

Yoda the powerful Jedi Master: Perception of the character of Yoda in five of the  
first six Star Wars films

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## 1. Introduction

My thesis focuses on a fictional character called Yoda in Star Wars films. The films are called episodes, and out of the first six films, Yoda appears in five of them. These films are, in consecutive order, *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999), *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), and *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* (2005).

In all of the Star Wars films, there are several different kinds of characters, who belong to different species and look very different to humans. The species of Yoda is never mentioned in the first six films. In terms of his appearance, Yoda is a small-sized, green creature with long, pointed ears. He has a little bit of white or light grey hair growing on the back of his head, which might be to imply that he is quite old, and he has three fingers on each hand, and three toes on each foot, with big and long, slightly animal-like nails on them. He wears brown clothes, with a lighter shade of brown robe-style coat on top, characteristic to Jedi.

Yoda's age is never specified either, but according to some of the lines in the films, he is at least 900 years old. For example, in *Episode VI – Return of the Jedi*, Yoda says to Luke that “When 900 years old you reach, look as good you will not,” implying, in a humoristic manner that he has reached that age. Yoda is also very wise and powerful, and he is, in fact, one of the most powerful Jedi in the films. The character, for example, tells his apprentice to “Do, or do not. There is no try” (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980), among many other wisdoms. Jedi and Sith are characters who are able to use the Force, and they usually use lightsabers as their weapons. The Force is “an energy field uniting all living things”<sup>1</sup>, and it can be “embraced and manipulated by certain individuals, much in the way witches and wizards of popular folklore use magic” (Ellerhoff, 2015, p. 45). The Force could, therefore, be described as a sort of supernatural power that can be controlled by Jedi, the characters who are trained to do so. The Jedi use the light side of the Force, for good, and the Sith use the dark side of the Force, for evil. In *Episode II*, the character Mace Windu says that the Jedi are “keepers of the peace” (McCallum & Lucas, 2002).

The main goal of my thesis is to examine Yoda's perception of others and himself, and other characters' perception of him in two of the three original trilogy films and all three of the prequel films. Although, Yoda does not appear in the first original film (*A New Hope* (1977)), I will introduce that film anyway later, in section 3.2.1, so that the storyline would be clearer. I intend to

analyze, for example, how other characters treat him and how much respect they show towards him because he is such a powerful character. The secondary aim of this thesis is to compare the character of Yoda in all five films. I have chosen this approach because in the original films the character is a puppet, but in the trilogy films he is a character made with CGI (computer-generated imagery), and I want to see how this might change the character's behavior, for example. CGI is created by either using an image that already exists by scanning it into a computer, or by drawing a new image on the computer with software tools (Netzley, 2000, p. 47). Once the desired image is on the computer, it can be changed to fit "the needs of the desired effect, and then later combined with the live-action footage and rescanned back onto film" (Abbott, 2006, p. 91). Additionally, there is also a relatively large period of time between the release of the original films (1977-1983), and the prequel films (1999-2005), which is why it would be interesting to see how the development of technology, for example, has changed the character in the films.

In the next section, entitled *On the character of Yoda: previous studies*, I will introduce some of the previous studies and other sources that I have found useful for my thesis. In the third section, I will first introduce the methods of research I used for my thesis, and explain about them in more detail. I will then move forward to introduce the materials I used, with subheading *Original Star Wars trilogy*, introducing the three original films, and subheading *Star Wars prequel films*, introducing the three films that were released later. The fourth section of my thesis, entitled *Analysis of perceptions*, will include my analysis of the subject I have chosen, and go into more detail about the findings I might have made. It is categorized in subheadings, in which I will analyze the perceptions individually in different scenes from each film. The fifth section of my thesis will introduce my conclusions of the subject, and finally, the sixth section will include all of the references I have used.

## **2. On the character of Yoda: previous studies**

In this section I will introduce some of the previous studies made, relating to Yoda, and Star Wars in general, as well as to other things relevant to my thesis, such as character studies. These are the studies and materials that I have used in my thesis, in addition to the first six Star Wars films.

Some of the previous studies I used for my thesis include Encyclopedia of Movie Special Effects by Patricia D. Netzley, and an article in an academic journal, Final Frontiers: Computer-Generated Imagery and the Science Fiction Film, by Stacey Abbott, which I only briefly used, in order to better explain the term CGI (computer-generated imagery).

Another source I used, was *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, which I used in order to analyze the character of Yoda, by thinking of him as the mentor of the story. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is a book, which includes a theory about the hero's journey. According to Drobot (2013), the hero's journey is a pattern, which can be found in multiple stories, the structure of which includes the different stages of the hero's journey. These stages are departure, initiation, and return (p. 140). The first stage, departure, is the stage in which the hero meets the mentor. The first step of the departure stage is the call to adventure, in which the character "is given notice that everything is going to change" (Drobot, 2013, p. 140). This step is followed by the refusal to the call, in which the character refuses to begin the adventure, due to, for example, obligations or fear. The next step is supernatural aid, in which the character receives help from a magical character, after accepting the call to adventure. The step after that is the crossing of the first threshold, in which the character leaves for "the unknown realm of adventure" (Drobot, 2013, p. 141). The final step of the departure stage is the belly of the whale, which is the moment in which the character "separates from his own world and thus from his own self. He transitions between worlds and between selves" (Drobot, 2013, p. 141). The creator of Star Wars, George Lucas, used this book as his inspiration and source while creating the original film. According to an article in the Australian Screen Education magazine, "Lucas suggested that, were it not for Campbell he might still have been writing Star Wars" (Bancks, 2003, p. 32).

