.

Who was Tzvetan Todorov and what did he propose?

What were the 5 stages that he believed narratives go through and what was the function of each of them?

Referring to DISTRICT 9, explain how each of the different stages are seen in the film.

How is film language used in DISTRICT 9 to help create a key scene for each of the 5 stages that Todorov proposed?

In your opinion, which of Todorov's 5 stages doesn't fit DISTRICT 9? Give examples of film language and at least 1 key scene to explain your ideas.

Referring to your own ideas, which of Todorov's 5 stages suits DISTRICT 9 the best? Give examples of film language from at least 1 key scene to help explain your ideas.

Why might DISTRICT 9 not suit/fit Todorov's 5 narrative stages as well as other films? (For this, consider narrative structure of DISTRICT 9 and how the stories are presented)

What narrative structures suit Todorov's 5 narrative stages the best? Why is this? What narrative structures don't suit Todorov's idea and why?

Referring to DISTRICT 9 and at least 1 other film of your own choice, explain why Todorov's 5 narrative stages are effective in explaining how a film narrative usually works.

Referring to DISTRICT 9 and at least 1 other film of your own choice, explain why Todorov's 5 narrative stages is too restrictive to make an interesting and original film.

VLADIMIR PROPP

Vladimir Propp was a Russian scholar who analysed the basic plot components of Russian Folk tales to identify the simplest, most recognisable and, as a result, most 'repeatable' narrative elements. His most famous work, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, offers a detailed and impressively accurate explanation of how narratives can apply to a wide range of plots. Much like Todorov, Propp's theory is designed to be applied to a wide variety of plots. Impressively, it does often work and can be applied in two different ways, *narrative functions* and *character functions*.



NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS

By reading 100 Russian fairytales he was able to identify 31 functions and identified common themes within them. He broke down the stories into chunks he called morphemes managed to identify 31 elements or narratemes that comprised the structure of many of the stories. As with all narrative theories, these may not fit *all* narratives and stories to which you may want to apply them, but the sheer number of narratemes means that many films can fit many of these functions nicely.

Listed below are the narrative functions in their entirety. As with much of the narrative theories presented in here, you are NOT expected to be able to apply them to every question you may get in an exam, but instead can choose to apply what is the most useful or interesting to help your ideas and arguments. For something which has a slightly more complex narrative structure such as DISTRICT 9, it helps to assign key roles to some of the characters and prepare to be flexible in terms of what they character does/is expected to do.

PAIRED TASK

Using the tables below, read the different descriptions of each narrative function (narrateme) and consider whether it is present in DISTRICT 9. If it is, describe where/when it is seen in the film.

1st Sphere: Introduction

Steps 1 to 7 introduces the situation and most of the main characters, setting the scene for subsequent adventures.

| Narratemes | In DISTRICT 9? If so, where/when? |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Absentation: Someone goes missing | |
| 2. Interdiction: Hero is warned | |
| 3. Violation of interdiction: Hero ignores the warning | |
| 4. Reconnaissance: Villain seeks something | |
| 5. Delivery: The villain gains information | |
| 6. Trickery: Villain attempts to deceive victim | |
| 7. Complicity: Unwitting helping of the enemy | |

PAIRED TASK (continued)

Using the tables below, read the different descriptions of each narrative function (narrateme) and consider whether it is present in DISTRICT 9. If it is, describe where/when it is seen in the film.

2nd Sphere: The Body of the story

The main story starts here and extends to the departure of the hero on the main quest. As with other narrative theories, what the hero seeks may be an obvious physical object, a place or setting, some information or perhaps some new skills.

| Narratemes | In DISTRICT 9? If so, where/when? |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 8. Villainy and lack: The need (lack) is identified | |
| 9. Mediation: Hero discovers the lack or need | |
| 10. Counteraction: Hero chooses positive action | |
| 11. Departure: Hero leaves on mission | |

3rd Sphere: The Donor Sequence

In the third sphere, the hero goes in search of a method by which the solution may be reached, gaining the magical agent from the Donor. Note that this in itself may be a complete story. Some of these character functions (which are listed later on) may be flexible here-consider who talks to or demands something from the hero. As well as this, some of these narratemes may not fit the exact same order as we see them presented in DISTRICT 9, so try to be flexible with these and in some cases, select key narrative moments from the film perhaps out of order, but not drastically so.

| Narratemes | In DISTRICT 9? If so, where/when? |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 12. Testing: Hero is challenged to prove heroic qualities | |
| 13. Reaction: Hero responds to test | |
| 14. Acquisition: Hero gains magical item | |
| 15. Guidance: Hero reaches destination | |
| 16. Struggle: Hero and villain do battle | |
| 17. Branding: Hero is branded | |
| 18. Victory: Villain is defeated | |
| 19. Resolution: Initial misfortune or lack is resolved | |

PAIRED TASK (continued)

Using the tables below, read the different descriptions of each narrative function (narrateme) and consider whether it is present in DISTRICT 9. If it is, describe where/when it is seen in the film.

4th Sphere: The Hero's return

In the final phase of the storyline, the hero often returns home, hopefully uneventfully and to a hero's welcome, although this may not always be the case and often, there will be some dramatic change to the character and others around them. Of course, as with all films, DISTRICT 9 may not fit ALL of these narratemes given that they were designed to fit classic Russian folk tales.

| Narratemes | In DISTRICT 9? If so, where/when? |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 20. Return: Hero sets out for home | |
| 21. Pursuit: Hero is chased | |
| 22. Rescue: pursuit ends | |
| 23. Arrival: Hero arrives unrecognised | |
| 24. Claim: False hero makes unfounded claims | |
| 25. Task: Difficult task proposed to the hero | |
| 26. Solution: Task is resolved | |
| 27. Recognition: Hero is recognised | |
| 28. Exposure: False hero is exposed | |
| 29. Transfiguration: Hero is given a new appearance | |
| 30. Punishment: Villain is punished | |
| 31. Wedding: Hero marries and ascends the throne | |

SOLO TASK

Looking at your ideas of the 4 Spheres, out of 31 narratemes how many in total do you think DISTRICT 9 features? Which numbers are they? Summarise them in the space below:

CHARACTER FUNCTIONS

As well as defining 31 functions of narratives, Propp also concluded characters could fit 8 broad character *functions*. Again, it is important to remember that Propp devised these character functions by looking at traditional folk tales and as a result they have a very traditional set of descriptions that fit very traditional stories. For this reason, you may often find that these character functions, as well as the narrative functions, often fit and suit fairy tales better than they do contemporary film narratives. However, some of these character functions do suit many characters closely.

