BENEFITS OF NONLINEAR STORYTELLING IN FILM AND TELEVISION

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Joshua Seemann

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BY

Joshua Seemann

Adam Moore, MFA

Film and Electronic Arts

California State University, Long Beach

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Abstract

Screenwriters strive to create narratives that are emotionally compelling and engaging to audiences. This research explores the technique of nonlinear storytelling, focusing on what makes a film nonlinear, as well as discussing what benefits nonlinear storytelling provides to the screenwriting process. Through the analysis of three films and one television show that utilize aspects of nonlinear story structure, this study argues that linearity should be thought of as a spectrum rather than something that is categorical. In addition, this work argues that nonlinear story structure makes it easier for films to cover larger spans of time, allows screenwriters to achieve effects that would be impossible in fully linear stories, and helps writers enhance the audience’s emotional connection to scenes through implicit storytelling. This research suggests that by taking advantage of these benefits, screenwriters can create films that lend audiences an emotionally powerful viewing experience.
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Benefits of Nonlinear Storytelling

In Film and Television

Nonlinear storytelling is a narrative technique in which the events of a story are told out of chronological order. Better understanding nonlinear story structure will help screenwriters create scripts that are more emotionally compelling than traditional linear films. This is important because if a film is more emotionally compelling, viewers will be more likely to enjoy it, and the writer will be more likely to have a successful career.

Literature Review

Overall, the definition of what makes a film nonlinear is unclear. Since it is a broad term, its exact meaning varies from person to person. As stated in the book Ideas for the Animated Short, “the only definitive thing that can be said about the meaning of nonlinear storytelling is that it is not linear” (Sullivan, Alexander, Mintz, Besen, 2013, p. 128). Moving beyond this, individual definitions begin to diverge. There are many areas where opinions on nonlinear overlap—as well as many that diverge from or clash with one another.

In her book Secrets of Screenplay Structure, Linda J. Cowgill argues that flashbacks can be a part of both linear and nonlinear films, even though flashbacks are chronologically nonlinear (Cowgill, 1999, p. 158). Cowgill believes they “deepen [the audience’s] understanding of the characters and the situation at a specific point in the film” and allow the film to cut between multiple time frames (Cowgill, 1999, p. 158). However, the study argues that not all films that utilize flashbacks are nonlinear because “the main plots of these films still proceed in a chronological order” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 149). Many times these flashbacks are just used to “create context and tension, or to deliver exposition” in linear films (Cowgill, 1999, p. 149).

Although a nonlinear film is not told in chronological order, Cowgill believes that it must
still present information in acts in order for its meaning to be clear (Cowgill, 1999, p. 159). Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush seem to agree that nonlinear films have some sort of act structure, even if it is not the same as linear films (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 197). They find that rather than traditional three act structure, a “non-linear film may be organized in two acts or without act breaks,” usually including multiple two-act stories woven together (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 199). This format, where multiple stories are woven together, is called a multiple thread narrative. Similarly, Evan Smith argues that these films do not have the traditional beginning, middle, and end because they follow multiple narrative threads with different protagonists (Smith, 1999, p. 88).

Dancyger and Rush explain that in the multiple thread format, scenes do not progress in chronological order, so “involvement will come from character rather than plot, from the intensity of the individual scene rather than from the organization of progressive scenes” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 196). They argue that plot works against the goal of the main character” in a linear film, but since there is no single character in multiple thread nonlinear films, “the use of plot is muted,” and it “at best... functions as background” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 196). To create energy in a nonlinear story, Dancyger and Rush believe “it’s best to focus on the scene rather than on the narrative as a whole” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 199).

According to Cowgill, action can be used to frame the plot of a nonlinear film (Cowgill, 1999, p. 152). This “creates continuity by focusing on a specific action or task to be accomplished,” so as the film jumps through time the audience can orient themselves based on “where the characters are in relation to that task and plot” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 152, 153). In addition, sequences help the plot to sustain a sense of continuity and to build momentum” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 154). Each sequence has its own protagonist and mini-plot, which “[makes]
the information presented more involving” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 154). However, filmmakers must be careful due to the fact that cutting too frequently between time periods can be confusing unless the audience can easily orient themselves in each time period (Cowgill, 1999, p. 157).

