Brent A. Polk

Week 2/“3 Acts”

Departure, Initiation, Return

The film “Back to the Future” breaks down within the guidelines of the three Act structure as follows. The “Departure” consists of the main character Marty McFly, who is a teenager that is going through the typical issues of the average teen. In so far as the average angst that all teenagers have to deal with, Marty wants to be viewed in a better light than the world around him cast. Mr. Strickland calls him a slacker (just like his father) and his overly confident bravado as a guitar player in his band is shot down as well. All Marty seems to want is a higher level of respect, the one thing that shows as lacking in his immediate family. Marty has a limited although stretching level of self-ambition; he has wants and needs like anyone else and whatever controllable objectives he has; he keeps close i.e. his girlfriend Jennifer and Doc Brown. As the character of Marty is unveiled one cannot help but to notice that he is the “coolest” thing in his family and to escape his family’s’ monotonous lifestyle holds his friendship with the Doc very closely.

By a completely unexpected set of events Marty ends up taking a “trip” to avoid certain death from a group of Libyan terrorist. I must stress this point as Marty himself had no direct desire to change his or his families’ current circumstances by this method of “Departure”. He did state earlier in the film that “well history is going to change” when Mr. Strickland says he was just like his father one of many on the nose time based quips.

The film continues to unfold as Marty is whisked back to the past and again after he realizes what has occurred makes no revelation as to what he might be able to change in his life or any others until he meets up the Doc from this past era. It takes the witnessing of his father being bullied by Biff for one to begin to realize that Marty has the opportunity to alter or change anything from the past. Once the fact that he might not be able to return to his present, Marty states that “I can’t be stuck here, I got a girl”. It is of some valuable interest that Marty and his father share if not similar the exact same flaws. The only difference being that Marty’s father had a bully. This connection of flaws allows Marty to set forth both direct changes to his father’s pride and self-assuredness and in his own dilemma to escape from the past to return to his life. Due to his sons influence George has his own “Heroes Journey” and comes to an independent “Initiation” and “return” or resolve by the near close of the film.

Marty’s “Return” from the literal past is a direct conclusion to his journey. He has witnessed the adversities of both his parents, his mother’s alcoholism was passed from her mother and his father’s weaknesses were extensive to the level of social paralysis. What Marty accomplished was partly unintentional and by minimal means of his own actions he affected the future for the betterment of all.