Another source that I used for my thesis was a blog post by Rod Hilton, in which he introduces the Machete order, a viewing order that he invented for the films. Although, this is not an official study of any sort, it is quite an essential source for my thesis, as the Machete order is the order in which I watched the films for analyzing them, and this viewing order makes a little bit of difference to the perception of the character of Yoda, which is the main focus of my thesis.

In addition to these sources, I also used an English outline of a German monograph about film characters, by Jens Eder. Some of the things pointed out in this piece of writing were very useful for my thesis, because they were about film studies, which are essential to analyzing films or film characters. Some other previous studies that I found useful were two articles in different journals. The first one was Luke Skywalker's Individuation, by Steve Gronert Ellerhoff, and the other one was Using the Force: "Star Wars" in the Classroom, by Timothy P. Chartier.

### 3. Studying the character of Yoda in the Star Wars films

#### 3.1 Methods

In this section I will explain what my research methods are. My methods of research were quite limited, as I mostly just observed. I did, however, also do some discourse analysis. I collected some data for analyzing by writing down most of the lines, especially the important and essential ones, from the scenes in which the character of Yoda appeared in or was mentioned in, while I watched the films. In addition to these, I also used some methods of film analysis.

According to Jens Eder (2008), when someone wants to understand films, “questions of an interpretative analysis pose themselves”: How can, for example, the behavior of a character be explained, and how does the character affect the film’s meaning (p. 14)? In my thesis, I tend to mostly focus on interpretative analysis, and I try to find an answer to how powerful the character of Yoda is. If the perception of the character is that he is very powerful, then he would also affect the film’s meaning in many ways, and is an important character.

When analyzing characters, one is usually more focused on certain characters or different types of aspects of these characters. Eder (2008) also states that analysis is usually carried out by following specific steps. These steps include one watching the film or reading the script multiple times, while concentrating on the aspects that are relevant to the character, and “supplements the resulting impressions with additional information, e.g. about viewers or historical contexts” (p. 14). Based on these steps, one forms conclusions about the character, and the relevant aspects of the film, and might also add some images or scenes to substantiate these conclusions (Eder, 2008, p. 14-15). In my thesis, I chose certain scenes from each film, and analyzed these scenes, in order to prove that my theories about the character of Yoda might be the way I expressed them.

Analyzing also poses certain problems and tasks, for example, selecting relevant information. While analyzing, it would be important to be able to spot the differences between which information is too complex, and which is not (Eder, 2008, p. 15). In order to effectively analyze the character of Yoda, in a narrow enough manner, I had to limit my subject. Eder (2008) also says that one must limit their analysis to only the things, which are the most relevant, as many characters provide “an immeasurable range of properties” (p. 15). The character of Yoda, certainly, provides a very wide range of aspects that could be analyzed, but the perception of the character can be narrowed down to a more general level, which makes the subject small enough for my thesis.

## 3.2 Materials

In this section I will introduce the materials I used for my thesis. First I will introduce the first three, original Star Wars films that I used as my research material, then I will proceed to introduce the three prequel Star Wars films that I also used. According to Oxford English Dictionary (OED), prequel is “[a] book, film, etc., narrating events which precede those of an already existing work” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.).

The order of the Star Wars films can be quite confusing, if one has not familiarized oneself with the subject. Each film is called an episode, and they were released in the following order: episode four (IV), episode five (V), episode six (VI), episode one (I), episode two (II), and episode three (III). The reason for this order of numbers is because the events of the first three released episodes (four, five and six) happened, in the Star Wars universe, after the events of episodes one, two and three. There are several orders in which the films can be watched in, one being the Machete order, which is the order in which I watched the films for my thesis. That means I watched them in the following order: Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (1977), Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back (1980), Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (2002), Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith (2005), and Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi (1983). After those, I also watched Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (1999), because, although it is not a part of the Machete order, because of its lack of relevance to the actual storyline, it was relevant to the subject of my thesis, because Yoda appears in it.

The Machete order was created by a software developer, Rod Hilton. He wrote about it in his blog called Absolutely No Machete Juggling, which is also what the order was named after. The order ensures that a viewing keeps the reveal of Vader being Luke’s father, a surprise, “while introducing young Anakin before the end of Return of the Jedi” (Hilton, 2011). Episode I is not part of the order because, according to Hilton, it is irrelevant to “Luke’s journey and his decision to accept his hero’s burden by saving not only the galaxy from the Empire, but his father from the dark side” (Hilton, 2011).

### 3.2.1 Original Star Wars trilogy

Here I will introduce the original trilogy. First I will summarize the plot of episode IV, A New Hope. Although Yoda was not in that film, some of the plot is important to know in order to better



understand the rest of the films. Next I will talk about episode V, The Empire Strikes back, and finally, episode VI, Return of the Jedi.

Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (originally just Star Wars) was released in the year 1977. The film starts with the line “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away” written with blue text on black background, followed by the famous opening “crawl”, as does every other Star Wars film, in which yellow text flows, or “crawls” upwards on a black, starry space background. This opening crawl tells some background story or information regarding the events of the films. In A New Hope the crawl goes as followed.

It is a period of civil war. Rebel spaceships, striking from a hidden base, have won their first victory against the evil Galactic Empire.

During the battle, Rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the DEATH STAR, an armored space station with enough power to destroy an entire planet.

