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Media Literacy

Framework and Production Elements of LOST

LOST broke many rules and taboos in television, and thanks to its collection of writers, actors, and directors, made a show like nothing that had been seen before. In addition to being very original in storytelling, characters, and settings, LOST was also a very creative and innovative television show in framework and production elements.

The show's title and title sequence are both simple and memorable. The name is very bare and doesn't really tell you much about the plot, but it does give an idea of a show that is mysterious and ambiguous. The Title sequence is just a black background with the words LOST written in white, going closer to the viewer, with the words initially out of focus and as it moves closer, gets into focus. The music is stark and ominous, and the whole sequence is very short; just like the show's name, the title sequence doesn't tell the plot but instead tries to show the general feeling of mystery. Most television shows have a longer title sequence, with segments of the show played together to show the audience what to expect, while LOST wants the audience to be interested in the show's secrecy and ambiguity, and with its

constantly changing storylines and characters, it would be difficult to make a title sequence with footage that can sum up the entire show and main characters.

LOST is most famous for its large, overarching storylines, using a variety of storytelling techniques to create a plot that is very different from most TV shows. The show uses a structure in television called a story mythology, in which events in an episode would have consequences that would affect and be built upon in future episodes. This technique was made popular by shows such as *The X-files* and *Twin Peaks*. This idea would also lead to some episodes starting right where the last episode ended, as opposed to stand alone episodes where the events of that episode would not effect or be referenced in future episodes. The biggest problem with this system is that it makes the shows difficult to get into if the viewer had not seen previous episodes and thus would not be able to understand the plot, while someone who had only seen a few episodes of the show could generally enjoy alone episodes as the plot and characters would generally stay the same. LOST heavily built upon this idea of a story mythology by making every episode start where the last had ended, leading to almost no stand alone episodes and instead have one large story arc. This show's mythology has several subplots that exist in the generally story arc. These range from characters spitting up to solve a problem in their own individual ways, showing established events through the eyes of different characters, to seeing different characters back stories. LOST took the concept of a flashback to new extremes, with each episode showing the current plot and also one characters individual flashbacks to different times in their lives before they crashed on the island. These stories initially seem to only serve as providing character

development, but they start to become more and more important to the current plot, showing how many characters were unknowingly connected to each other's lives in some way, such as meeting the same people, going to the same places, or having indirectly affected each other's lives in some way, as well as being connected to the island in some way. Around halfway through the series, the show innovated the flashback concept even further by replacing flashbacks with flash-forwards and flash-sideways. The flash-forwards show the three years of the six survivors who managed to get off the island and their attempts to go back to their pre-island lives, but find that their time on the island has greatly changed them and are unable to go back to being the people they once were. The flash-forwards were first used in the season 3 finale and were presented as a normal flashback, and weren't made obvious that it took place in the future until the end of the episode, making the flash-forwards introduction one of the greatest twists in *LOST*. With the flash-forwards, we see the consequences of certain events, but not the events themselves, which would be explained in the current plot with the characters still on the island until we finally see how the six survivors managed to get off the island and the two storylines finally converge. In the last season, the flash-sideways took the place of the flash-forwards. In one of the story arcs, several main characters end up in the past and attempt to activate a nuclear device at an unleashed pocket of electromagnetism, an event that occurred on the island in 1977 called "the Incident." They believe that by colliding these two huge sources of energy, it will change history and prevent their plane from ever crashing, and that all the events on the island will have never happened and they will all safely land at the LAX airport

as scheduled. This plan seems to fail, leaving history unchanged and sending the main characters back to the current time, but the viewers are also shown flash-sideways, where in a seemingly alternate reality their plan worked and their plane never crashed, and that the island was destroyed by the nuclear device. This flash-sideways is made even more interesting when we see how characters that had been on the island for decades would be if they were never involved in the island, the biggest case being Benjamin Linus, who was the survivor's main antagonist and leader of the island's native people (referred to as "The Others,") is a high school history teacher.

The show was well received for breaking away from drama show formulas and having unique characters, and shortly after the 1st season; several other channels spawned LOST derivative shows. The main elements from LOST were the overarching storylines (Invasion), supernatural themes (Heroes), and variations of flashbacks (FlashForward), and with the exception of Heroes, all failed to make it to their second season.

The editing on LOST is unique in the way the flashbacks are shown. In most shows flashbacks are only one, unbroken scene, while in LOST the flashbacks make up nearly half an episode, and the story with shift back and forth from the current plot to the flash back. This gives the flashbacks more importance, as we are able to see just how the past has shaped the characters, and how it effects how they handle present events.

