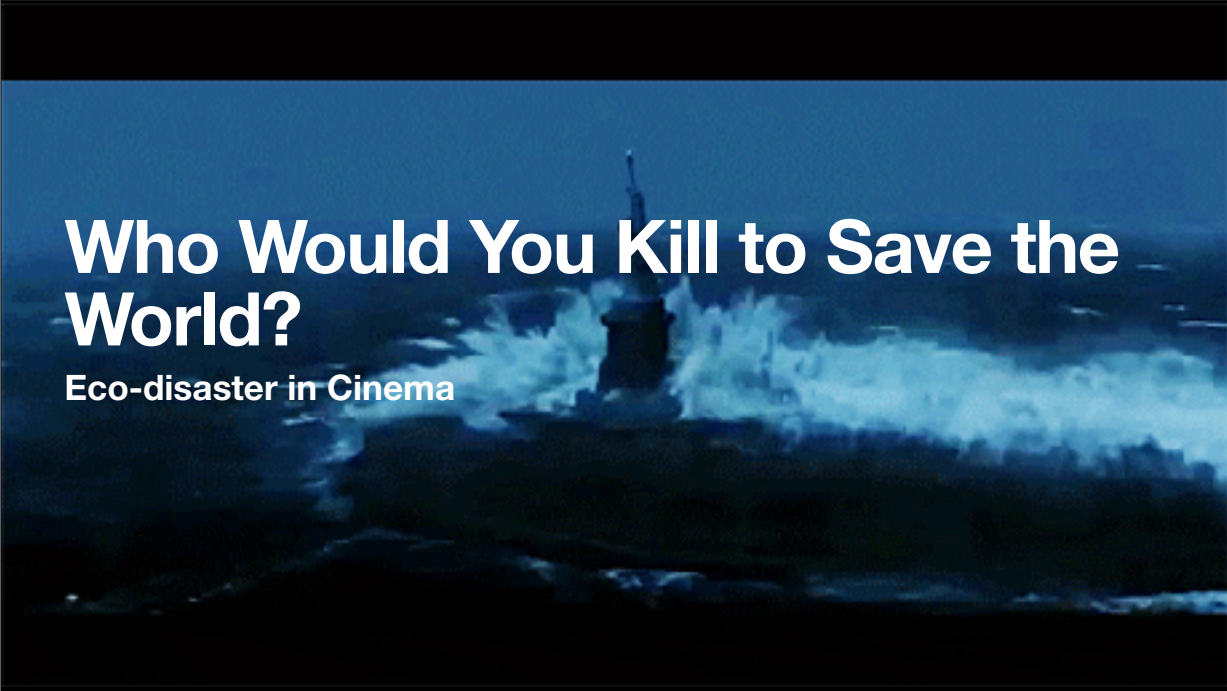




Who Would You Kill to Save the World?

Eco-disaster in Cinema

The end of the world has become a commodified spectacle in cinema; we enjoy seeing the world being destroyed and then saved by “one of us”

Looking at how the world ends reveals how we see the world

We don't “save the world,” we save the world of humanity

**What is saved is a particular
conception of life worth living**

**Catastrophe allows salvation;
destructive spectacles allow for
human triumphalism**

Approaches

Narrative perspective
Narrative structure

Narrative Perspective

Narrative perspective extends sympathy to others

Reversal: we extend sympathy to whoever holds narrative perspective

Narrative Perspective in Cinema

- Subjective shots — rare, can usually be ignored
- Spatio-temporal (narrative) attachment — how much do we follow a given character?
 - Really a matter of number and length of scenes
- Subjective access — how much do we learn about their thoughts and feelings?
 - How the film provides such access

Identify the character who has the most spatio-temporal attachment

Let us call that character the protagonist

Identify the feelings and motivations of the protagonist

Who are they trying to help and why?

List all the identity markers of the protagonist

The more the better, including ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, class, ability, etc.

Discuss who these people represent; who are not included?



- WALL-E is present in practically all scenes and has spatio-temporal attachment
- His emotive “face” grants access to his feelings and motivations
- WALL-E wants to save EVE and the human species, but the human species is strongly coded as white US-ian.
- WALL-E is anthropomorphized quite openly but what humans are around are coded white

The collapse of the human species reverses into the survival of the white US-ian

The utopian ending papers over the eradication of diversity and absolves over-consumption

- Curtis has the most spatio-temporal attachment
- He explains his motivations and shares the horrors of the tail end of the train, giving us subjective access to that collective
- Curtis attempts to help the downtrodden; fights for equality
- Curtis: white, straight, working-class, able-bodied, etc.

