

Part 1-

- Who is the protagonist?
- Who is the antagonist?
- What is the driving conflict ?
- What is the theme?
- What can you take away from this film to help you develop your own movie idea?

1. Disney's The Kid (2000)

Russell Duritz is a highly successful public image consultant living in Hollywood. He has a distant relationship with his father and a prickly relationship with everyone else. A few days away from his 40th birthday, he meets his 8th year old self and wants him to return to the past where he belongs.

Ultimately Russell becomes his own antagonist as he is unwilling to truly confront his own feelings over what happened in his childhood. He pushes everyone away and is hard on his younger self for being insecure as a kid. His father and some bullies from Russell's childhood take up the antagonist role when the movie goes to 1968. They serve more as gatekeepers as Russell's interactions with them shows how both Russells have grown since the beginning of the film.

The theme in the movie is told to Russell by his coworker Amy when she complains that Russell is being too hard on his younger self. She tells him that no one really knows what they're doing when they are growing up. He should just focus on having fun with the opportunity he's been given. Towards the end of the film Russell stops worrying about how his childhood is gonna be and starts joking around about it. He also helps his younger self forgive his father for not always being there for them as a kid. After his mom dies his father is too scared of raising Russell and his siblings on his own. That leads to Russell internalizing his dad being strict with him as him being a failure. Russell achieves a cathartic moment by comforting his younger self while crying and realizing why he has his facial tic instead of crying.

Disney's *The Kid* (2000) works because it chose its theme well and it told it carefully. In the 1940's there were a lot of movies that felt like everything it introduces ties into the plot. That's extra useful in a time travel script given how confusing they could get. I liked that he had a facial tic instead of crying and why he has it ties into the arc. They even have a moment where young Russell realizes why his older self became an image consultant which was a good character moment for both of them.

In the early version of my script Khalid didn't have a clear problem other than the angst of screwing up things. He needed something specific to fight against and that helps externalize the inner conflict. So I thought about giving him a couple goals he wants to achieve and that helps give a structure to the film. That also gives us a payoff when he fails or succeeds in changing his past.

#2. The Jacket (2004)

The film centers on Jack Starks a former gulf war veteran who was wrongfully accused for a crime he didn't commit. He wasn't able to recall what actually happened and the court blames it on him having PTSD. He was sentenced to treatment in an asylum but ends in the care of a mad scientist (so to speak). He is the victim of a behavioral experiment but he discovers he can travel in time. He also discovers he is fated to die in 4 days time, New Year's Day 1993.

Dr. Beecher is a misguided therapist at the asylum fed up with the traditional methods and willing to try something drastic. He is unwilling to face up to the fact that his experiments have killed four people already and is gonna kill one more.

The main conflict centers on Jack finding about his future death and his attempts at stopping it. We see him also find out about how the immediate cast fared in the future and he starts interfering with that. He takes an interest in Madeliene a woman who helps him in the future. She is the girl he rescues in the beginning and he is a bit shocked about how she turns out.

The theme is what would you do if you get a second chance to live? Or what would you do if you knew when you were going to die?.

Robert Mckee once wrote "character is structure, structure is character" and this film helped me understand what he meant by that. I thought character development in storytelling comes down to a character's perspective changing because of the events they experience over the course of the story. Which is still true but I also thought the other kind of character development, one where a person's true character is revealed. The film follows the latter because Jack is put under pressure and we get to see what kind of man he is through the choices he makes. The fact that he chooses to help Madeleine in her own life rather than going back to the beginning and stopping himself from being arrested says more about him than anything else he did.

In my script Khalid is faced with an older version of himself who he becomes unsure as the film goes on. There is a sense that his older self is lying to him and going behind his back which does lead to a confrontation in Act 2. The younger khalid has a bigger change as he goes from a more passive person blaming everyone else for his problems to a more active and self assured young man. The older khalid is more stubborn and more defeatist but we see him moving past his own pain and learning to hope again

#3 The butterfly effect (2005)

The movie centers Evan Treborn, a young man who discovers he has the ability to travel back in time through a medium like his old journal entries. He is placed in his younger body explaining the periodic blackouts he suffers from as a child.

His father Jason was institutionalized during Evan's childhood. He has the same ability as Evan but sees it as a curse. After learning his son has the same ability but he is obsessed with changing the past without considering the consequences he tries to strangle Evan.

A recurring antagonist is Tommy Miller Evan's childhood friend. He grew up in an abusive home and takes out his frustrations on everyone else. He has a sister who Evan is close too and he focuses his outrage on Evan. In many alternate timelines he seeks to get revenge on Evan and they come to blows often.

The film focuses on the butterfly effect which is the idea that one change that can lead to a different change. A butterfly flap its wings and a storm happens in another part of the world. It's a metaphor for Evan's trips through time. He may have good intentions but he can't control the outcome and his refusal to accept has dire consequences for everyone else.

