

The word "JAWS" is rendered in a large, white, three-dimensional serif font with a dark blue outline. It is centered against a dark, textured background that resembles a close-up of a shark's skin or a deep-sea environment. The lighting creates a sense of depth and texture.

JAWS

part 1: the film's opening, shot-by-shot

nature's revenge?

- the birds (1963)
- jaws (1975)
- grizzly (1976)
- piranha (1978)
- the swarm (1978)
- long weekend (1978)
- arachnophobia (1990)



credits.

- released: 1975
- director: **steven spielberg**
(his second film)
- screenplay: **peter benchley** and **carl gottlieb**, adapted from novel by **benchley**
- music: **john williams**
- cinematography: **bill butler**
- editor: **verna fields**
- production design: **joe alves**
- set decoration: **john m. dwyer**

box office mojo.

- production budget: **\$12 million**
- prints and advertising budget: **\$4 million**
- worldwide box office gross: **\$470,653,000**
- **equivalent in 2009 dollars** (inflation adjusted):
\$1,664,674,137
- ranked **#46** in all time domestic (US) box office chart
- if adjusted for ticket price inflation, ranked **#7** in all-time domestic (US) box office chart

sources: boxofficemojo.com and the-numbers.com

phenomenal.

- jaws was the first of the summer **blockbusters**
- every summer since, hollywood has tried to reproduce its success
- over and above its box office numbers, jaws is also a technical **tour-de-force**
- the special effects look tame these days, but spielberg's camera work, the cinematography, the visual storytelling, editing, and score are all **brilliant**.


The image shows the classic Universal Pictures logo. It features the word "UNIVERSAL" in large, metallic, 3D block letters. A blue globe with a white equator is positioned behind the letters, partially obscured by them. Below "UNIVERSAL" is the text "AN MCA COMPANY" in a smaller, yellow, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark blue background with a subtle pattern of white stars, suggesting a night sky or space theme.

UNIVERSAL[®]
AN MCA COMPANY

even before the Universal corporate identity fades from the screen, electronic **underwater sounds** can be heard, recalling the electronic soundtrack of hitchcock's **the birds**

	ROBERT	
ROY	SHAW	RICHARD
SCHEIDER		DREYFUSS

credits: who has top billing? as with the towering inferno, one actor is top if you read from left-to-right; another if you read from top-to-bottom

An underwater scene from the movie Jaws, showing a shark's point of view. The water is dark blue and murky, with some greenish-brown seaweed or coral visible. The text "Music by JOHN WILLIAMS" is overlaid in the center.

Music by
JOHN WILLIAMS

opening of film shows shark's p.o.v. underwater. distinctive musical score by john williams is one of jaws' most memorable features. williams also composed scores for earthquake, the towering inferno, star wars, superman, close encounters of the third kind, e.t., raiders of the lost ark, and many, many more.



the students gathered round the fire on the beach. warm lighting. fire is elemental, symbolic of safety and home.



camera tracks across as opening credits continue



we reach the edge of the fireside warmth. the smoking male student, tom cassidy (jonathan filley) is facing away from the fire, his eyes on...



...christine 'chrissie' watkins (susan backlinie, though the swimming chrissie is another actress, denise cheshire), who sits apart from the rest. 180° rule applied. the matching **medium close-up** shots trick us into thinking these characters are closer than they are. at the moment, the closeness is all in the mind...



30° rule: cut to a long shot of the campfire scene, showing chrissie's distance from the rest of the group. being an **outsider** is one of the key themes of the film. a key signifier in the film is the **fence** — here seen to the right of the picture