PAIRED TASK

Read each description carefully. As you read, consider examples of the characters from other films you have watched.

Then, underneath, list as many examples of the character types as you can, listing character names and the film they are in.



In every story there is a major character with whom the reader will normally associate most strongly and who is the key person around which the story is told. Although this person is often a hero they may also take another form, such as a victim or a seeker after some treasure or knowledge. They may not be a hero to begin with or a 'hero' in the traditional sense. We would typically identify Propp's idea of a hero as the protagonist.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:

HELPER



The Hero is supported in their quest by a Helper, who often appears at an important moment to provide support. Traditionally they would be a wise old man or magician, but other helpers usually appear along the way as friends or random people who support the Hero. In superhero films the Helper may be a sidekick or more of a scientist who develops new materials such as weapons or costumes for the hero.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



The sharpest contrast against the hero is the villain, who struggles directly against the hero. This is the clearly bad-guy person and typically is morally bad, highlighting the worthiness of the Hero. The Villain may seek to prevent the Hero from achieving the goal or may quest after the same artefact. The Villain may also present offers or temptations to the hero to get them to join them or stop their quest.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



Offering a potential complication within the plot is the False Hero, who appears to act heroically and may even be initially mistaken for the real Hero. However, they often have more in common with the villain as the False Hero will try to steal the Hero's thunder, grabbing the credit and perhaps trying to marry the princess instead.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



The Donor is a person who gives the Hero something special, such as a magical weapon or some particular wisdom that allows the Hero to develop, change or defeat the Villain. This role is often, but doesn't have to be combined with that of a Helper. The Donor may not be easily swayed and may not give up their gift without setting the Hero another task, from a simple riddle to a whole other quest.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



An early role in the story is that of the Dispatcher who sends the Hero on the mission. This may be a family member, the Princess's Father, who gives the Hero a set of quests to be completed before he gains the hand of the Princess or any other character who is/could be significant to the narrative. The Dispatcher may also be combined with another role, for example the False Hero who then trails along behind.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



The Princess may take two forms. First, she may be the object which is deliberately sought by the Hero, perhaps finding where the Villain has taken her. Secondly, she may be the reward, such that after completing some other mission, he gains her affections or hand in marriage. The Princess traditionally does not feature much in the story but can also be an integral character, for example where she accompanies the Hero on his mission, where he may win her heart by the courage and determination of his actions. The Princess may be wooed by many, in particular by the False Hero.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:



Finally, there is the Princess's Father, who constrains the Princess or who may Dispatch the Hero on his mission to save the Princess. The Princess's Father is a key figure for the Hero to persuade, as the Father is almost always protective of his daughter. The Father may also be in competition in some way with the Hero for the Princess's affections and a triangle may form.

YOUR EXAMPLES OF THIS CHARACTER TYPE:

VLADIMIR PROPP

PAIRED TASK

Having examined the 8 character functions identified by Vladimir Propp, now consider the characters in DISTRICT 9. For each of the character listed, see if you can apply Propp's character functions to any of them. You may find some fit easily, some take a while to work out, some may not fit at all or even that some fit more than one character function. Use the bullet points to list the character functions they fit and then explain to a partner WHY they fit that function. If working alone, perhaps use the space below to record why they suit one particular character function.



Wikus van der Mewe

-
-
-



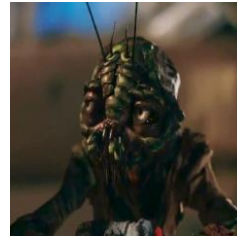
Gary Branan

-
-
-



Christopher Johnson

-
-
-



Little CJ

-
-
-



Fundiswa Mhlanga

-
-
-



Obesandjo

-
-
-



Tania van de Merwe

-
-
-



Koobus Venter

-
-
-



Piet Smith

-
-
-



Sarah Livingston

-
-
-

VLADIMIR PROPP

SOLO TASK

Below are a range of questions that could be answered as essay questions to check and test your knowledge and understanding of the narrative of the film. You may not want, or be asked to, answer these questions by yourself as a series of essays and instead could use these as starting points for discussions, as homework or tests or revision.

Who was Vladimir Propp and what were his main ideas?

What did Vladimir Propp study to develop his ideas around the 4 spheres of action and can you summarise the 4 including their names?

Of the 31 narratemes he proposed, how many would you suggest apply to DISTRICT 9? Which are they and briefly give examples of where each is seen in the film.

Analyse at least 1 key scene in detail, referring to film language, to help explain where at least one narrateme can clearly be seen in DISTRICT 9.

Why might it be that a modern film does not neatly feature all 31 narratemes proposed by Propp? (Consider where Propp got his ideas from in terms of his research)

Considering only the final scenes of the film, aim to explain why Propp's 4th sphere of action does not suit DISTRICT 9 very well, referring to film language and context.

Propp proposed there were 8 main character functions. List these and for each provide a brief explanation of what each one means.

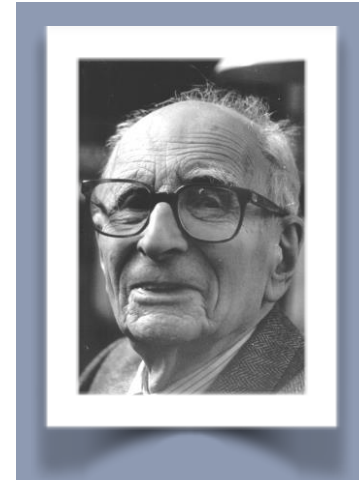
Referring to DISTRICT 9, explore which characters fit the character functions by describing them in detail, using film language where possible.

Why might some films struggle to suit the idea of Propp's 8 character functions? Aim to think of at least 3 different reasons and provide as detailed a response as possible.

Thinking about the opening 10 minutes of DISTRICT 9, what character functions do we see and why do you think they feature in the opening of the film.

CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS

Claude Lévi-Strauss was a French anthropologist key in the development of the theory of structuralism. In terms of narrative he proposed the idea of **Binary Opposition**.



