**Slumdog Millionaire - Narrative**

**Narrative in Slumdog Millionaire**

The narrative structure of Slumdog Millionaire is rather unique. The film is based upon the novel Q&A by Vikas Swarup, so the film’s narrative is effectively told in chapters and stages.

At first, the narrative appears to be non-linear, as we see flashbacks and flash-forwards coexisting together. However, what is special about the narrative is the three different universes it exists in; it is suggested that the interrogation scenes are the present, and the scenes in the Slums and on Who Wants To Be a Millionaire are flashbacks (with the latter later existing as a flash-forward at the end of the film). Therefore, the film is technically perfectly linear, as the interrogation scenes run in order, with occasional interruptions for flashbacks.

These flashbacks are central to the narrative as they not only show progression in age and personality, but also explain how Jamal knows the answers. The ages of the characters move from children to teenagers quickly, but this seems organic and natural due to the nature of the narrative.

As above, the film is told in chapters and stages, with three main narratives being interwoven. This is why Who Wants To Be a Millionaire is such a good platform to base the film on, as the format lends itself well to ‘stages’; with each question being a ‘ladder’ up to the grand total. The show fits in a way no other gameshow would, as whilst Jamal is gradually reaching the top monetary prize, he is also getting a step closer to reuniting with Latika.

The narrative perfectly reflects the recurring theme of destiny, as several obstacles are thrown up to prevent Jamal from succeeding, but he always knows (through flashbacks) how to solve these problems. This allows the audience to understand that the film is told in chapters, similar to a portmanteau style of filmmaking, and not parallel narratives. The narratives may intertwine at stages, particularly toward the end where the interrogation becomes the gameshow, but as narrative strands they are separate and stand alone as the film progresses. In fact, it could be said that instead of being parallel, they interrupt each other to move the narrative on.

The fact that the film begins with an 18 year old Jamal being severely beaten, and then flashes back to a wide eyed youngster gives us an instant connection to Jamal and an understanding of his character. The narrative enables us to find the depth in the characters, Jamal in particular, as the skips through time highlight the most prominent and defining moments of their lifetimes, meaning the audience can understand the film better than they would if the story was merely set in the present with occasional flashbacks. The fact that the flashbacks form individual stories of their own, such as how the brothers escape the slum, further reinforces the idea of chapters and increases the audiences’ awareness of character and story progression.

By its definition, the film is non-linear, but as mentioned above it could technically be seen as linear. The fact that Todorov’s narrative structure is present, albeit a bit skewed to accommodate the complicated story of Slumdog, means that the film could be seen as rather typical of its genre.

Thus, for the audience, does Slumdog challenge or met expectations and conventions? Despite its episodic nature, the narrative can be seen as linear if broken up into the three strands that form the narrative, and the character arcs are easy to identify. As well as this, the loose following of Todorov’s narrative structure means that the film is rather generic of its genre (the romantic drama) meaning that the audience’s expectations are met, and conventions are not challenged too greatly.

<https://sssfcmediastudies.blogspot.com/2013/12/slumdog-millionaire-narrative_13.html#:~:text=The%20narrative%20structure%20of%20Slumdog,and%20flash%2Dforwards%20coexisting%20together>.

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The way in which Slumdog Millionaire is structured is important to the story that unfolds in front of our eyes, at first it appears challenging as this is a non-linear film.

Applying Todorov’s five stages of narrative to Slumdog millionaire we see that we begin with the attempt to repair the disruption. This is then followed by a flashback to the Equilibrium and from there the story carries out normally intervened with flash forwards to the presents then finally when the narrative meets the present the film carries out in chronological order. This format keeps the audience engaged through the enigma codes as well as making them feel like active participants because they have to piece the movie out in their mind, the audience having to understand how narrative works in order to do this. However this knowledge is pretty basic and is very easy to get to grips with because of how conventional the film actually is, this therefore leads the audience to quickly understand the films pattern and create expectations on how it will end, because it is a romantic drama we know that it will end with Jamal and Latika reuniting and sharing the iconic ‘Big Kiss’.

Although the film tries to be smarter than it is the use of editing is crucial for the plot of this movie because we are restricted to Jamals memories. If the movie was to be depicted in chronological order from the beginning right the wat through our view of Jamal would probably be different, instead of him being Latikas hero and the ‘good guy’ we would see him more as Lakitas stalker.  The characters in this film also seem to be 2 dimensional, lacking any development, they can easily fit into props character types, Jamal undeniably the ‘hero’, Latika ‘princess’ and the rest villains. This being said Salim is seemingly more interesting as he can fall into many of the stereotypical character roles i.e the villain who prevents latika and Jamal being together, The donor to Jamal as his brother who saves him multiple times and the hero who kills the villain and saves the day, however these traits can arguably fit into the anti-hero category.

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