# Assignment 2: Part II: Movie 12: Cloud Atlas

Cloud Atlas is a movie of 5 interweaving stories, these are:

**Story 1**

Set in the Pacific Islands in the year 1849, an American lawyer called Adam Ewing is doing business for his father-in-law, Reverend Gilles Horrox.

**Story 2**

Set in Cambridge / Edinburgh in the year 1936, a young man called Robert Frobisher who is a music composer works for an aging composer called Vyvyan Ayrs.

**Story 3**

Set in San Francisco in the year 1973, a tabloid reporter called Luisa Rey meets Rufus Sixsmith, a nuclear physicist (also Robert Frobisher’s lover in Story 2) and uncover a scandal at the Swanekke Nuclear Power Plant.

**Story 4**

Set in London in the year 2012, an older book publisher, Timothy Cavendish finds himself in debt to the wrong people and in asking for financial help from his older brother. His older brother tricks him into going to a nursing home instead.

**Story 5**

Set in Neo Soul in the year 2144, a fabricant (a human clone) called Sonmi-451 escapes from her life as a fast food server to find the ultimate truth i.e. after 12 years, instead of going to “exaltation”, fabricants are killed and fed back to themselves. She joins the revolution and transmits the truth of how fabricants are treated to the world.

**Story 6**

Set in Hawaii, 106 winters after The Fall, Zachary lives in a village with his sister and her daughter, haunted by a demon called Georgie. He allowed his brother in law and his son to be killed by the Kona while he looked on too afraid to help. The prescients come to the island searching for the ability to send a message to any off-world colonies to survive as the Earth is slowly killing them.

1. **Who is the protagonist of the story?**

Story 1: Adam Ewing, the American lawyer from San Francisco

Story 2: Robert Frobisher, the music composer

Story 3: Luisa Rey, the journalist

Story 4: Timothy Cavendish, the book publisher

Story 5: Sonmi-451, a human clone

Story 6: Zachary, a villager

1. **What is the conflict that drives the narrative?**

Story 1: There are two conflicts in this story. In the first conflict, Adam Ewing is slowly being poisoned by Dr Henry Goose who is after his valuables. In the second larger conflict, Adam Ewing helps a stowaway Maori to find his freedom on board the ship from the Pacific Islands back to San Francisco.

Story 2: There are also two conflicts in this story which are related to each other. In the initial conflict, Robert Frobisher is a music composer in love with Rufus Sixsmith, he is disinherited from his wealthy father therefore finds himself penniless. To be able to earn money, he becomes an “amanuensis” to an elderly composer called Vyvyan Ayrs. The second conflict occurs when Robert Frobisher starts writing his own music and Vyvyan Ayrs wants to claim it as his own and uses Robert Frobisher’s sexuality as blackmail, Robert Frobisher shoots Vyvyan Ayrs but the bullet does not kill him. So, now it is a matter of time for Robert Frobisher to complete his Cloud Atlas sextet before he is arrested by the police. He does complete it in time and then he kills himself.

Story 3: The conflict in this story is that Luisa Rey uncovers a scandal at the Swanekke Nuclear Power Plant. The leadership knows that the plant is not safe, they are working with the oil companies to make sure that people rail against nuclear power but Rufus Sixsmith has published a report identifying the dangers of the nuclear power plant.

Story 4: Timothy Cavendish is always coming up against problems financially and life in general and he usually goes to his brother to help him out. However, this time, even though his book deal came through, it paid off his debt but he still had no money. The family of the author of the book are after him and want their money, in going back to his brother, his brother tricks him into committing himself into a nursing home. This is about his efforts to escape from the nursing home.

Story 5: The conflict in this story is about the treatment of fabricants, being less than pure-bloods, naturally born humans, a futuristic look at slavery.

Story 6: The conflict in this story about Zachary is driven by him helping a prescient on to the mountain in order for her to be able to send a message to an off-world colony to save them from Earth.

1. **What is the theme of the film?**

In general, the themes in this film look at discrimination be it across race, sexuality, gender, humans versus non-humans and social classes. It also brings love and how it transcends life and death.

1. **Are the characters relatable? Why and why not?**

All these characters are relatable, there are flaws in all of them which is generally the human condition.

1. **What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write your story?**

The dream sequence with Robert Frobisher and Rufus Sixsmith “transcending boundaries” and smashing the plates and vases, a beautiful shot and metaphor for “transcending boundaries”.

At the beginning of the movie, they show voiceovers and shots combining all the different stories at once, provided a lot of tension and action, fast paced right up front and introduces everything at once, even though it might be a little disorienting.

Even if we can’t see someone’s face, we could see them in a mirror or a reflection. Halle Berry’s character in the car, couldn’t see her face from behind but can in the mirror. It seems to add more tension to the scene.

Dr Henry Goose, has dialogue that make you think he is a good man e.g. questioning the use of Africans as serfs but he is actually someone who cannot be trusted, as Adam Ewing finds out. He is a shapeshifter which keeps the tension in the character and the story and makes the character more complex and layered.

The use of the same locations and sets in the different lives which links them together.

The use of match cutting not only visuals but also music.

Using different, un-natural colors for scenes e.g. when Sixsmith and Luis Del Ray are stopped in the elevator, the scene is red which adds tension and when they are moving again, they are back to normal colors.

The use of transitioning scenes by compositing one on the other as they transition e.g. Robert Frobisher looking for his book and Sixsmith in his hotel room reading the letter written in the past by Robert Frobisher. It adds to the story of how both Robert Frobisher and Rufus Sixsmith are linked in all lives.

The general use of lighting a scene, a person or a thing to add another emotional dimension.