BINARY OPPOSITION

Levi-Strauss' suggested the idea that things/objects/qualities often and in fact, should have a direct opposite. This idea shows how an audience can understand character, themes and even props in further detail by providing contrast and opposition. Whilst Levi-Strauss' ideas were not immediately designed for films, his ideas and work do apply to the narratives in films in a useful manner. For example in terms of characters, a protagonist could be typically pleasant and kind, whereas the antagonist could be the direct opposite to this by being nasty and selfish. The idea behind doing so allows the audience to see how the two character types emphasise each other and as a result in being so different, the audience can appreciate the characters in more detail.

As well as this, having an opposite (notice how similar the word *opposite* is to the word *opposition*, meaning "a person who disagrees with or resists a proposal or practice") allows the film to have contrast, tension and conflict. This is key in driving a narrative; as we have seen in earlier this guide, having conflict is central in making a character do something. A character and a story needs conflict so that a hero can go on a journey, so that the protagonist has to discover or battle something/someone. Conflict causes a character to change, to engage with others, to create tension and interest and therefore intrigue and alignment from the audience. Without contrast and without conflict, characters lack the motivation to do anything and would simply stay the same forever.

Looking at the 3 and 5 Act structure or Propp's Spheres of Action and/or Character Functions, almost all of them would not be seen or used in a film if there was no conflict or disruption in the film in the first place.

Simply; without conflict, narratives lack purpose and drive.

GROUP TASK

On the next page is a brief timeline of some key moments the film. You may wish to add more key moments to it.

Using the space underneath it, add to each moment in what conflict is seen to drive this moment in the film. Then discuss what opposition is seen that drives that conflict and then write down an example of the two character, props, themes or moments from the narrative overall that are in opposition during that key moment.

A camp called District 9 is set up for the aliens.

Aliens arrive in Johannesburg but cannot leave.

MNU is going to force the aliens to a new camp.

Wikus is in charge of the removal of the aliens. Koobus wants to deal with the aliens violently.

Many of the aliens do not want to move. Some aliens attempt to hide themselves or things that are

Wikus is injured and taken into hospital. MNU decide to use Wikus' transformed arm to do tasks

Wikus escapes. Wikus teams up with CJ to break into MNU.

CJ tries to leave D9 and get back to the mothership to rescue the aliens stranded on Earth.

CJ decides he has to go home first and come back to rescue Wikus and the other aliens.

Wikus tries to stop MNU from trying to capture CJ.

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

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Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

Opposition:
Film language that shows opposition:

PAIRED TASK

Below are a list of some characters and props in DISTRICT 9. For each, list their names and describe what they are like. An extension, explain how they affect or are involved in the narrative. Then, discuss and decide on an opposite to that character or prop and add their name to the labelled box. Then describe them in terms of being an opposite and finally, explain how each is involved in the narrative.

| Character/Prop | Description | Opposite | Description |
|---------------------|-------------|---|-------------|
| Wikus | | [Hint: think about what Wikus is like and who has the opposite personality] | |
| Christopher Johnson | | [Hint: think about who is the opposite to how CJ acts- they do not have to be an alien] | |
| Tania van de Merwe | | [Hint: consider what Tania knows and how she deals with Wikus' situation] | |
| Alien gun | | [Hint: first of all, think about what it is and what it does, then HOW it does it. What prop is the opposite of this?] | |
| Alien mothership | | [Hint: think about what the mothership is and why it's in the film. Think about a location where humans live that is the opposite of the spaceship] | |
| Alien Mech-suit | | [Hint: first of all, think about what it is and what it does, then HOW it does it. What prop is the opposite of this?] | |

SOLO TASK

Using the space below, explain how the contrast of the people and props in the film helps to make us appreciate the characters more by answering the questions.

How would you describe Wikus as a person? Think about the opposite of him to really consider what he's like as a person and what his personality is like.

What is Wikus' role in the narrative? Describe what he does and how he affects the stories he's involved in.

Who is Wikus' opposite? Does this stay the same throughout the film?

How would you describe Christopher Johnson as a person? Think about the opposite of him to really consider what he's like as a person and what his personality is like.

What is Christopher's role in the narrative? Describe what he does and how he affects the stories he's involved in.

How would you describe Tania as a person? Think about the opposite of her to really consider what he's like as a person and what his personality is like.

What is Tania's role in the narrative? She is not involved in the film that much, so consider how her opposite character acts to make it clear how she acts and perhaps what she doesn't do that affects the narrative.

What is the purpose of the alien gun in the narrative?

Why do we need to see the opposite to the alien gun to help the narrative?

What is the purpose of the alien mothership in the narrative?

Why do we need to see the opposite to the alien mothership to help the narrative and understand more about the opposite location to it.

What is the purpose of the alien mech-suit in the narrative?

CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS

SOLO TASK

Below are a range of questions that could be answered as essay questions to check and test your knowledge and understanding of the narrative of the film. You may not want, or be asked to, answer these questions by yourself as a series of essays and instead could use these as starting points for discussions, as homework or tests or revision.

Who was Claude Levi-Strauss and what did he propose?

In your own words, explain why Levi-Strauss' idea help to make characters more detailed and interesting.

Thinking about DISTRICT 9 overall, describe, referring to at least 1 key scene, why binary opposition is used in the narrative.

Throughout the film there are many examples of binary opposition taking place, referring to at least 1 character and 1 prop, explain how binary opposition is used in DISTRICT 9 to create conflict and tension.

Generally speaking, why do many films have characters that have direct opposites?

In DISTRICT 9 there are a few main characters but only Wikus goes through a journey that sees him physically and emotionally change. Referring to at least 1 key scene and with reference to film language, explain how binary opposition forces Wikus to transform.

Given the nature of the two main groups (humans and aliens) that are established early in the film, explain why you think it was important that the script was designed so that the two groups were in direct opposition.

Referring to film language in at least 1 scene, explain how we see binary opposition between the humans and the aliens.

Referring to film language in at least 1 scene, explain how we see conflict between the humans and the aliens in relation to the differences between them.

Our protagonist Wikus faces a lot of opposition throughout the film. List and explain some binary oppositions to Wikus from throughout the film.

Thinking about other aspects of narrative techniques and structures, why do you think that it was important for the film that Wikus change is generated by binary opposition and therefore conflict?

GENERIC CONVENTIONS

Generic conventions are those things which keep popping up in different films in the same genre.

Watching an action film? You're expecting explosions, guns, chases and a clear villain.

Watching a romantic comedy? There will probably be romance, dates gone wrong and a happy ending.

Watching a Western? You'll be wanting to see horses, six-shooter guns, a shoot-out and the film to be set in the American West.

What does this have to do with DISTRICT 9 and narrative?