Color and lighting in LOST compliant what is happening in the plot. The shows main color is green, in that the main setting of the show is a tropical island

this is to be expected, and in flashbacks that take place off the island, there is a noticeable lack of the color green, making the jump between settings more powerful visually. Being that the island is usually in the Pacific, the island's weather can change drastically, leading to heavy rainfall, but its usually rains during intense signs, such as the main character's first encounter with the Monster in the pilot episode. One the island there are few artificial light sources, most being by torch, leading to dramatic lighting on the characters faces, and whenever an electric light source is seen, it is usually something special.

The point of view in LOST is important, in that a scene may not make sense as it is initially seen only through the eyes of one character, but when it is shown what another character saw or did during that scene, the scene overall makes much more sense. One character whose point of view gives a huge insight to the scope of LOST is the mysterious Jacob. Jacob is first referenced to by name in season 3 and is said to be the unseen ruler of the island, and is nearly worshipped by The Others, and to whom even their leader Ben Linus answers to. For three seasons, the character is referenced repeatedly, and whose word the others hold in the highest regard, even though only Ben's Advisor Richard has ever really seen him. When we finally see Jacob in the season 5 finale, it offers great revelations and answers some mysteries that have been around since the 1st season. In the season 5 finale and in episodes in the final season, we see how Jacob has affected the lives of all the main characters, long before they crashed on the island, and through his flashbacks we see some of the history of the island, dating back from 4 A. D. to 2007. The camera angles on LOST generally follow the rule of thirds with the main characters in the corners,

although when a character is supposed to be dramatic, they often appear in the center of the frame. LOST also often uses a very shallow depth of field on shots of the characters, where the background is completely out of focus, making the in focus character the most important part of the frame.

The music in LOST is critically acclaimed for its originality and creative use of music and audio. Much of the score is made up of ominous and dark music, made from broken pianos, rare ethnic instruments, and most interestingly metal parts for the plane used in the pilot episode. LOST uses these ominous sounds in scenes where a subtle revelation or action occurs, such as a flashback scene in the 1950's where Ben's advisor Richard is seen, but looks exactly as he does in 2004, implying that Richard doesn't age. One of the most interesting uses of ominous sounds in LOST are the sounds of the Monster. The Monster has been feared by the survivors since the pilot episode, and was made terrifying by being initially unseen, and not known what it was, besides something very big and powerful. The characters could only hear the sounds it made, ranging from powerful animal screams to mechanical sounds, most memorable being a ticking sound that came from a taxi receipt printer. There are also several very memorable melodies that are played throughout the series, ranging from a motif with a strong forward moving motion that is used when characters are moving to some special location, to probably the best piece of music on LOST, the original piece "There's No Place Like Home," a song first used in the season 4 finale of the same name, when we see the 6 survivors when they are reunited with their families and loved ones. That song would also be used heavily in the very emotionally powerful series finale "The End."

Word choice in LOST is very important to the story, where certain phrases are repeated and the speech of characters varies by their personalities. Locke is famous for saying, "Don't tell me what I can't do!" a phrase that originates from his past when he was handicapped and was often told what he couldn't do physically, but on the island the phrase is often used. Locke feels he is being unfairly limited in his potential, in particular by Jack. Jack is most known for his phrase "Live together, or die alone," which comes from his belief that only by sticking together will the survivors of the crash finally make it back home. The character Sawyer is one of the more negative and troublesome main characters, and is known for his seemingly unlimited amount of derogative nicknames for other characters, ranging from "Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon" for the Korean couple the Kwons, "Jumbotron" for the overweight Hurly, and "Colonial Kurtz" for the Bald Locke.

LOST has earned several Emmys for the performances featured on the show. The two standout performances are from Terry O'Quinn as John Locke, and Michael Emerson as Benjamin Linus. O'Quinn's performances show Locke as a man with a tortured past that has now devoted his life to faith in the island after being able to walk again, but is not without be able to have his faith tested. Emerson brings a huge depth to the character Ben Linus, someone who has done horrible things to get his power, and whose cunning and manipulative personality allows him to deceive and use almost anyone. Emerson plays him as someone who can be very intense and creepy, and also as someone who deep down has some shreds of humanity. Emerson plays Ben as a villain that believes he isn't evil, when he does horrible things he doesn't enjoy it, he does it because he truly believe its what's best for the

island. Emerson's performance of Ben has awarded him with two Emmys and is usually tied with Locke as the most interesting character amongst fans of the show, and the scenes where Emerson and Quinn act together are some of the best of LOST.

LOST was a show whose framework and production was just as original as its plot, and has lead to it being one of the most famous and critically acclaimed shows of the decade.