According to Cowgill, effective nonlinear stories “achieve clarity by creating relationships between various time segments which, taken together as a whole, form a specific meaning” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 150). These films achieve dramatic unity by intersecting “a controlling theme or idea” and “a framing action” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 150). The events of the plot in a nonlinear film are chosen based on the theme, and at the end of the film all scenes shown should help reveal the theme (Cowgill, 1999, p. 151). Similarly, Sullivan et al. argue that nonlinear storytelling is very effective for creating mood because it allows the writer to create sequences “connected by theme rather than by narrative” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 130).

Another strength of nonlinear storytelling is “the active presence of the voice of the writer,” with “its subversion of structure and character [enabling] voice to be pronounced, clear, and important” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 201). Overall, “in the non-linear story, voice is central” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 201). Tone in a nonlinear film is less confined by genre expectations than linear films (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 199). It does not have to remain consistent throughout a nonlinear film, which makes it “more malleable to the voice of the writer or writer and director” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 199).

Cowgill argues that by reordering events, nonlinear films can be “more surprising, compelling and unpredictable than if [they were] told in a straight linear fashion” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 148). Others, however, argue that nonlinear stories are inherently “less involving” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 202). The latter argue that writers of nonlinear stories could overcome this problem through the use of voice or by having a unique approach to story
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Cowgill agrees that nonlinear films that rely primarily on intricate plot structure lack the strength of compelling character relationships or focused characterizations at their centers (Cowgill, 1999, p. 149). However, Dancyger and Rush argue that nonlinear structure as a whole subverts character, stating that nonlinear films with multi-thread structure have “multiple main characters rather than a single goal-directed main character… [who] do not necessarily proceed along a clear dramatic arc (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 195). As a result, they believe viewers are “observing character, rather than identifying with a character and moving with that character through a dramatic arc” (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 195). However, this seems to be only in regard to nonlinear films with multi-thread narratives—the rationale being that each thread is less developed than a linear story due to the fact that the author does not have time to fully tell each story (Smith, 1999, p. 88, 91).

In contrast, Cowgill argues that “a well written nonlinear film exposes a character or a situation from a number of different vantage points,” which “allows characters and their motivations… to be explored in greater depth” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 149). She states that these “multi-layered portrayals of character or situation… strengthen the theme and significance, and are eminently watchable in repeat viewings” (Cowgill, 1999, p. 149).

Overall, some, like Dancyger and Rush, believe that nonlinear stories are unlikely to be successful without the edge of novelty (Dancyger & Rush, 2013, p. 202). In contrast, others such as Smith, Cowgill, and Sullivan et al., believe that nonlinear films can be very successful by “[manipulating] viewer comprehension” and “[creating] surprise and [building] tension” in ways that linear films could not, as well as “keeping the viewer on his/her toes as they attempt to second-guess where the film is going” (Smith, 1999, p. 92; Cowgill, 1999, p. 166; Sullivan et al.,
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2013, p. 134).

Although current research does discuss many of the benefits and drawbacks of nonlinear storytelling in film, there are still benefits of nonlinear storytelling that have not been addressed. Moreover, many of the benefits that have been discussed can still be looked at in greater detail. Lastly, past studies do not all agree on what exactly makes a film nonlinear.

Research Questions

The varying definitions of nonlinear storytelling, as well as the wide variety of conflicting ideas about its advantages and weaknesses, leave a great deal of room for further research into nonlinear storytelling and its potential benefits. This study aims to do two things: first, to discern what exactly makes a film nonlinear, and second, to understand some of the ways nonlinear storytelling can be utilized to enhance the emotional impact a screenplay has on its audience. To these ends, this study hopes to answer two questions: “What makes a film nonlinear?” and “What benefits can nonlinear storytelling provide for the screenwriting process?”