DISTRICT 9 is, as most films are really, a mixture of genres. It could perhaps be best said to be a science fiction, action-comedy filmed in a documentary style. As a result there's lots of different things we're expecting to see in the film.

SOLO TASK

Below, list what generic conventions you would expect to see in each of the genres that DISTRICT 9 belongs to. You may want to add a further genres and conventions using the extra space at the bottom of the table.

| | Cinematography | Mise-en-scene | Sound | Editing |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Science fiction | | | | |
| Action | | | | |
| Comedy | | | | |
| Documentary | | | | |
| | | | | |

GENERIC CONVENTIONS

Generic conventions then can act as a way of suggesting to an audience of what to expect in a film and as a result, can influence the narrative. If we identify certain generic elements that make a film, for example, a science fiction film, we may then expect the narrative of the film to contain certain ideas or scenes because of other films in that genre usually do. For example, horror films usually feature a scare and the death of a minor character, musicals feature singing and dancing and a superhero film will have the main hero fighting against the main villain. As we watch films that have a clear genre, we expect to see these key scenes and when we don't yet see them, we anticipate that they will occur at some point during the film.

When watching DISTRICT 9, we also develop certain expectations. This will be created through things like the 5 Act structure, Propp's character functions and many more, but we will also have expectations based on the generic conventions of the film.

Having previously listed some examples of film language on the previous page, your task below asks you to consider the generic conventions of narrative and apply them to DISTRICT 9.

SOLO TASK

Below are a list of generic conventions of narratives from sci-fi, action and documentary. Watch (or recall the film) and tick when they're used. In each box, write a brief explanation of when/where seen. Some of these may NOT be seen in DISTRICT 9, but are there as reminders about generic conventions of the genres the film belongs to. There are also some blank boxes to write your own ideas.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| fist fight | a group of people tracking someone down | | news reports | a journey into space | spaceship |
| dystopian setting | CGI | ambiguous character types | | footage from CCTV | practical effects-i.e, stuntment |
| gun fight | interviews with specialists | | car chase | | timetravel |
| | a voice over | dialogue is short and aggressive | technology that doesn't yet exist | laser/laser gun | |
| handheld camera movements | 'wobbly' framing | interviews | | dialogue contains scientific terms | recreations of events |
| explosions | | chase on foot | aliens | | good vs. evil |

GENERIC CONVENTIONS

SOLO TASK

List 5 things you expect to see in DISTRICT 9 because it's a sci-fi film.

List 5 things you expect to see in DISTRICT 9 because it's an action film.

List 5 things you expect to see in DISTRICT 9 because it has elements of a documentary film.

Give 3 examples of props used in DISTRICT 9 that are generic conventions of action films.

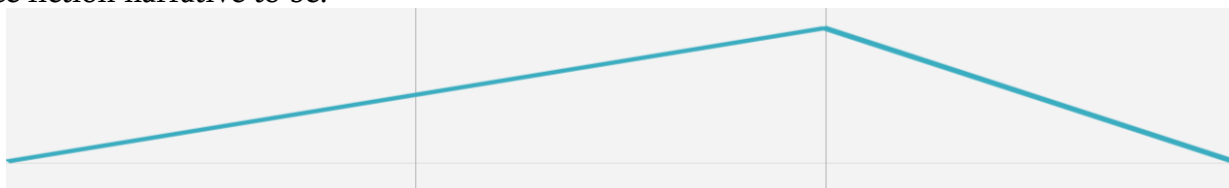
Give 3 examples of camera angles and/or shot sizes that are generic conventions of science fiction films.

Give 3 examples of cinematography that are generic conventions of the documentary genre.

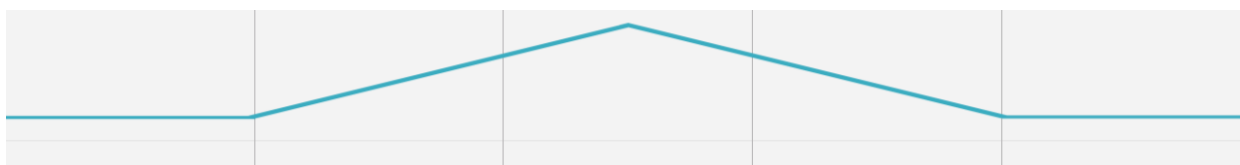
Using Aristotle's 3 Act Structure below, complete the pyramid so to show what you'd expect a generic action film narrative to be.



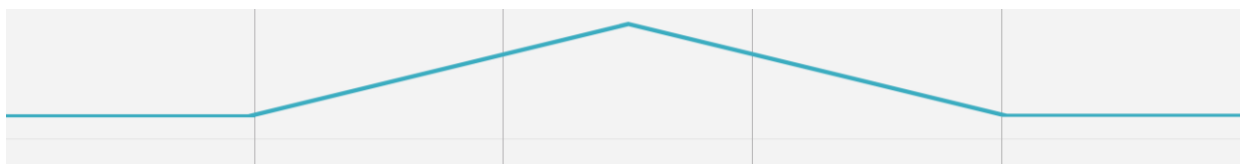
Using Aristotle's 3 Act Structure below, complete the pyramid so to show what you'd expect a generic science fiction narrative to be.



Using the 5 Act Structure Pyramid below, complete the pyramid so to show what you'd expect a generic science fiction narrative to be based on either Freytag or Todorov's theory for a 5 Act structure.



Using the 5 Act Structure Pyramid below, complete the pyramid so to show what you'd expect a generic action narrative to be based on either Freytag or Todorov's theory for a 5 Act structure.



INTERPRETING THE NARRATIVE

Having spent some time looking at DISTRICT 9 and different ways of approaching the narrative, it's time to start considering how the narrative may seem to be different for different viewers. As with any film, the response to it by one audience member may be different to someone else and while the reason for this can be difficult to analyse or describe, the best candidates in the exam will be able to not only explain how the narrative for DISTRICT 9 'works', but also explain how someone else may see that narrative differently.

With that in mind, over the next few pages you'll find several activities that allow you to consider and explain how people may see the film and see or have different ideas about different aspects of the film.

DEFINITION

Literal; this is what we see on screen-the actual film, story, characters etc.

Metaphorical; this is a version of what we see on screen and what we think that the story, characters or film overall is suggesting. For example, the representation of a specific character may be used as a metaphor for another person or group of people in real life.

