*Star Wars*

[*Star Wars*](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076759/); 20th Century Fox, 1977; Directed by George Lucas; Written by George Lucas; Starring Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher; Rated PG; [Watch the trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1g3_CFmnU7k).

Summary:

*Star Wars* premiered in 1977, from which point cinema has never recovered. George Lucas wrote and directed the film—later to be called *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*—a combination of other stories as varied as King Arthur, *Flash Gordon*, and those in the Bible. But *Star Wars* made its own singular contributions, from its setting in the distant past rather than the future, its textbook portrayal of a hero’s mythological journey, and what is recognized as one of the greatest film scores of all time.

Luke Skywalker is a young farmer who is brought into a rebellion against the oppressive Galactic Empire. He meets and befriends Princess Leia, the smuggler Han Solo and his tall and hairy Wookie, two droids, and an old friend of his father’s. The first science fiction film to be nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards, *Star Wars*, originally predicted to be a flop (even by its director), went on to become the highest grossing film at the time and the genesis of an entire franchise that includes multiple films, hundreds of novels, video games, comic books, radio plays, and television shows.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* The Force. Obi-Wan Kenobi describes the Force as an energy field permeating all life: “It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.”
* Fathers. Luke has never met his father but decides, like his father, to become a Jedi.
* Heroes. Each hero is unlikely and has significant roadblocks: Luke’s isolation on Tatooine, Han Solo’s pride, Leia’s captivity, and C-3PO and R2-D2’s limitations as droids.
* Hope. The subtitle of the film “A New Hope” points to the hope the Rebel Forces have of defeating the Galactic Empire, the hope following the Empire’s demise, but perhaps also the hope of Darth Vader, who at the end of the film is alive and hurtling away from the destroyed Death Star.
* Good vs. Evil. *Star Wars* makes the delineation between the good guys and the bad quite clear. Darth Vader tortures, kills, and follows “the Dark side of the Force,” is dressed in black and wields a red lightsaber; Luke Skywalker is honorable, dresses in white, and his lighsaber is blue.

Discussion Questions:

1. George Lucas intentionally adopts what he calls a “used future” look for the film, meaning that all ships, buildings, and weapons look used and old rather than the usual sci-fi sleekness. What effect does this have?
2. Discuss the parallels of *Star Wars* (and especially the planet Tatooine) with the [*Dune* universe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dune_(franchise)) of Frank Herbert.
3. Where do you see *Star Wars* impacting the film industry? Broader culture?
4. Lucas worked with Joseph Campbell, author of [*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*](http://www.amazon.com/Thousand-Faces-Collected-Joseph-Campbell/dp/1577315936). How do you see Campbell’s concept of a “monomyth” in the film?