Methodology

In order to answer these questions, this study examines three films and one television show that utilize nonlinear storytelling effectively. Determining successful art is incredibly problematic due to its high level of subjectivity. In addition, it is eminently difficult for one to determine why part of a story is effective if that particular person does not find it compelling. As a result, the three films and one television show discussed in this study were chosen primarily based on the fact that I personally find them very emotionally compelling, as well as the fact that each incorporates aspects of nonlinear story structure. The particular works I chose are Memento, Inception, Gone Girl, and True Detective (Season 1). In addition to the fact that I personally find
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Each of these works compelling, each has achieved critical acclaim, with *Memento* and *Inception* both receiving nominations for Best Screenplay at the Academy Awards, *Gone Girl* receiving a nomination for Best Screenplay – Motion Picture at the Golden Globes, and *True Detective (Season 1)* receiving a Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series as well as a Golden Globe nomination for Best Miniseries or Motion Picture Made For Television. By studying these works of art, this study picks apart what aspects of nonlinear story structure are present in each, as well as examines how that structure affects the emotional impact of the film or show as a whole.

**Results**

Why is it that people have such varying definitions of what exactly makes a film nonlinear? This study found that even nonlinear films tend to have some linear thread that holds the story together. Although the narrative may jump drastically through time, this linear thread helps the film flow together as a cohesive story. In addition, this linear thread can occasionally allow for flashbacks and other scenes to be shown out of chronological order in a way that seems very linear.

*Inception* is a perfect example of a film that is right on the fringe between linear and nonlinear. For the most part, the entire film is very linear. However, there are a few flashbacks throughout the film that help explain events from the protagonist’s life that occurred before the start of the film. These flashback scenes are technically nonlinear, but the way in which they are presented is such that it is hard to discern exactly whether the film should be classified as linear or nonlinear. The line between linear and nonlinear is blurred by having the protagonist, Cobb, narrate all of the flashbacks to another character as they are shown onscreen. In this way, it does not feel like the film is jumping through time; rather, it just seems as if Cobb is describing
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everything the audience sees. Instead of simply watching him talk to the other character, which would get boring very quickly, the audience gets to see everything he is describing. This gives the information to the audience at the same time that it is given from Cobb to the other character, which, one could argue, makes the scenes linear. In this way, the film toes the line between linear and nonlinear. It creates a scene that is visually nonlinear, yet one that is, due to the narration holding it together, very linear in regard to the progression of the story.

*True Detective (Season 1)* does something very similar. The show has a parallel structure (two storylines are told simultaneously), with the majority of the show told as flashbacks. Two former detectives, Cohle and Hart, as well as Hart’s ex-wife, are being interviewed by the police about a case the two worked on years prior. The show cuts between the first storyline, which shows the police interviewing the two men, and the second, which shows Cohle and Hart in the past as they investigate a series of murders and kidnappings. Usually narration from the men as they are interviewed bridges the transitions between the present and the past. Once a flashback begins, the narration drops off, only occasionally coming back in for a few lines at a time.

Although the narration becomes more sparse once a flashback sequence begins, the implication is that everything shown onscreen is being described by the former detectives to the police in the present day. As a result, much of *True Detective (Season 1)* seems linear in the same way that *Inception* is. Visually speaking, the story is jumping through time. However if the viewers think of themselves as sitting at the interview alongside the detectives as they speak, then the story seems very linear; the audience is receiving the story as the former detectives are telling it. This is emphasized by the fact that the past storyline is told completely in order. In this way, there is the illusion that the audience is receiving the story linearly as if they were sitting in the room as the interviews take place. However, this is not quite the case.
Although it has the illusion of linearity, *True Detective (Season 1)* is overall more nonlinear. The narration alternates between former detectives Hart and Cohle. Each of the former detectives is interviewed at a different time, so although the past storyline is given in chronological order, changing the narrator at different points in the story means that the show is technically jumping in time from one interview to the other. In addition, the show also breaks linearity when the detectives lie about what happened in the past. As stated earlier, the assumption is that everything shown onscreen is a visual representation of what the men are describing. However this pattern is broken when the detectives lie; the narration reveals what they say happened, but the following flashback clearly contradicts it, showing what actually happened instead. In this way, the film is nonlinear. Overall, the show breaks linearity in quite a few ways, yet by telling the past story in order while anchoring it to the detectives’ narration creates the illusion of linearity.

*Gone Girl* also has a parallel structure for the majority of the film. The first portion of the film is nonlinear, with the primary storyline following a man whose wife has disappeared and potentially been murdered, while the second storyline chronicles how the couple met and tracks the development of their relationship. In contrast to *Inception* and *True Detective (Season 1)*, the beginning of *Gone Girl* is very clearly nonlinear. Around the end of the first act, the secondary storyline catches up to the first. From that point on the film is no longer nonlinear, although it maintains its parallel structure, alternating between the husband and the investigation, and what is simultaneously happening to his wife.