GROUP TASK

Discuss ideas related to the two ideas below and note the literal and metaphorical interpretation for both. This activity can be applied to most characters or aspects of the narrative and even some props if you'd like to develop your ideas further.



Describe Christopher Johnson using a literal interpretation.

Describe who Christopher Johnson may metaphorically represent.



Describe the displacement of the aliens from District 9 to the new camp using a literal explanation.

Describe what the displacement of the aliens from District 9 to the new camp may metaphorically represent.

PAIRED TASK

Now that you've had the chance to see how the idea of literal and metaphorical interpretation can be applied to some aspects of the film, now consider how the narrative of the film overall could be described and then how it could be interpreted.

The great thing about interpretation is that different audience members can see a film and interpret different ideas and meanings-so be prepared to offer evidence for your interpretation through the use of example of film language and examples from context related to the film.

To do this next task, it's recommended that you have your 3/5 act structure pyramids to hand.

To begin: describe the literal story of DISTRICT 9 using only the space below.

Next: describe the literal plot of DISTRICT 9 using only the space below.

Then: describe what the narrative of DISTRICT 9 could metaphorically represent. You will need to consider context here.

Finally: describe what the plot of DISTRICT 9 could metaphorically represent. For this you can produce your own idea entirely, but will need to provide examples of film language to help make your point clear.

THEMES & ISSUES

DEFINITION

Before we consider the specific themes & issues of DISTRICT 9, it may be useful to consider the difference between story types and themes. Story types are, as the name suggest, the types of stories you may see in a film. These are generally the genres or the generic conventions you see in a film that you see in more than just this film. Themes however are what the underlying message, or 'big idea' is behind the story. In other words, what the Director, producer, actors, scriptwriter or anyone involved in the creative choices in the film are trying to say about the world. This belief, or idea, is universal in nature meaning that it can be applied to almost anyone in any place in the world.

Trying to work out what themes (we can also refer to them as issues-the two words here are interchangeable) a film has can be quite tricky, but here are a few ways.

- First of all, think about what does the film have to say about the 'human experience' or, what it means or is like to be human?
- Consider less of "what is the film about" and more of "what is the *point* of the film?" and "what is it trying to tell us?"
- Finally, consider these possible ideas in two main ways; major themes and minor themes. Major themes are the 'big' important ideas. Minor themes are the smaller ideas-perhaps only 'showing up' in a scene or two or only relevant to one or two of the characters.

Having done that, now it's time to see if we can identify some major themes in DISTRICT 9. Major themes can generally be separated into 3 main areas; feelings, relationships and social structures. Films may have ideas and things it wants to say or suggest and these 3 areas will generally cover most major themes. Of course, there will be many others, but these are a good place to start.

| Feelings | Relationships | Social Structures |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| love | weakness | justice |
| fear | convenience | war |
| hate | fatherhood | altruism |
| nervousness | power | crime |
| joy | friendship | discrimination |
| empathy | honesty | slavery |
| embarrassment | motherhood | leadership |
| excitement | loyalty | peace |
| anger | lying | prejudice |

SOLO TASK

Watch DISTRICT 9. As you do, see if you can spot any of the themes below across the whole film, not just in one moment or in one character. Highlight each you identify, but aim to highlight only a small number and try not to do so until you've finished watching the film.

THEMES & ISSUES

PAIRED TASK

Looking at the themes you identified in DISTRICT 9, now it's time to link these to which parts of the narrative they are most visible in.

Below are a series of screencaps that represent key parts of the film. For each one, write down underneath what each image represents in terms of the narrative and, as much as possible a major or minor theme that is seen in each. You should find quite quickly that you are repeating the themes you identify, but this is fine and will help with the next task.

You will notice the screenshots are not in order. This will also allow you to practice recalling the narrative and you can do this in two ways; by numbering these screenshots so that they follow the



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |



| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: | Narrative: |
| Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: | Minor theme: |
| Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: | Major theme: |

THEMES & ISSUES

GROUP TASK

You may find that there are more themes and different themes that you personally feel are present in DISTRICT 9 than the ones already listed in this guide. In fact, in terms of major themes, many of the 'classic' themes haven't yet been addressed. Below are ten themes which are often said to be the most commonly identified in films. Working in pairs, see if you can name some other films where these themes are seen. You may want to write them down or simply discuss/share ideas, but you'll quickly find that these themes appear in many films you've seen. It's especially interesting to note how many of these themes feature conflict as a key aspect given that conflict can often be used as a way of driving a narrative.

10. Man vs. Nature

9. Man vs. Himself

8. Loss of innocence

7. Revenge

6. Death (as part of life)

5. The Battle

4. Individual vs. Society

3. Triumph over adversity

2. Love (conquers all)

1. GOOD VS. EVIL

SOLO TASK

For the major themes listed above, how many can you identify in DISTRICT 9? Using the spaces below, aim to list as many as relevant and in the bottom of the space, explain where/how that theme is seen using as much film language as possible.

The image shows ten yellow sticky notes arranged in two rows of five. Each sticky note is tilted slightly to the right. The top row contains five notes, each with the text 'Theme:' at the top and 'Film' at the bottom. The bottom row also contains five notes, each with the text 'Theme:' at the top and 'Film' at the bottom. The notes are intended for a solo task where students identify themes in the film DISTRICT 9 and provide examples of film language.

THEMES & ISSUES

THEMES & CONTEXT

One final thing to consider in terms of themes and issues is how context can have an influence on not only what we see on screen but also how we think of the images. Therefore, context can also affect the themes and issues, given that the background details to a film can influence how a director, scriptwriter or actor may choose to represent a character or a situation.

For example, in DISTRICT 9 we've looked at how major themes such as loss of innocence, revenge, death, the battle, triumph over adversity, love and good versus evil are all prominent. However, some of these are further reinforced when we consider the context of the film. As referred to before, there is much to the context of this film in terms of social, historical and political context, so when we consider for example, how apartheid is seen in the film, it's difficult not to therefore make links to the themes of the film too. Apartheid and the treatment of minorities is clearly then, a key theme and issue for this film. Similarly, the visual references and treatment of refugees is something which DISTRICT 9 deals with in detail and this ties in with the major themes of discrimination and slavery as well as empathy and power.

In fact, having watched the film you should now be able to consider how the film reflects the key themes and context in the film.

PAIRED TASK

Below are the screenshots used earlier in this guide when analysing how context is seen in the film. As before, annotate the shots referring to the areas of film language provided but this time, also analyse how the themes provided for each are reflected in the images used. You will need your annotations for the questions on context in themes & issues.

