*Gravity*

[*Gravity*](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1454468/); Warner Bros. Pictures, 2013; Directed by Alfonso Cuarón; Starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney; Rated PG-13; [Watch the trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiTiKOy59o4).

Summary:

*Gravity* is hailed as a film for its technical brilliance. Its opening shot is twelve and a half minutes long; when filming began, the technology did not exist for what the film required; over 80% of the film is computer-generated (CG) whereas *Avatar* was 60%; *Gravity* won Oscars for Directing, Cinematography, Film Editing, Music, Sound Editing, Sound Mixing, and Visual Effects. (Also keep in mind that none of the film was shot in zero gravity.) But the film’s core is not the technology but the story of its main character, the astronaut Dr. Ryan Stone. Sent to space to repair the Hubble telescope, Ryan and her colleagues encounter problems when debris from a satellite kills most of the team and destroys their ship. Ryan is the sole survivor and struggles to return to Earth, though she’s experienced great loss. The film asks what do we do after trauma, and Ryan certainly experiences catastrophe: the Hubble accident, her colleague Matt’s death, and the accidental death of her young daughter. Ryan has to make a very conscious decision whether she will give up or fight to live when there appears to be no hope.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* Survival/Resilience. The film resembles a shipwreck story or a wilderness survival tale where characters battle against the elements.
* Ryan Stone’s name. Ryan is in many ways a rock. She is hard and detached at the film’s beginning but also firm and resilient by the end. Pressure and time change her.
* Death and rebirth. There are many “deaths” in the films, as well as many “rebirths.” Consider the multiple times an umbilical cord is used as a symbol.
* Evolving. Humankind is at the peak of its technological achievements, yet the technology fails. The film ends with a shot of Ryan seeming to evolve out of the lake, or as Cuarón said, “It was the evolution of life in one, quick shot."

Discussion Questions:

1. The film, through Ryan Stone’s character’s arc, asks, “What keeps you going when all hope is lost?” What is it that motivates Ryan to survive?
2. Where does the film insert instances of the transcendent/religious (especially objects), and why?
3. In the final shot of the film, Ryan crawls out of the lake, grabs the sand with her hand, and says, “Thank you.” To whom is she talking?
4. Why did this film win seven Oscars but *not* the Academy Award for Best Picture? Should it have won?
5. How does Ryan Stone evolve throughout the film?
6. Is *Gravity* a “deep” or “shallow” movie?
7. The film's tagline is "Don't let go." At what points does Ryan decide to let go?