Pursued by the Empire's sinister agents, Princess Leia races home aboard her starship, custodian of the stolen plans that can save her people and restore freedom to the galaxy...  
(Kurtz & Lucas, 1977)

Princess Leia gives the secret plans to the droid R2-D2, right before people from the Empire (includes Darth Vader and other evil characters) attack Leia's starship. The droid ends up with Luke Skywalker, who sees a part of the holographic message that Leia left on the droid. In that message Leia asks for help from a character called Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Luke eventually finds him. He tells Luke about his father and gives him his old lightsaber, and later sees the full message Leia left. She asks for him to help her father “in his struggle against the Empire” (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977). She tells him she stored vital information into the R2 unit and that it needs to be delivered to her father on planet Alderaan. Obi-Wan tells Luke he needs to learn the ways of the Force and come with him to Alderaan, because he is too old to go alone. Luke declines, but eventually changes his mind after seeing that his uncle and aunt have been killed. They decide to hire Han Solo to fly them to Alderaan.

The Empire destroys Alderaan right before Luke and the others arrive there, and their ship gets pulled into the Death Star by its tractor beam. Luke, Han and Chewbacca rescue Leia from the Death Star. Meanwhile Obi-Wan runs into Darth Vader, who eventually kills him. The Rebels (the good people) have a plan to destroy the Death Star by hitting a target area inside of it. The area is only two meter wide, and only a precise hit will set up a chain reaction that destroys the entire

weapon. Luke is one of the characters trying to hit the target, and he hears Obi-Wan's voice telling him to use the Force. He succeeds in using the Force to hit the target area, and the weapon is destroyed (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977).

Star Wars – The Empire Strikes Back is the fifth (V) episode, and the second Star Wars film to have been released. It was released in 1980, and it starts the same way as the previous one, but the crawl is, of course, different.

It is a dark time for the Rebellion. Although the Death Star has been destroyed, Imperial troops have driven the Rebel forces from their hidden base and pursued them across the galaxy.

Evading the dreaded Imperial Starfleet, a group of freedom fighters led by Luke Skywalker has established a new secret base on the remote ice world of Hoth.

The evil lord Darth Vader, obsessed with finding young Skywalker, has dispatched thousands of remote probes into the far reaches of space... (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980)

Luke faints in the snow on Hoth planet, and eventually sees Obi-Wan's Force ghost (Jedis can appear as Force ghosts after their death) who tells him he will "go to the Dagobah system" (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980), where he will learn from Yoda, the Jedi Master who also instructed Obi-Wan. Han Solo finds Luke and saves him before he freezes to death. The imperial troops attack the Rebels, and they fight back, but eventually have to leave Hoth. Princess Leia and others leave just as Darth Vader enters their base. Luke sets course to the Dagobah system with R2-D2. They arrive there, but Luke lands their ship into a lake. Later they meet Yoda, who agrees to instruct Luke. Yoda lifts Luke's ship from the lake using the Force. Luke senses that Han and Leia are in trouble (they get capture by Vader), and goes to save them, but promises to return for more training. Later Luke runs into Darth Vader, and as they fight with lightsabers, Vader reveals Luke he is his father (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980).

Star Wars – Return of the Jedi, is the sixth (VI) episode, and the third Star Wars film to appear. It was released in 1983. The opening crawl for this film goes as followed.

Luke Skywalker has returned to his home planet of Tatooine in an attempt to rescue his friend Han Solo from the clutches of the vile gangster Jabba the Hutt.

Little does Luke know that the GALACTIC EMPIRE has secretly begun construction on a new armored space station even more powerful than the first dreaded Death Star.

When completed, this ultimate weapon will spell certain doom for the small band of rebels struggling to restore freedom to the galaxy... (Kazanjan & Marquand, 1983)

Luke and others manage to save Han Solo. Luke then returns to the Dagobah system in order to complete his training with Yoda. Yoda dies, but reveals to Luke first that there is another Skywalker (his sister, Leia). The Rebels learn that the new Death Star orbits the forest moon of Endor, and that its weapon systems are not yet operational. They also learn that the Death Star "is protected by an energy shield, which is generated from the nearby forest moon of Endor." The shield needs to be deactivated first in order to attack. Luke, Han, Leia and others go to Endor in order to deactivate the shield. Luke later goes to Darth Vader, and then meets the Emperor (evil Sith lord, Palpatine). He reveals that he was the one who let the Rebels know the location of the shield generator, it was all a trap, and the deflector shield will be operational once Luke's friends arrive. Luke and Vader start to duel with lightsabers, and the Emperor wants Luke to turn to the dark side of the Force by killing Vader. Luke says he will never turn to the dark side, and the Emperor strikes him with his lightning powers. Vader does not want Luke to die, as he is his father, and he kills the Emperor, but gets hurt himself while doing it. As Vader is dying, Luke takes off his mask, revealing Anakin Skywalker, whom he managed to bring back from the dark side. The Rebels win the Empire and celebrate (Kazanjian & Marquand, 1983).

### **3.2.2 Star Wars prequel films**

Here I will introduce the three prequel films, *The Phantom Menace*, *Attack of the Clones*, and *Revenge of the Sith*. *Star Wars – The Phantom Menace*, is the first episode (I), and the fourth *Star Wars* film to appear. It was released in 1999, and, such as the original three films, this one also starts with the opening crawl.

Turmoil has engulfed the Galactic Republic. The taxation of trade routes to outlying star systems is in dispute.