POWER FEAR WAR DISCRIMINATION



LIGHT/COLOUR PROPS LOCATION SHOT SIZE

THE BATTLE POWER SEGREGATION



LOCATION PROPS FRAMING CAMERA

GOOD VS. EVIL PREJUDICE ANGER



LIGHTING/COLOUR SHOT SIZE LOCATION

THEMES AND ISSUES QUESTIONS

SOLO TASK

Define what theme means in relation to film studies.

Define what an issue is in relation to film studies.

List at least 5 of the top 10 themes most commonly seen in film.

What is the difference between a major and a minor theme?

One way of establishing theme is to consider themes in one of three main categories. What are these categories?

Give at least 3 examples for each of the categories you've listed above.

What is context?

Why might context be important to consider when thinking about themes/issues?

Overall, what 5 major themes/issues would you say are the most important in DISTRICT 9?

For each of the themes you've listed above, give one example of a key scene where each theme/issue is seen.

For each of the scenes listed above, give at least one precise example of how film language is used to create that theme/issue.

In your opinion, why are themes important to films?

Why are might different people see or think about different themes/issues when they watch the same film?

Thinking only about themes/issues, why can we watch DISTRICT 9 and see a different theme or issue as being most important, based on what we know about it's context?

Finally, explain how themes/issues in one key scene of your choice is seen and created through the use of film language.

ASSESSMENT AND KEY SCENES

When we consider just how much there could be to reference or cover in terms of narrative for this aspect of the GCSE exam, it seems that there is simply too much content. However, in the exam there will be no expectation for you to mention and refer to every aspect of narrative structure, theorists, techniques or styles rather, begin by ensuring you know the narrative of DISTRICT 9 in detail and then produce analysis from this. This could mean, for example, that when looking at the questions given, you find no need to refer to theorists or anything else but narrative structure and how it was influenced by the context of the film. A different question may see you decide to explore how context is presented through the story of a character. Essentially; there is a large amount of freedom in how you answer a question if you happen to have an excellent understanding of knowledge of narrative in DISTRICT 9.

The questions from the Eduqas SAMS are provided below for reference: based on what you've learned /revised using this guide, could you now answer these questions? If not, what do you need to go back and

1. (a) What do you understand by the social context of a film? [2]
- (b) Briefly describe the main social context of your chosen film. [3]
- (c) Explore how the narrative of your chosen film reflects its social context.

In your answer, you should consider:

- how key characters reflect the social context
- how the social context is built into the narrative
- at least one example from the film's narrative which demonstrates its social context. [15]

SOLO TASK

Having now analysed, examined and explored the film in some depth, now is the time to start focusing what you've learned and apply this to three key scenes. For each identified key scene, use the hexagon provided to analyse a range of film language elements that help to establish or emphasise the context and/or the narrative of that scene. When completed, the hexagon will allow you to plan and prepare a series of points to help you answer detailed exam questions, such as the 15 mark question above.

To complete the hexagon, start with the smallest inner ring and add 6 examples of film language in the scene provided. In the next ring, describe how context is seen in that scene with 6 examples that link to the film language example in the section next to it. Finally, in the outer ring, describe *how* the example of film language and context is reflected in the narrative. This sounds much trickier than it is, so one section has been completed for you. Aim to complete 3 of these hexagons in total-this will give you 3 keys worth of revision and a wide mix of film language, context and narratives examples to reference in any question you are asked.

Finally, when writing a detailed answer, simply copy the relevant sections needed, working from the inside ring outwards, remembering to follow the example from each section and perhaps even adding more detail as you go.

KEY SCENE 1

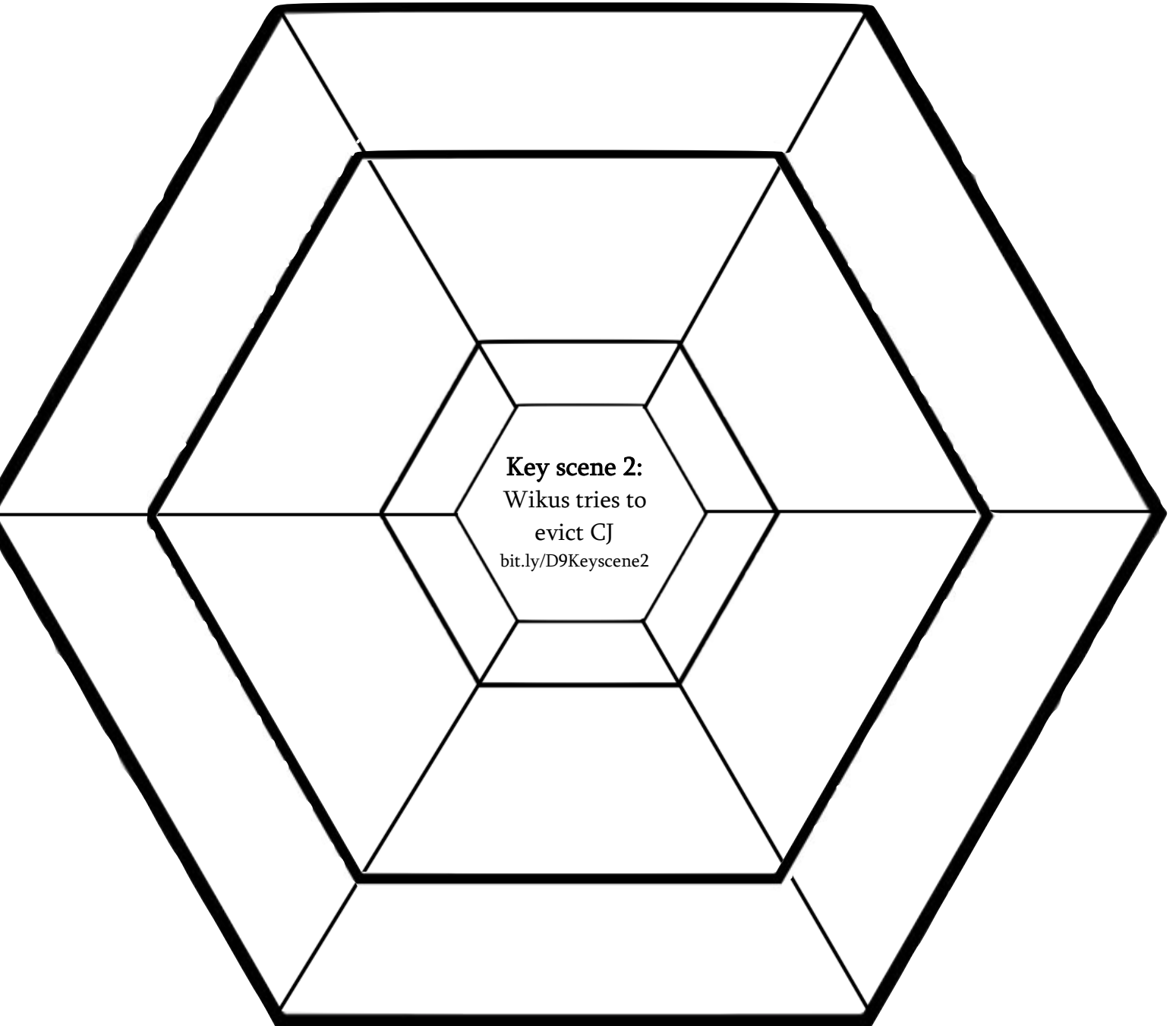
During the opening scene we see that the armed guards are carrying too much ammo, breaking regulations that Wikus meekly tries to enforce. Not only does this establish Wikus as being powerless but also the foreshadowing of having too many bullets acts as a cause for the effect later on that violence is used against the aliens against Wikus' wishes.

