

THE CAREER AUTHOR



Bonus Episode 4 // *Dunkirk* (2017)



Allied soldiers from Belgium, the British Empire and France are surrounded by the German Army, and evacuated during a fierce battle in World War II.

Genre: Action, Drama, History

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5013056/>

For “The Mole”

Progressive Complication (1:05:00) - The boat is flooding as the tide rises while it's also taking fire.

Crisis (1:06:00) - Does he defend the French soldier or let the others send him out as a sacrifice?

Inciting Incident (11:17) - Grabbing a stretcher and attempting to get on the boat.

Climax (1:09:00) - He refuses to kick "Gibson" off the boat. Says, "It's wrong."

Resolution (1:25:00) - He is pulled from the water and is heading home on the fishing boat.

“When 400,000 men couldn’t get home, home came for them.”

THE ANTI-PLOT (*NOT A HERO'S JOURNEY*)

From *The Story Grid* by Shawn Coyne, page 76:

- There is no requirement that there be a consistent reality.
- There is no requirement of causality.
- There is no requirement to adhere to any time constraints.
- The protagonist(s) at the end of the Story are the same as they were at the beginning.
- The characters neither defeat nor surrender to external or internal antagonistic forces. They just remain as they ever were, like plants with voices.

Notes about the movie:

- Nolan directs in the style of Stanley Kubrick, often shunning convention in order to make something memorable – a statement about humanity without character development like *A Clockwork Orange* or *The Shining*.
- There is no Hero's Journey pattern, although one could use "The Mole" as a simple way of identifying the Global Five Commandments (loosely).
- There is no three act structure.
- Nolan plays with both the role of protagonist(s) and time which weave and interlap without much apparent purpose. One of the protagonists (George) dies a random and unnecessary death. Nolan seems to be making a statement about the violent, random, brutal nature of war and the fact that heroes and villains are nonexistent.
 - Important dialogue at 01:32:00 to support this observation – "All we did was survive."
- The celebration of the British fishing boats arriving at 01:36:00 does not have a strong setup to such an emotional scene.

Other articles:

<http://www.scriptmag.com/features/craft-features/screenplay-structure-and-outlining/storytelling-strategies-dunkirk-finely-tuned-watch>

<https://www.shorescripts.com/dunkirkfilmreview2017/>

"It is not a movie for everybody. It's not supposed to be."

DOES THE MOVIE WORK? WHY OR WHY NOT?

J: Absolutely! It is a brilliant anti-plot film, a story about nothing (like *Seinfeld*) that shows us the nature of war without the filter of propaganda or hero worship. It is powerful and I believe it'll stand the test of time like the Stanley Kubrick classics. I don't typically enjoy these types of movies which is why I think this one really works.

Zach: After speaking with J., it's hard for me to say the movie doesn't work. Just because it didn't meet my expectations, doesn't mean it's a broken film. That said, the marketing for the movie sold this as a war film, which is a genre with certain conventions and expectations. It's doubtful that that's Nolan's fault it was promoted as such. Perhaps if I had gone into this expecting a Nolan film and not a war movie, I would have felt different. Which, again, is not Nolan's problem. So even though I didn't "get it," I'd say the film does work.