Hoping to resolve the matter with a blockade of deadly battleships, the greedy Trade Federation has stopped all shipping to the small planet of Naboo.

While the Congress of the Republic endlessly debates this alarming chain of events, the Supreme Chancellor has secretly dispatched two Jedi Knights, the guardians of peace and justice in the galaxy, to settle the conflict... (McCallum & Lucas, 1999)

Obi-Wan Kenobi and his mentor Qui-Gon Jinn rescue Padmé Amidala, the queen of planet Naboo. They leave the planet with her starship, but it is broken and needs a new part called hyperdrive generator, which is why they land on planet Tatooine. Qui-Gon and Padmé go to buy the part, and meet Anakin Skywalker, who is a young slave boy. Qui-Gon frees Anakin, and brings him with him so that he can be trained to be a Jedi. Qui-Gon believes him to be "the chosen one", someone who

will bring balance to the Force, according to a prophecy. The Jedi Council says that Anakin cannot be trained because he is too old, and, according to Yoda, his future is “clouded” (McCallum & Lucas, 1999). Qui-Gon offers to train him himself, but because he already has an apprentice (Obi-Wan), he is not allowed to. Qui-Gon gets killed in a fight, by a Sith called Darth Maul. Obi-Wan becomes a Jedi Knight, and Anakin becomes his apprentice (McCallum & Lucas, 1999).

Star Wars – Attack of the Clones is the fifth Star Wars film to appear. It was released in 2002, and it is the second (II) episode. The opening crawl for this one goes as followed.

There is unrest in the Galactic Senate. Several thousand solar systems have declared their intentions to leave the Republic.

This separatist movement, under the leadership of the mysterious Count Dooku, has made it difficult for the limited number of Jedi Knights to maintain peace and order in the galaxy.

Senator Amidala, the former Queen of Naboo, is returning to the Galactic Senate to vote on the critical issue of creating an ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC to assist the overwhelmed Jedi... (McCallum & Lucas, 2002)

Senator Padmé Amidala nearly gets killed, so Obi-Wan Kenobi starts to protect her together with Anakin. Padmé almost gets killed again by a changeling, who gets killed by a bounty hunter. The Jedi Council tell Obi-Wan to track down the bounty hunter and to find out who he is working for. They also tell Anakin to escort Padmé back to Naboo, her home planet, where she will be safer. Obi-Wan finds a clone army, whose original host was the bounty hunter he was looking for, called Jango Fett. Anakin and Padmé are falling in love with each other, and Anakin has a premonition about his mother suffering. He goes to planet Tatooine, together with Padmé, in order to help his mother. He eventually finds her, but he is too late and she dies. Anakin is furious at the people who caused her death, and kills them all with his lightsaber. Obi-Wan gets captured by Count Dooku, after following Jango Fett to a planet called Geonosis. Padmé and Anakin get captured too, after they travel to Geonosis in order to save Obi-Wan. All of them are later saved by Yoda and multiple other Jedi. Obi-Wan and Anakin fight Count Dooku with lightsabers, but Dooku wins both of them. Yoda arrives, and also fights Dooku, but as Dooku is not able to win Yoda, he escapes. Later Yoda states that the Clone War has begun, and Anakin and Padmé get married (McCallum & Lucas, 2002).

Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith is the sixth Star Wars film to appear, and it is the final episode of the prequel films. It was released in 2005, and the opening crawl goes as followed.

War! The Republic is crumbling under attacks by the ruthless Sith Lord, Count Dooku. There are heroes on both sides. Evil is everywhere.

In a stunning move, the fiendish droid leader, General Grievous, has swept into the Republic capital and kidnapped Chancellor Palpatine, leader of the Galactic Senate.

As the Separatist Droid Army attempts to flee the besieged capital with their valuable hostage, two Jedi Knights lead a desperate mission to rescue the captive Chancellor... (McCallum & Lucas, 2005)

Anakin and Obi-Wan fight Count Dooku, but Obi-Wan gets hit and goes unconscious. Meanwhile Anakin fights Dooku by himself, and eventually kills him, as Palpatine tells him to. Later Anakin goes back to Padmé, who tells him she is pregnant. Anakin has a premonition that Padmé will die in childbirth. Palpatine appoints Anakin to be his personal Jedi Council representative. The Council accepts that Anakin will be a part of the Council, but they do not grant him the rank of Master. Obi-Wan tells Anakin that the Council wants him to report to them about what Chancellor Palpatine does. Later Palpatine tells Anakin about a Sith Lord, who was so powerful that he could keep people from dying.

Palpatine reveals to Anakin that he is a Sith Lord, and Anakin reports him to the Jedi Council. Mace Windu from the Council goes to Palpatine, and they end up in a duel. Palpatine loses his lightsaber, and Windu is about to kill him. Palpatine tells Anakin he can save Padmé, and, afraid of losing his wife, he cuts Windu's hand off along with his lightsaber. Palpatine strikes him with his lightning powers and Windu falls to his death from a window. Anakin pledges himself to Palpatine's teachings, and Palpatine names him Darth Vader.