The aliens are going to be forcibly removed from District 9 by MNU. This links to the idea of victims of apartheid being moved from Sophiatown against their will, with policemen using violence to destroy

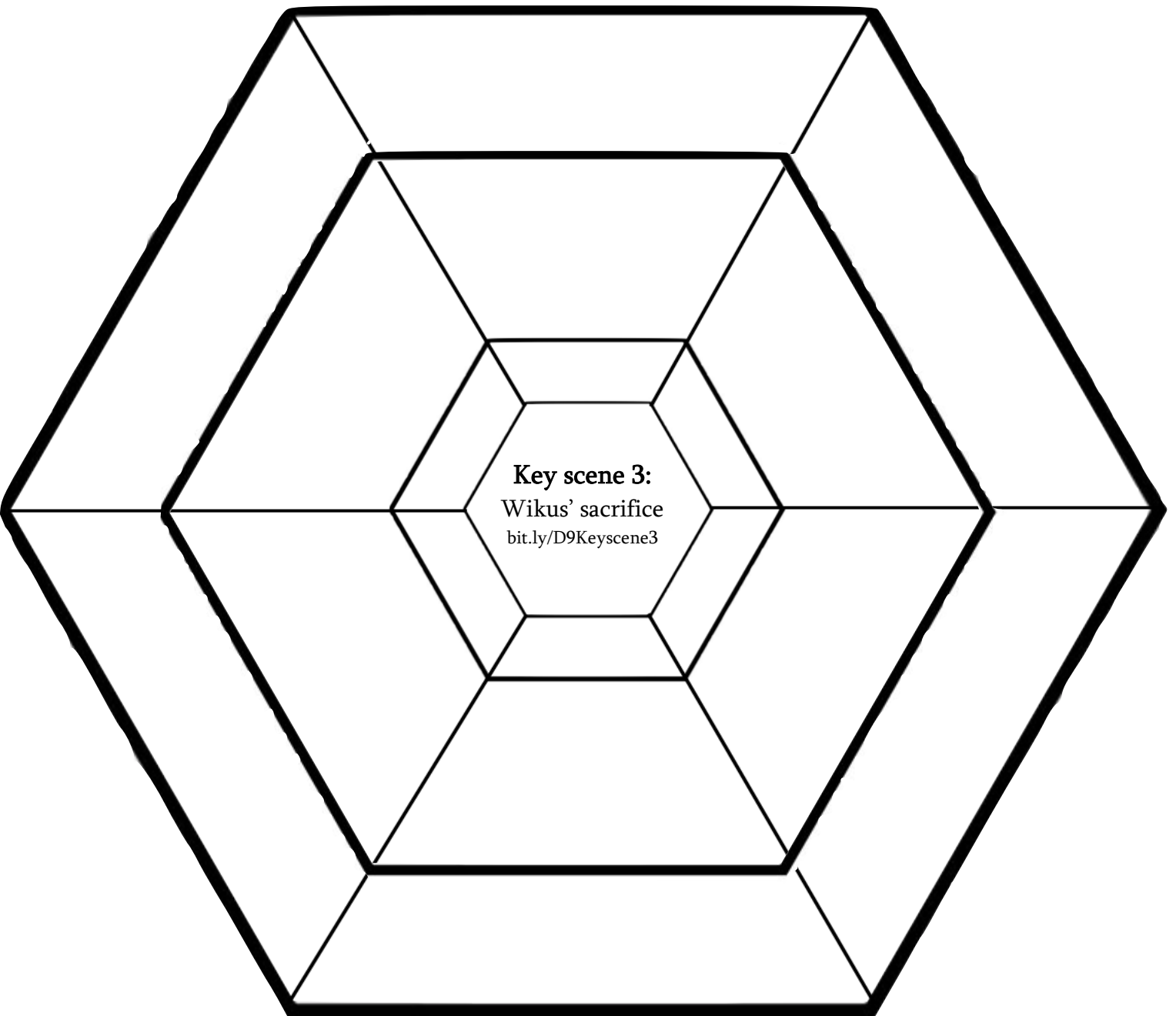
Props: guns.

Key scene 1:
MNU prepare to evict the aliens.
bit.ly/D9Keyscene1

KEY SCENE 2



KEY SCENE 3



OTHER NARRATIVE FEATURES AND TECHNIQUES

Finally, narrative is a complex and detailed area of film studies and continues to develop. As stated before and as we've seen in the theorists and techniques we've studied, narrative in film studies borrows heavily from literature. As a result, there are some terms and techniques that we've not covered but you may hear from time to time when working with narrative. The tables on the next few pages are designed to act as a way of quickly covering as much as possible; some will be revision of things we've already looked at, some will be new, some may be more familiar than others and similarly some you may have seen being in DISTRICT 9, some you may not. Carefully read the examples of each and, if used in DISTRICT 9, explain where/when it is seen in the film. If it isn't add as an example from another film you have seen.