Lastly, the most nonlinear of all the works discussed in this study is *Memento*. The primary storyline in *Memento* is shown in reverse order, with each scene directly preceding the scene shown before it. The secondary storyline is a flashback sequence, which proceeds in
chronological order. The film alternates between showing one scene from one storyline and then one scene from the other. The main storyline moves backward while the secondary storyline moves forward, with the two eventually meeting at the end of the film. In contrast to films like *Inception*, which can easily be considered either linear or nonlinear, *Memento* is very clearly nonlinear.

Overall, the aforementioned narratives have a wide variety of linear and nonlinear aspects. Although some may be more obviously nonlinear, such as *Memento*, others are structured in such a way that those looking to define them could easily disagree over which category the given film falls into. This highlights the fact that there is a grey area between linear and nonlinear, with no definitive line separating the two. As a result, this study proposes it is best to think of linearity as a spectrum. Writers and viewers should understand that even if a film is not told in chronological order, it still has many linear aspects. Because of this, each film falls at a certain point along the spectrum between linear and nonlinear, rather than being completely on one side or the other.

Regardless of where a film falls on the spectrum between linear and nonlinear, it can still benefit from utilizing certain aspects of nonlinear story structure. Even if in small amounts, nonlinear techniques can make a story much more interesting and emotionally compelling in ways that a purely linear structure cannot. These benefits include making it easier to show events spanning a wide time period, allowing the structure to achieve specific effects that would otherwise be impossible, and allowing the screenwriter to utilize implicit storytelling, a technique that keeps the audience engaged and enhances their emotional connection to the film.

First, nonlinear structure can make it easier for films to show events spanning a wide range of time. In *Gone Girl*, the nonlinear structure allows for a smooth transition between
scenes about how the couple met, and scenes from the police investigation. If the film were completely linear, the secondary storyline showing the development of the couple’s relationship through flashbacks would be shown at the start of the film, which would not work well. This storyline only shows specific important moments from their relationship, and these moments have large gaps of time between them. It would be awkward to watch them all in a row, due to the lack of information between some of the events. These awkward transitions could jolt the audience out of the viewing experience. However, by telling this part of the story as flashbacks, the writer smooths out the transitions to and from these scenes. This helps the audience stay immersed in the film, and therefore makes it easier for them to stay emotionally invested.

Another benefit of nonlinear storytelling is that it allows the screenwriter to create specific effects that would otherwise be impossible. This technique is also utilized very effectively in *Gone Girl*. In the beginning of the film, the past and present storylines are juxtaposed in a way that increases tension in the film. As the police investigation progresses, the detectives begin to suspect that the husband may be responsible for the disappearance and potential murder of his wife. Simultaneously, the past storyline reveals how the couple’s relationship slowly falls apart, eventually reaching the point where the wife says she is afraid that her husband may hurt her. If the film were completely in chronological order, the past storyline would make the audience distrust the husband from the beginning of the investigation. By slowly showing the flashbacks as the investigation progresses, the screenwriter ensures that viewers trust the husband at the start of the film. Then as the police begin to distrust him, the audience starts to see how the couple’s relationship falls apart, making them suspect the husband as well. This reversal from trust to mistrust increases tension in the film, making audiences more engaged. In this way, the juxtaposition of the two storylines in the beginning of the film
enhances the emotional connection audiences have to the film in a way that would not have been possible through purely linear storytelling.

*True Detective (Season 1)* does something very similar. The police in the present day are questioning the two former detectives about a case they worked on many years prior. Although former detectives Hart and Cohle thought that they had caught the people responsible, another person has recently been killed in a manner similar to that of the previous victims, suggesting that the true killer was never apprehended. As the interviews continue, it becomes clear that the police suspect that Cohle is actually the killer. This adds tension to the past investigation (the primary storyline of the film, told through flashbacks) because rather than just following the events of the investigation, the audience is also trying to figure out if Cohle is really the killer. This dynamic adds an additional level of mystery, keeping the audience even further invested in the enigma of the storyline.