Palpatine gives an order for all the Jedi to be killed, and turns the Republic into the Galactic Empire. Obi-Wan and Yoda find out that Anakin has turned to the dark side, and Obi-Wan informs Padmé about it. She goes to Anakin with Obi-Wan and tries to get him to go away with her, instead of following the path of the dark side. Anakin refuses to do so, and as he sees Obi-Wan, he thinks she brought him there to kill him, and chokes Padmé unconscious in his anger. Obi-Wan and Vader fight, and Obi-Wan wins, Vader being nearly dead with no legs. Meanwhile Yoda fights Palpatine, and after not being able to defeat him, leaves, and decides he needs to go into exile, as he has failed. Padmé gives birth to Luke and Leia, but dies right after it. Palpatine saves Vader, and he gets his iconic, black suit. Yoda and Obi-Wan decide that the twins should be split up and taken somewhere safe from the Sith. Obi-Wan promises to watch over Luke (McCallum & Lucas, 2005).

#### 4. Analysis of perceptions

In this section I will analyze scenes individually from each film, in which the character of Yoda has appeared. In analyzing these scenes, I will focus on Yoda's perception of other characters and himself, as well as other character's perception of Yoda. I will also analyze these perceptions by talking about the usage of computer-generated imagery (CGI). In episodes V and VI, Yoda appears a very old and feeble character, whereas in episodes I-III, he appears more swift and agile. It could, of course, be thought that this is a part of his character, and that is the way he appears, for example, because of the age difference of the character between the original films and the prequel films. But as the character of Yoda is already, probably about 870 years old, in the prequel films, this factor should, presumably, not make such a big difference in his movements. Therefore, it can be deduced that the differences in his agility are due to the technology being more advanced during the production of the newer films.

The character of Yoda being computer-generated allows him to move more freely, and, for example, jump around in lightsaber fight scenes. This would be nearly impossible to achieve, if the character were a puppet. The original trilogy does not seem to use as much CGI, as the prequel films do, probably for the reason that they are older, and the prequels have been, in fact, mostly created by using computer technology. The computer-generated version of the character of Yoda is technically younger than the puppet in the original trilogy films, as the events of the prequels are set in a time before the events of the original three films. For this reason, it is relatively logical that the character is more physically capable and active in the newer films. Nevertheless, it can be seen that the character is very old.

As mentioned earlier, when creating the first, original Star Wars film, George Lucas was inspired by the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, by Joseph Campbell. The films, in fact, use a pattern, called the hero's journey, introduced in the book. Bancks (2003) has summarized the main points of this pattern, as he says,

the hero is discovered in the 'ordinary world' before a call to adventure. The hero refuses the call but meets a mentor who gives the hero the strength to cross the first 'threshold' (into act two). The hero is then tested by enemies and obstacles of increasing magnitude until a 'supreme ordeal' followed by a reward. There is then (in act three) a return to the 'ordinary world' but with an elixir, something to make the ordinary world a better place (p. 32).

In Star Wars, the hero of the journey is, most likely, Luke Skywalker, and the mentor can be thought to be the character of Yoda. As stated by Campbell (1973), the supernatural mentor may often be “some little fellow of the wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith, who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require” (p. 72). This description matches the character of Yoda, as he is a small man, who, at the time of Luke meeting him, was living alone on a swamp planet. Another mentor for Luke’s character could also be Obi-Wan Kenobi, as he is the one who guided Luke to Yoda, and the beginning of his adventure of being a Jedi. Additionally, in Star Wars’ case, the refusal to call could be due to Luke’s aunt and uncle, and his home being on the planet of Tatooine, as he began his journey after discovering that his home had been destroyed. According to Bancks, “George Lucas calls Campbell his ‘Yoda’” (2003, p. 34), which would also imply how wise and important the character is, as Yoda is the mentor in Star Wars, and Campbell’s book guided Lucas in creating the films.

#### **4.1 Yoda in Episode V**

For analyzing the perception of the character of Yoda in Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back, I chose a scene in which Yoda is training Luke to become a Jedi and to learn to use the Force. I chose this particular scene, because it includes some of Yoda’s most famous lines. Another reason for me choosing to analyze this scene is that this scene is good for showing how wise the character is.

The scene begins with the character Luke doing a handstand while Yoda sits on his foot. Luke is stacking some stones on top of each other by floating them in the air with the Force, as they notice the previously into a lake crash-landed starship sinking further. Luke loses his concentration, which causes for both, Luke and Yoda, to fall down. Luke worries that they will never get the ship out, to which Yoda says “So certain are you. Always with you it cannot be done. Hear you nothing that I say?” (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980). These lines could indicate that, first of all, the character of Yoda tends to not assume anything, as Luke seems to assume that getting the ship out of the lake is impossible. Secondly, it could be deduced that Yoda has a relatively positive attitude, as he criticizes Luke for not having enough faith in things. Finally, Yoda’s character seems to value the ability to focus on his teachings and listen to his advice, because he, presumably, is aware of how wise he is.

Luke's reply to the previous lines shows that he possibly does not fully believe in the power of the Force, or more importantly, the power of his mentor, as he doubts that moving the large ship is possible with just the Force. Yoda's character then advises his apprentice to unlearn what he has learned. These are some of the many words of wisdom, which the character expresses throughout the films. This is one of the lines, which show how wise Yoda's character is. He advises his apprentice to clear his mind of thoughts that might distract him from succeeding in doing something that he does not necessarily believe he can do. After this, Luke tells him that he will "give it a try" (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980). Yoda's reply to this is one of the more well-known lines of his character, as he instructs Luke to "Do, or do not. There is no try" (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980). This line can also be thought to show, as many other lines of the character, how wise he is. This is because, as is mentioned in an unofficial interpretation of this line by a team of writers in the official website for the film series, a lot of Yoda's lines teach Luke to stay focused on the present moment, and to "have a more serious mind" (Starwars.com, 2013). According to the team's interpretation, the line reminds oneself to completely commit to something, instead of using just a little bit of effort (Starwars.com, 2013).