| Technique | Definition | EXAMPLE |
|--|---|---------|
| Backstory | Story that precedes events in the story being told—past events or background that add meaning to current circumstances | |
| Chekhov's gun | A dramatic principle that requires every element in a narrative to be irreplaceable, with anything else removed. | |
| Cliffhanger | The narrative ends unresolved, to draw the audience back to a future episode for the resolution. | |
| <i>Deus ex machina</i> (a machination, or act of god; lit. "god out of the machine") | Resolving the primary conflict by a means unrelated to the story (e.g., a god appears and solves everything). This device dates back to ancient Greek theater, but can be a clumsy method that frustrates the audience. | |
| Eucatastrophe | Coined by J. R. R. Tolkien, a climactic event through which the protagonist appears to be facing a catastrophic change. However, this change does not materialize and the protagonist finds himself as the benefactor of such a climactic event; contrast <i>peripeteia</i> . | |
| Flashback (or analeptic reference) | General term for altering time sequences, taking characters back to the beginning of the tale, for instance | |

| Technique | Definition | EXAMPLE |
|--|--|---------|
| Plot twist | Unexpected change ("twist") in the direction or expected outcome of the plot. See also twist ending. | |
| Poetic justice | Virtue ultimately rewarded, or vice punished, by an ironic twist of fate related to the character's own conduct | |
| Predestination paradox | Time travel paradox where a time traveler is caught in a loop of events that "predestines" them to travel back in time | |
| Quibble | Plot device based on an argument that an agreement's intended meaning holds no legal value, and that only the exact, literal words agreed on apply. | |
| Red herring | Diverting attention away from an item of significance. | |
| Self-fulfilling prophecy | Prediction that, by being made, makes itself come true. | |
| <i>Story within a story</i> (Hypodiegesis) | A story told within another story. See also frame story. | |
| Ticking clock scenario | Threat of impending disaster—often used in thrillers where salvation and escape are essential elements | |
| Unreliable narrator | The narrator of the story is not sincere, or introduces a bias in his narration and possibly misleads the reader, hiding or minimizing events, characters, or motivations. | |

| Technique | Definition | EXAMPLE |
|--|---|---------|
| Flashforward | Also called prolepsis, a scene that temporarily jumps the narrative forward in time. Flashforwards often represent events expected, projected, or imagined to occur in the future. They may also reveal significant parts of the story that have not yet occurred, but soon will in greater detail. | |
| Foreshadowing | Implicit yet intentional efforts of an author to suggest events which have yet to take place in the process of narration. See also repetitive designation and Chekhov's gun | |
| Frame story, or a story within a story | A main story that organizes a series of shorter stories. | |
| Framing device | A single action, scene, event, setting, or any element of significance at the beginning and end of a work. The use of framing devices allows frame stories to exist. | |
| <i>In medias res</i> | Beginning the story in the middle of a sequence of events. A specific form of narrative hook. | |
| MacGuffin | A plot device in the form of some goal, desired object, or other motivator that the protagonist pursues, often with little or no narrative explanation as to why it is considered so important. | |
| Narrative hook | Story opening that "hooks" readers' attention so they will keep reading | |
| Ochi | A sudden interruption of the wordplay flow indicating the end of a rakugo or a kobanashi. | |

EXTRA VIEWING / ANALYSIS

The list of extra films and YouTube channels below are by no means an exhaustive list and you will find plenty of other material from other films and channels. The list is also by no means a compulsory list-these should all be very much treated as things which can complement your appreciation of DISTRICT 9 rather than things which must be watched. Please note as well that some of the suggested films may be a difficult watch or may not be suitable for all viewers. It is suggested that you consult the imdb page for a film before watching, using the 'Certification' section to judge whether a film is appropriate before watching.

FILMS

ALIVE IN JOBURG [N/A] (2005) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0813999/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

TSOTSI [15] (2005) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0468565/?ref=mv_sr_1

THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY [PG] (1980) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080801/?ref=mv_sr_1

INVICTUS [12A] (2009) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1057500/?ref=adv_li_tt

MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM [12A] (2013)

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2304771/?ref=mv_sr_1

CRY FREEDOM [PG] (1987) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092804/?ref=ttls_li_tt

CHAPPIE [15] (2015) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1823672/?ref=mv_sr_1

ALIENS [15] (1986) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090605/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

ROBOCOP [18] (1987) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093870/?ref=mv_sr_1

YOUTUBE CHANNELS

OATS STUDIOS (<https://www.youtube.com/user/OatsStudios>)

EVERY FRAME A PAINTING (<https://www.youtube.com/user/everyframeapainting>)

LESSONS FROM THE SCREENPLAY (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCErSSa3CaP_GJxmFpdjG9Jw)

ROCKET JUMP FILM SCHOOL (<https://www.youtube.com/user/RJFilmSchool>)

CINEFIX (<https://www.youtube.com/user/CineFix>)

NOW YOU SEE IT (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWTFGPpNQ0Ms6afXhaWDiRw/featured>)

FILM STUDIES FUNDAMENTALS (<https://www.youtube.com/c/MrMorenoMelgar>)

THANKS/DISCLAIMER

Many thanks for purchasing this study guide. As I'm sure you can appreciate, it's the result of many hours work and I'm incredibly grateful for you supporting this by buying the guide. It's designed to be as exhaustive as possible in terms of content, both explanatory and in providing activities to complete. It has been planned, designed and written using the exam board specification, so should cover everything that could arise in an exam. Of course, please note that despite my every effort, there is *no* guarantee that this study guide *will* cover the contents of any exam set so please ensure that you do check the eduqas GCSE Film Studies specification. Similarly, I've made every effort to make this guide as easy as possible to download and distribute so there should be no missing images, broken links or issues with pagination, but please get in touch if you do find any issues with it. Given the sheer size of this guide it's almost impossible impossible not to make some mistakes, especially typos, so I apologise in advance if there are any and again, encourage you to let me know if you come across any.

Finally, this guide features hundreds of questions. I would have loved to have provided answers for each and every one but I'm sure you can appreciate that the guide would nearly double in size had I done so. Instead, I very much encourage you to discuss and debate, decide and work out the answers for yourself but as ever, please get in touch if there's something specific that you feel there is no help in the guide but you feel that I could help you to answer for a specific question.

Once again, many thanks for your support and I really hope this guide helps as much as possible and keep an eye out for more study guides soon via @Moreno_Melgar on twitter, at my sellfy store [sellfy.com/iandoublem](https://www.sellfy.com/iandoublem) and use the videos on my YouTube channel [youtube.com/MrMorenoMelgar](https://www.youtube.com/MrMorenoMelgar)

Ian