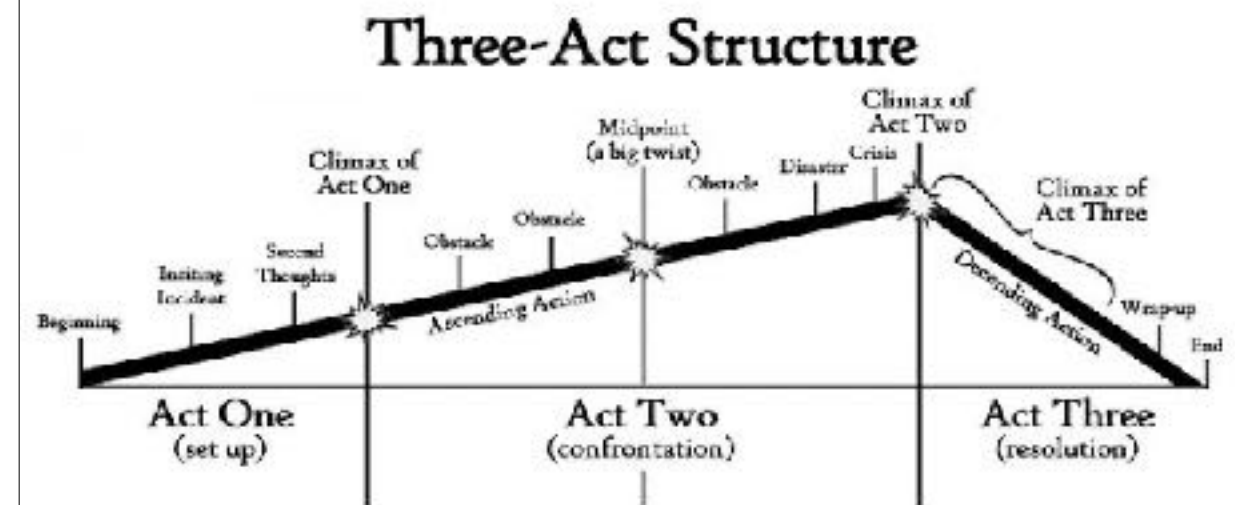
Crucially, narrative perspective shifts at the end of the film, allowing Yona and Timmy to survive



The death of the white US-ian is necessary for the survival of the planet

Narrative Structure

We must survive — but how?



Act One — Set-up

- Beginning/hook — who does this story concern?
- Inciting Incident — what engages the characters?
- First Plot Point — whose situation is changed?

Act Two — Confrontation

- Obstacles — what obstacles are encountered?
- Midpoint — whose situation is reversed?
- Obstacles — what obstacles are encountered?
- Disaster — security and hope is shattered for whom?
- Crisis — who stands to lose everything?

Act Three — Resolution

- Climax — who solves the crisis?
- Wrap-up — who are involved in the resolution?
- Denouement — is there a final statement?

Act One — Set-up

- Beginning/hook — The story revolves around Jack and his son Sam
- Inciting Incident — Jack attempts to convince politicians that climate collapse will trigger extreme weather
- First Plot Point — Extreme weather affects the U.S.; a superstorm floods New York City, threatening Jack's son Sam



Act Two — Confrontation

- Obstacles — climate collapse events in the U.S.
- Midpoint — Jack realizes that Sam is trapped in NYC
- Obstacles — government fails to control the situation or to help its citizens
- Disaster — Sam almost dies in New York Public Library
- Crisis — Jack is certain Sam has died



Act Three — Resolution

- Climax — Jack and Sam are united
- Wrap-up — The government acknowledges that they should have listened to scientists (Jack)
- Denouement — Earth is frozen in a new Ice Age but will overcome





Global disaster is individualized to a parent-child challenge

- The U.S. stands in for the world
- U.S. concerns — government failures, individual heroics — are generalized as the solution

Non-U.S. ways of life die invisibly as part of allowing Jack and Sam to reunite

Conventional narrative analysis can be expanded to reveal ecofictional and environmental themes

Questions, comments, etc?

Teaching Segments

Week 1: Introduction to Narrative Analysis and Analytical Tools

- Introduction to key concepts in narrative analysis such as narrator, point of view, composition, theme, and message
- Overview of different narrative structures in texts (e.g., chronological order, flashbacks, in medias res)
- Students work with short fiction texts or short stories to practice identifying and analyzing narrative elements
- Class discussion on how the text's narrative structure supports the theme and message

Week 2: Perspective in Cinema

- Introduction to narrative perspective in cinema
- Watch a non-ecofilm
- Narrative perspective in a given film
- Class discussion of how the narrative perspective supports or reveals the film's message

Week 3: Eco-Disaster Films and Perspective

- Introduction for how to read for climate sacrifice (ie., what I've done today)
- Watch an eco-disaster film
- Class discussion of what the narrative perspective reveals about the film's view of climate collapse

Week 4: Eco-Disaster Films and Narrative Structure

- Introduction for how to read for how we survive
- Use the same eco-disaster film or choose another
- Class discussion of how the narrative structure favors some humans over others



Evaluering Gymnasielærerdagen
2025

