Traditional Elements

- Things are clear
- generally linear
  - beginning, middle, end
- We recognize the hero
- We can follow the events
- We understand the theme
- We feel the resolution
Exposition/Beginning

• Begin Powerfully/interestingly
• Setup--often in beginning
• Info needed to follow the story
• who, what, where, when, why
  • just enough...........
• usually in beginning
• Can be sprinkled throughout--usually is
Inglorious Basterds
opening scene
Inglorious Basterds
opening scene

- Handshake -- hesitation
- He kisses the daughter’s hand -- feigned civility
- The milk as metaphor for ordinariness
- Transition from French to English..... plot device
- The pen, the ink, the book-- German fastidiousness
- This is YOUR house
Inglorious Basterds opening scene

- tobacco-pipe--bigger pipe
- one bit of humor
- civility-share a smoke with a “friend”
- one upmanship
- Arc around the table
  - shot change
  - tilt to reveal the hidden family
Inglorious Basterds opening scene

- "I think like a jew"
- power of the faces
  - colonel goes from friendly to intent/angry
  - farmer goes to sadness/deep regret--tear
- Classic dilemma
- Music
  - dissonance
  - choral music to crescendo
How to tell it

• "When we tell a story in cinema, we should resort to dialogue only when it's impossible to do otherwise. I always try first to tell a story in the cinematic way, through a succession of shots and bits of film in between"

- Alfred Hitchcock
How to tell it

• Begin strong/powerfully/interestingly
• Showing is preferable to telling
• unfold events
  – reflect the plot and the theme
• through behavior reveal the character and conflict
• Keep it simple
How to tell it

- Modulate tempo, mood
- Emphasize relationships
- Unpredictable
Modulate Tempo and Mood
“West Side Story”
Theme

What the story is about
abstract—not enough by itself for a strong story
but all good stories have a theme
be about something
use oblique approach
Great themes
“When you make a movie, always try to discover what the theme of the movie is in one or two words. Every time I made a film, I always knew what I thought the theme was, the core, in one word. In The Godfather, it was succession. In Apocalypse, it was morality. The reason it’s important to have this is because most of the time what a director really does is make decisions. All day long: Do you want it to be long hair or short hair? Do you want a dress or pants? Do you want a beard or no beard? There are many times when you don’t know the answer. Knowing what the theme is always helps you.
Great Themes

Love
Death
Self awareness
Limitations
Envy
War
Power
The Philips Parallel Lines: Tell It Your Way film contest invited people to make a short film, no longer than three minutes, that contained these lines as its dialogue:

What’s That?
It’s a Unicorn
Never seen one up close before
Beautiful
Get away, get away
I’m sorry.

The winner, as judged by acclaimed director Ridley Scott, was Porcelain Unicorn.
The Porcelain Unicorn