After this wisdom, Luke's character attempts to lift the ship from the water by using the Force, and manages to lift it up a little bit, but ends up being unable to lift it up fully, and the ship sinks back into the water. Yoda looks disappointed, and Luke states that he cannot do it, as it is too big. This is followed by another one of Yoda's more famous lines, as he says that "Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? And well you should not, for my ally is the Force" (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980). This line could denote that while Yoda is a small character, he does not perceive himself as any less powerful or meaningful, and purely relies on the Force. It could also be inferred that the character's perception of other is quite open-minded in terms of appearances. It is also good to remember that in, for example, martial arts, technique is often more important than the size of the one fighting. Yoda could be perceived as a sort of "guru", which is the kind of character that is often portrayed in, for instance, kung-fu or karate films.

This line regarding the character's size, is followed by him saying "Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter," (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980) as he squeezes Luke's shoulder. According to an unofficial interpretation of this line by Lucasfilms' (a production company founded by George Lucas) senior content writer, Dan Brooks (2016), this line reminds oneself of all life being equal and connected by the Force, and of this wisdom being the understanding, which could lead to a



truly selfless attitude. This one of Yoda's wisdoms is then followed by the character telling Luke that he needs to feel the Force everywhere around him, for example between the land and the ship. Luke then tells Yoda's character that what he wants is the impossible. This is followed by Yoda closing his eyes and calmly floating the ship up from the lake by using only the Force (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980).

Yoda's character seems to avoid showing his powers and abilities for as long as he can. Only when his student is about to give up, and does not believe anybody to be able to do what Yoda is trying to teach him, does Yoda show what he is really capable of. He finally shows Luke that if he believes in himself, and the Force, and spends enough time learning it, he will be able to do it, if he just concentrates. Consequently, it can be seen that the character of Yoda does not brag with his powers or skills, and is, in fact, quite humble.

Afterwards, Luke looks amazed and says that he doesn't believe it, to which Yoda replies with "That is why you fail" (Kurtz & Kershner, 1980). This final line is a very powerful one, as Yoda's character is trying to prove to his apprentice that he should listen to his advice and instructions, and believe in himself and the Force, as well as his mentor.

To summarize, Yoda's character's perception of Luke in this scene could be thought to be quite despondent, as he is trying to teach him the ways of the Force, in order to be able to use them to his, and everyone else's advantage. In general, this scene creates a wise, powerful, and humble image of the character of Yoda, and the character himself seems to also perceive himself this way, but not in an arrogant manner, nor does he seem to take it for granted.

#### **4.2 Yoda in Episode VI**

Choosing a scene to analyze from Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi was not difficult, as there is only one scene with the character of Yoda in the entire film, apart from a short appearance from the character's Force ghost at the end of the film. This is a scene, in which the character Luke returns to Yoda on planet Dagobah, as he promised before leaving, in order to finish his training to become a Jedi. Yoda has become sick, and is dying, thus being unable to train Luke.

In this scene, the character of Yoda seems to be aware that he is about die, and he tells Luke that he will rest soon, and that he has earned the "forever sleep" (Kazanjan & Marquand, 1983). This

could suggest that his perception of himself is that he has done in his lifetime what he was supposed to do, and has done good things and worked hard to earn a good rest.

He also tells Luke that he has become old and weak (Kazanjian & Marquand, 1983). My point of view is that, had the character not been sick in Return of the Jedi, he might have been able to jump around, and so on. This is because in Attack of the Clones and Revenge of the Sith, while fighting, the character did not appear as old and feeble, as he did otherwise. One could assume that the powerless and frail appearance of the character was just a perception that he let others see, in order to either not show possible enemies his true powers, or as to not appear condescending.

In addition to these, this scene demonstrates the character's sense of humor, as he tells, in a humoristic manner, to the worried-looking Luke that "when 900 years old you reach, look as good you will not" (Kazanjian & Marquand, 1983). An unofficial interpretation of this line by the team of writers in the Star Wars' official website, this sentence "adds a layer to [Yoda's] ability as a teacher", as he could be thought to be trying to unburden his apprentice's worries and sadness about the character dying (Starwars.com, 2013). This could show that the character is also very kind to his student, as well as, presumably to some other characters too. This scene also shows that Luke might be quite appreciative towards Yoda and his lessons, and he cares about his mentor, as he seems quite worried about him dying.

Luke's character tells his mentor that he needs his help, and has returned to complete his training. Yoda replies that he does not need more training, as he already knows what he needs to. Later Yoda tells his apprentice that when he is gone, Luke will be the last of the Jedi, and that he needs to pass on what he has learned (Kazanjian & Marquand, 1983). This shows that Yoda's character has faith in his student, as Luke has learned from Yoda's lessons and remembered his advice. This scene also proves that Luke's character respects his mentor, as he kept his promise to return for training. According to an unofficial interpretation of this scene by Brooks (2016), Yoda's final teaching to Luke is him gracefully embracing his death, which proves that the character was a powerful Jedi and mentor until the very last moment.