*Memento* is another great example of the unique effects that can be achieved through nonlinear story structure. The protagonist of the film has short-term memory loss, so he is unable to make any new memories. As a result, every few minutes he forgets where he is, what he is doing, and why he is there—each scene of the primary storyline starts with such a lapse in memory. In a linear film, it would be practically impossible to make the audience experience the world in the same way as this character. Even if they saw his reaction every time he forgot what was going on, viewers themselves would still know where he was and what he was doing since they could still remember all the preceding scenes. This would make it hard for the audience to connect with the protagonist’s struggle. For this reason, the primary storyline of the film is told in reverse, with the audience seeing one scene, and then later the scene that directly preceded it, and so on. When each of these scenes begins, the audience has no idea where the protagonist is,
what is going on, or how he got there. In this way, the structure of the film makes the audience experience the world in the same way that the protagonist does. By sharing in his struggle, the audience forms a better connection with him, and is therefore more emotionally invested in his journey.

The final benefit to be addressed is a concept this study refers to as “implicit storytelling,” which is based on the idea that some scenes are much more emotionally compelling when shown as flashbacks. Implicit storytelling is when the events surrounding a flashback are implied rather than actually shown to the audience. The general idea behind implicit storytelling is that if the audience sees how a past event has affected a character and knows the basic circumstances surrounding the event, then the audience will fill in that framework with their own details, making the situation more real and relatable to each individual.

*Inception* is a perfect example of implicit storytelling. Throughout the film, the audience can tell that the protagonist loves his wife. Although flashbacks show a few important scenes that the protagonist, Cobb, and his wife, Mal, shared together, the majority of the film does not show the two interacting. Although there are many times Mal appears in the dream world, these do not accurately depict the couple’s relationship since this “Mal” is actually Cobb’s own subconscious. In reality, there are very few scenes that actually reveal the couple’s relationship, yet due to implicit storytelling it is still emotionally compelling to the audience.

Although the audience does not see much of Cobb and Mal’s life together, they know that the two were married, and it is evident through Cobb’s actions that he loves her. Each individual audience member has their own specific idea of what a loving relationship looks like. They know that Mal and Cobb are in love, so they take whatever their idea of a loving relationship is and
project it onto the characters. In this way, the audience creates the details of the relationship themselves. The more information writers choose to show onscreen, the more likely it is that a particular scene will seem inauthentic to one of the audience members. By implying the relationship and letting the audience fill in the details, screenwriters form a much stronger bond between viewers and the film. Each audience member creates the details of the relationship themselves, which ensures that those details will seem authentic and personal to each person, thereby forming a much stronger emotional connection between each viewer and the film. This makes Mal’s suicide, as well as the discovery that Cobb caused her to kill herself, much more visceral since the audience is that much more invested in the couple’s relationship.

The effectiveness of implicit storytelling saves precious screen time that the writer could spend showing other information to the audience. If Inception were linear, the screenwriter would have to build a framework of scenes around the flashbacks (which would all be shown in the beginning) in order for them to seem authentic, otherwise the audience would have no strong understanding of the context for the scene. However, showing these scenes as flashbacks saves the writer from wasting time on extraneous information; the audience understands that they are jumping back in time to just a few specific moments, and they have already constructed their own ideas of what surrounds the scene, so there is no need to waste time setting it up for them.

Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug discuss a concept similar to implicit storytelling in their book Interactive Storytelling for Video Games. They argue that the more control a player has over their character’s personality, the stronger the bond is that they will form with that character (Lebowitz & Klug, 2011, p. 250). This supports the argument that implicit storytelling can create a stronger emotional connection between viewers and characters in a film. Just as increased control over a video game character’s personality strengthens a player’s bond with their
character, allowing the audience of a film to participate in the creation of details that are not explicitly stated strengthens the bond between viewers and film characters. Additionally, just as video games allow players to actively participate in the events that transpire, implicit storytelling forces audience members to participate in the creation of the story. In this way, it keeps viewers actively engaged in a way that could not always be accomplished in a linear film.