The theatrical ending has Evan getting a good ending but he had to make a big personal sacrifice to get it right. He had to sacrifice his friendship with Kayliegh (Tom's sister) and later burns all of his childhood journals and photos. By that ending the film seems to be stating that there is no way to get everything right and the only way to get close enough is through a sacrifice.

The takeaway is the importance of externalizing an internal conflict. Films are a visual medium so you need a way to get a character's thoughts across without going inside their heads. So Evan's desire to change things is keyed early on through the montage detailing Evan's life so we see his regrets and that sets up what he wants to change. This also calls back to Disney's The Kid because this script is airtight. Everything revealed about the characters leads into something else or comes back around. By the end of the film we will have seen 5 or 6 different possible timelines of what could have been and where each character ends up makes sense given what we know.

In my script I wanted Khalid to feel like the architect of his own misery and his inability to move past is what's holding him back. That signals the third act when his younger self forces him to confront what he's really running from.

#4- About Time (2013)

Tim Lake is a 21 year old law student who discover he has the ability to travel through time. He inherited the ability from his father and he decides to use it to solve his most pressing problem; finding a girlfriend.

Eventually he starts branching out and testing his ability. He decides to help his sister fix up her life. She ends becoming an alcoholic because of her disastrous relationship with her boyfriend. He is the closest thing the film has to an antagonist.

The main conflict is Tim deciding what to use his newfound ability for and him learning to deal with the consequences.

Which also sets up the central theme that you shouldn't use time travel to solve every problem even if you can.

One interesting lesson is that the quote "every hero is as good as their villain" isn't always necessary. There is no tragedy to mourn nor villain to stop. Tim's struggle is just how to go through life being the best he can be. This is probably the simplest time travel has ever been in film and it's really used to serve his story.

#5 Predestination(2014)

The Barkeep is a veteran agent of the Time Bureau who is determined to save lives by going back in time to selectively alter events. He is loyal to the agency but bitter over his failure to stop the Fizzle Bomber during the 1970s. He is on his way out but looking to train his replacement.

The Unmarried Mother is a writer who lived an interesting yet difficult life. She was a math wiz who had her heartbroken and rejected by NASA. She was also forced to become a He due to health concerns. He walks into the bar feeling discontented about life and meets the Barkeep.

The Fizzle Bomber is an anarchist responsible for a series of bombings in the 1970s. He has successfully evaded the Barkeep and planning his next move.

Mr. Robinson was a recruiter for the US Government who took an interest in the Unmarried Mother. He recruited him first for NASA and seems to be behind the Barkeep's meeting with him. No one really knows what he's after but he is looking to find the perfect agent for the Time Bureau.

The Time Bureau tasks the Barkeep to find that replacement and he uses that opportunity to go after the Fizzle Bomber. The Unmarried Mother uses the trip to investigate his own past and realizes his own role in shaping those events.

The film is named after the predestination paradox where a time traveler ends up the cause of events they witnessed.

Representation politics is a big concern in media right now. This film features a transexual character without making the film about transexuality and it gave me ideas on how to weave my own heritage in the film. It also is a refresher for character is structure and structure is character from the Jacket.

#6 Project Almanac (2015)

David Raskin is a smart yet awkward high school senior looking to get accepted in M.I.T with a full scholarship. He discovers the blueprints for a time travel prototype and decides to build it with his friends.

Later in the film David develops an obsession with going back in time and fixing things that escalates with each trip and each new series of events. It leads to him breaking all his own rules, lying to his friends and affecting the larger community. His two friends Quinn and Adam become foils for him with Quinn wanting to be popular and Adam wanting David to come clean to everyone else.

David screws up his chances with Jesse over their potential relationship and he goes back to do that conversation over. He crosses into his own personal timeline and that causes ripple effects in the community. David feels responsible and goes back again to get things right and it becomes a cycle. Eventually Jessie finds out and becomes a victim of a paradox as you can't have a prolonged interaction with your past self.

It touches upon the "you can't get everything right" theme of "the butterfly effect". The use of time travel is a metaphor for responsibility and growing up.

I think the found footage method has its uses because it fits the coming of age vibe the film has. It gave me ideas on how to handle teenage characters because it's an important time in your life but it's not always captured well.

In my script I wanted Khalid to be in high school but I changed it to college because I felt high school was too routine. Your college years act as an extension of high school years but you have more freedom to do what you want and a greater responsibility to get things right. Khalid screwed up his college years the first time around by being passive and defeatist. His older self believes that if he tries to fix that part of his life he'll be better off. He succeeds but he just pushed his problems on his younger self. He also goes behind his younger self's back and it doesn't work out as well as he wants.