In Campbell's book (1973), the mentor is described as a "protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (p. 69). Before his death, Yoda's character warns Luke not to underestimate the Emperor's

powers. According to an unofficial article about the Machete order, this order allows one to better understand Yoda's unfortunate past. One can see, when watching the films in this order that the character speaks from experience, as he has faced the Emperor himself, in the past (Pallant, 2012). This could show that the character protects Luke by warning him, but also has learned from his mistakes, and accepts that he has made them.

### **4.3 Yoda in Episode I**

Even though, in *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*, there are not many scenes where the character of Yoda makes an appearance, choosing a certain scene to analyze from this film was quite difficult. This was because, as we can see from the Machete order, *The Phantom Menace* is actually not very essential to the storyline (Campbell's hero's journey) and the main events of the film series. I ended up choosing a scene in which the young Anakin Skywalker has been brought in front of the Jedi Council, and they are testing his ability to sense things with the Force. Yoda asks him if he is afraid, and Anakin's character replies that he is not. Yoda's character, most likely knew that the boy was afraid, but asked him, possibly in order to test his honesty. Yoda senses that he is not telling the truth, and one of the other Jedi in the council says "Your thought dwell on your mother," as he had to leave his mother behind. The boy admits that he misses her, and Yoda's character asks him if he misses her. Anakin wonders how that is relevant to anything, to which Yoda says "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering. I sense much fear in you" (McCallum & Lucas, 1999).

This scene shows that Yoda is not gullible, as he tests what the young Anakin replies to his question, to which he already knew the answer. The other members of the council seem to never question Yoda's decisions, or the things he says, which would imply that they trust him, and know that he has a lot of information that not every character has.

The character of Yoda was not originally a puppet in Episode I, and the puppet that was used for it (see figure 1) looked quite different to the one used in the original trilogy (see figure 2). According to some unofficial, speculative discourse by Star Wars fans online, this puppet could have been a failed attempt at making the character appear younger, as the events of the films are set about thirty years earlier in time (Reddit, 2015). The puppet was then replaced by a computer-generated version of the character (for CGI Yoda, see figure 3), for later releases. In regard to the other four films in which Yoda's character appears, I much prefer the puppet version, as it makes him, in my

opinion, in a way, more believable and realistic. The original puppet Yoda is, I think, also more endearing, and I would assume many people prefer this one as well for nostalgia reasons. In the case of *The Phantom Menace*, though, I do prefer the CGI (computer-generated imagery) version of the character, simply for the reason that he looks more like the original Yoda. Although I cannot verify the reliability of this source, according to an article in the magazine *Entertainment Weekly*, the creator of *Star Wars*, George Lucas, has said that there were attempts earlier to digitalize Yoda already for *The Phantom Menace*, but the attempts failed due to the character being much harder to create than some other CGI characters (Ross, 2012). The puppet version of Yoda's character was voiced and controlled by puppeteer Frank Oz (Chartier, 2007, p. 9).



**Figure 1. The puppet Yoda in *The Phantom Menace* (Star Wars, 2012).**



**Figure 2. The original puppet Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back* (Databank, n.d.).**



**Figure 3. CGI version of Yoda in Revenge of the Sith (Yoda Biography Gallery, n.d.).**

#### **4.4 Yoda in Episode II**

In Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones there are, in my opinion, at least two very essential scenes with the character of Yoda in them. One of these scenes is a scene in which the character is training some Jedi younglings. Youngling is a term in Star Wars that is used to call children. In this scene the character Obi-Wan Kenobi comes to Yoda for some advice regarding a planet that he cannot find in any archive maps. Yoda asks the children if they know, how it can be that the planet cannot be seen on the map. One youngling knows to tell that this is because “someone erased it from the archive memory” (McCallum & Lucas, 2002), to which Yoda says: “Truly wonderful the mind of a child is” (McCallum & Lucas, 2002). This scene is, as I see it, important regarding the perception of the character of Yoda in this film because it shows how Yoda has been written to perceive characters a lot younger than him, and, for example, children, who do not have as much experience. He still values their words and respects them in the manner that they are smart, regardless of them being young. According to an unofficial explanation of this line, it shows that although Yoda has lived for a very long time and seen so much, he still does not “exclude the thoughts and opinions of others, no matter their size or age, and that teachers can still learn from their students” (Starwars.com, 2013).

The scene continues with Yoda’s character wondering who could have possibly erased the planet from the archives, and says that he will meditate on it (McCallum & Lucas, 2002). This line could possibly prove that the character is very thoughtful. It might also show that he perceives himself as someone who will be able to find answers to questions by meditating, as he is a powerful Jedi.

Another point related to the character's perception is that Obi-Wan chose to go to Yoda for advice on finding the planet. This again proves that the character, indeed, is quite smart, as Obi-Wan, for example, went to him instead of somebody else.

The second essential Yoda scene, I think, is a scene in which Yoda fights another character called Count Dooku. Before Yoda's character arrives at the scene, Count Dooku says to Obi-Wan's character that due to his surprisingly weak powers, he disappoints him, and that Yoda holds him in high esteem (McCallum & Lucas, 2002). This could be thought to indicate that although Count Dooku, who was trained by Yoda, is evil, and uses the dark side of the Force, he still acknowledges how powerful Yoda is, and might have thought of him as a good mentor.