Discussion

Following this research, I have been working on a script of my own that utilizes nonlinear story structure. In writing this script, I have gained first hand experience that validates many of the conclusions I drew in my research. To begin with, I found that nonlinear structure made it much easier for me to cover a large span of time. In the first draft of my screenplay, I tried to show my protagonist’s entire backstory through a few long flashback sequences in the beginning of the story. This did not work well; although I was using nonlinear structure, the flashback sequences were very long, which made them drag on and become boring. This was especially problematic because there were only two or three scenes in the flashbacks that I actually needed to show—the rest were just added in order to fill the gaps between these scenes. Overall, the script felt much more linear than I wanted it to be.

As a result, I rewrote the entire first act, shortening the flashback sequences and making the story even more nonlinear. This worked wonderfully. Much like in Gone Girl, the nonlinear format created smooth transitions between places in time. In addition, this structure allowed me to show only the most important flashbacks without having to waste time describing the events surrounding them—just as Inception and Gone Girl do. This made the story as a whole much less boring and allowed the audience to become more invested in the narrative.

My script also helped me better understand how nonlinear structure can create effects that
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would be impossible in linear storytelling. In the beginning of my screenplay, the protagonist, who is struggling to accept the death of his wife, remembers the moment when he found out that she was dead. In the sequence directly following this one, he wakes up in bed beside her. Juxtaposing these two scenes creates a unique feeling that would not be possible in a linear film. In addition, showing this cut early in the film piques the audience’s interest; they are still trying to figure out what exactly is going on, so this keeps them engaged by making them question whether or not the protagonist’s wife is actually dead.

Although my film seems very nonlinear, it too has a linear thread connecting the story together and helping transition between points in time. This is done through narration, which lends a structured feeling to the film and helps it flow. In *True Detective (Season 1)* the narration helps create the illusion of linearity from the police officers’ perspectives, although in reality the past investigation is being delivered in a nonlinear manner due to the fact that it is jumping between narrators. In a way, my film does the opposite. My script seems very nonlinear and in some places random; however, in the end it is revealed that the narration is actually one character telling the story to another character. As a result, my film becomes linear from the perspective of the scene in which the narration takes place. In the same way that the flashbacks in *Inception* are visually nonlinear, yet linear in regard to the flow of the narrative, my film becomes very linear due to the implication that everything being shown is just a visual representation of what the narrator is describing.

Overall, working on my own nonlinear script has validated many of the conclusions this study found. While I continue the process of writing, I will be looking for further instances in which the nonlinear techniques encompassed in this research can effectively enhance my story in ways that linear storytelling cannot.
Conclusion

Overall, it is best to think of linearity as a spectrum. Even if a film is not told in chronological order, it may still have many linear aspects. There is a grey area between perfect linearity and complete nonlinearity, with no definitive line separating the two. As a result, most films will fall somewhere along this spectrum, rather than being completely on one side or the other. Even if a film is very close to the linear side of the spectrum, it can still benefit greatly from utilizing aspects of nonlinear story structure. Some of these benefits include making it easier for the film to cover a wide span of time, allowing the writer to structure the film to achieve specific effects that would be impossible in strictly linear narratives, and allowing the writer to utilize implicit storytelling. By understanding how to take advantage of these benefits of nonlinear storytelling, screenwriters can create films that are very emotionally compelling. This will make audiences more likely to enjoy the film, and will therefore make the writer more likely to have a successful career.

Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study is that it focuses on a small selection of nonlinear material. In addition, this study was limited by the subjective nature of art. One cannot explore how a particular technique can be effective if they personally do not find the film in question to be compelling, because in that person’s opinion, the technique is not effective in that particular scenario. This severely limited what films I was able to examine, due to the fact that I could only look at those I personally found to be emotionally compelling.

Directions For Future Research

Future studies can build upon this one. There are many more films utilizing aspects of nonlinear storytelling that can be analyzed. These go at least all the way back to *Citizen Kane*—
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released in 1941—if not further. In addition, new films are constantly coming out. As a result, there is an incredibly vast and constantly expanding supply of films and television shows that future researchers can draw upon to study nonlinear storytelling and its effectiveness. One can also branch out into other art forms, studying mediums such as literature, theater, and video games.

Furthermore, new artists who wish to understand how to utilize nonlinear storytelling should conduct their own research, focusing on films that they connect with emotionally. This will give them an understanding of nonlinear storytelling that is specific to their artistic style, thereby circumventing the obstacles presented by the subjectivity of art and ensuring that the techniques they learn will have effects that they personally desire.
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References