Regarding how Yoda can be perceived, this particular scene offers some new perspectives, in comparison with the character in the earlier films. In, for example the original trilogy films, Yoda's character appears to be old and frail, and he does not, for instance, jump or run all that much. In this scene Yoda arrives, after Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi have just been won by Count Dooku, and the two characters are lying on the ground, unable to move (McCallum & Lucas, 2002). When Yoda enters the scene, first thing that can be seen is his shadow. This tall and big shadow that can be seen before anything else, could have been made to indicate that a strong and powerful character is about to enter. If one is not aware of what kind of a character Yoda is, one might be surprised by the small, feeble man, who enters, walking relatively slowly, and with a cane. Once the two characters start fighting, Dooku throws heavy-looking items, and pieces of ceiling at Yoda's direction with the Force, but he is so powerful that he just easily stops them mid-flight. Dooku's character then says that he has become even more powerful than Yoda, and strikes a lightning at him with his powers. Yoda's character then returns the lightning at Dooku, as he seems to be the only Jedi character who can do this. This, again, is an indication of Yoda's powers, and even the evil character Dooku admits, indirectly, that Yoda is very powerful. Yoda and Dooku then start a duel with their lightsabers, and this is a part of the scene, which shows that the feeble character Yoda appears as, might actually not be completely accurate, as he jumps around, and is very agile while dueling. Nevertheless, after the fight has ended, the character picks up his cane from the ground, and appears as old and frail again.

#### **4.4 Yoda in Episode III**

For analyzing the character of Yoda in *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* I chose mainly just one very important line from the character, which is “Into exile I must go. Failed I have” (McCallum & Lucas, 2005). To understand this line and its meaning better, though, I must first explain some of the events leading to that line: The Republic had been taken down by the evil character, Palpatine, who made himself the Emperor, and executed Order 66, which was an order to kill all the remaining Jedi. In addition to these, the character Anakin Skywalker had turned to the dark side of the Force, and Yoda was, presumably, aware of how powerful he would be. Yoda fought the Emperor, but after failing to defeat him, decided to go into exile. According to an unofficial interpretation of this event by Lucasfilms’ senior content writer, Yoda’s character lived on in order to teach someone, who would, eventually, be able to defeat the Emperor, and that from “a certain point of view, this was a victory” (Brooks, 2016).

According to some informal fan discourse online the character’s decision to go into voluntary exile might have been because, as the character fought with Emperor Palpatine, but did not manage to defeat him, and the Jedi were in danger, he became more humble. Going into exile might have been “a form of penance for his hubris” (Kishor, 2016). Although, the character of Yoda is a powerful Jedi, he is not perfect, and he, too, can miss important factors. For example, he failed to see the full extent of the Sith threat. Yoda’s decision to go into exile, thus might have been, because he accepted that the situation was beyond his control, and that he should not proceed with the mistakes that had already been made. The discourse also says that it is “a profoundly humble act on Yoda’s part to leave the rebellion to others to build” (Kishor, 2016), as he can share his wisdom with others, and leave the following generation with means to fight the Empire with (Kishor, 2016).

These interpretations could be thought to indicate that the character of Yoda perceives himself as, in a way, responsible for most, or some of the events in the films, such as not being able to defeat the Emperor. One interpretation could also be that Yoda felt ashamed, because he thought he had failed, and this is why he thought it would be best if he went into exile. This would be logical because of the character’s devotion towards the Force and the Jedi code, which would prove that Yoda is quite humble, for example. However, this interpretation could also be wrong, because it might indicate that Yoda’s character might feel some form of self-pity, which would not suit his character’s general view. Another conclusion from these interpretations would be that Yoda’s character is, indeed, perceived as very humble and wise, as mentioned before.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the perception of the character of Yoda from both, his own point of view, as well as other character's point of view, is quite similar. Everything Yoda says seems to be a lesson of some sort, and the character seems to like sharing his knowledge and teachings with others, as he was teaching younglings even when he was already very old. The way in which Yoda treats others is as if he is aware that he is a lot more powerful and old than most of the other characters, but he is not at all arrogant. The character's overall image is, for the most part, quite humble and kind, as he does not, for example, brag with his amazing powers and skills.

Yoda's character is the mentor to Luke, based on the pattern of the hero's journey, introduced in Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As a result, the character seems quite protective, and gives other characters important advice, and shares his many wisdom with them. These wisdoms include things, such as having a more serious attitude, and believing in oneself, the Force, and his lessons. As the character is so wise, he does not appear to make assumptions, and he emphasizes the importance of focusing on his teachings, and the ability to concentrate. Other characters sometimes come to Yoda for advice and help, because they perceive him as about as wise as he really is. Regardless, the character does not take his wisdom or skills for granted.

For example, in the character of Luke's case, he did not seem to fully believe in the powers of his mentor, or the powers of the Force, until Yoda proved him that everything he has told him to do, can be done. This perception could be thought to be due to Yoda's appearances, as he is a very small, and old-looking character. Although he is small, he does not seem to perceive himself as any less powerful, and he appears to be quite open-minded. It could be said that the character of Yoda is a sort of "guru" character, as can be seen in, for example, some martial arts films. In the end, Luke's character seems to respect Yoda, as he keeps a promise he made to him, and he also appears to care about his mentor, as he is quite worried when he is about to die. Even when he is dying, Yoda's character manages to show his sense of humor, and is a good teacher until the very end.

In the original two films, the character of Yoda appears as old and feeble, but in the prequel films, he seems agile and swift in motion. This could be due to technology being more advanced in the creating of the latter films, and because the character was later made with CGI. The character of Yoda does not appear in very many scenes, especially in the original trilogy, and the scenes are



usually not very long, but despite these things, he is a very memorable, central and significant character.

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