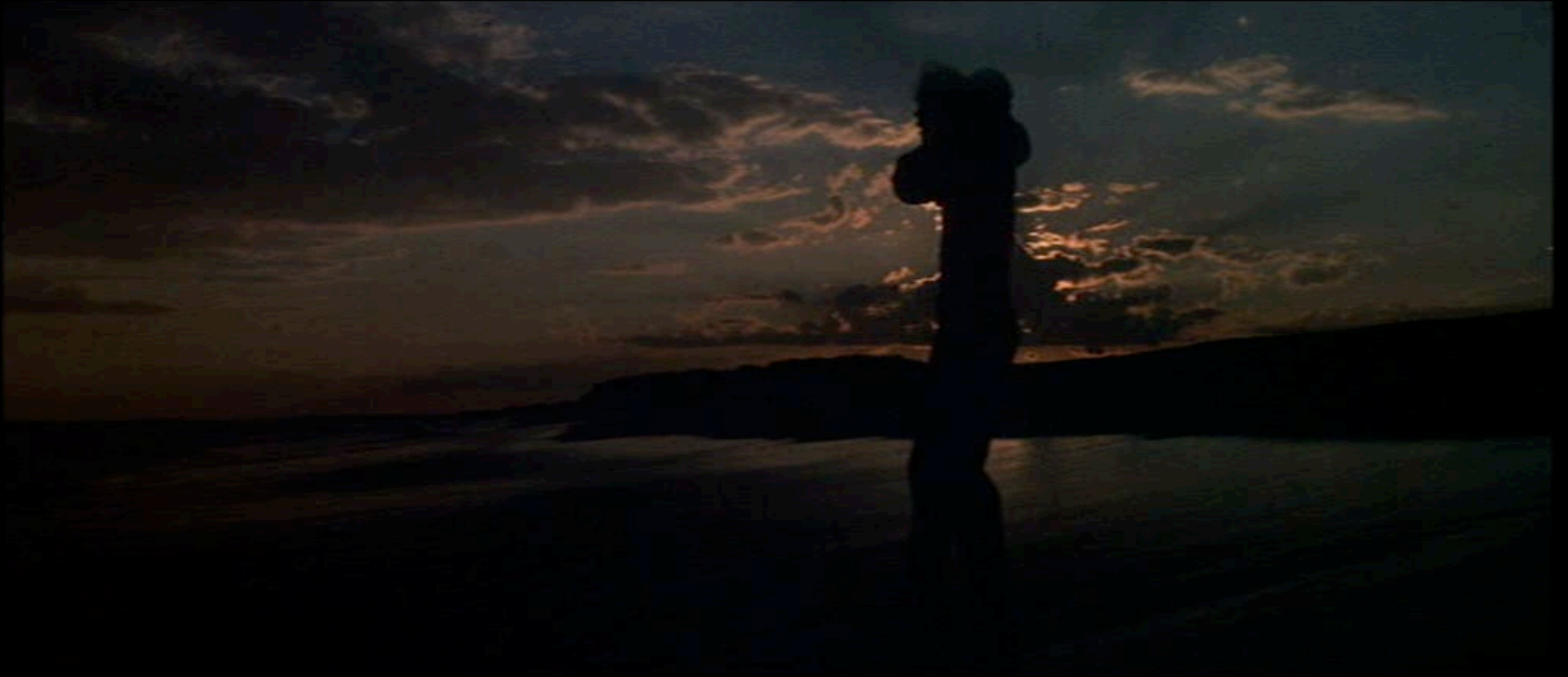
long tracking shot as the couple run alongside the fence on their way for a night swim. **w**hat could the fence symbolise?



chrissie undresses as she runs and heads towards the sea as she reaches the jagged broken end of the fence on the dune



dives into the water. **n**ote the **buoy** in the background, which will become a reference point in the scenes to follow



meanwhile, tom stalls in the surf, too drunk to continue.
occasional cross-cuts back to him in the following scenes



chrissie stretches her leg out of the water, esther williams-style. buoy is still in the background.





continuity? **w**hat time of day is it? **w**hich way are we facing?
presumably, back towards the shore. **t**he police report later
puts the time of death at 11.50 pm.



p.o.v. shot, with **john williams'** famous cello score on the soundtrack. **chrissie** is silhouetted against a light source above (presumably meant to be the moon, though we never see it directly).



sequence of shots as the shark attacks, a long way from the warmth of the fire.



what does the buoy represent? safety? danger? both?



final shot of the buoy, with the waters calm again... this buoy with its bell would ring with the motion of the waves, a warning to passing boats of some danger beneath (a rock or shoal).



classic continuity **match cut** to a similar view of the indifferent sea at dawn. **w**e're looking at a different view, but we're aware that it's the same sea. in **j**aws, the sea is **anthropomorphised**: another character in the film.



axial cut back to the interior shot of chief **brody** (**roy**
scheider), **ellen** (**lorraine gary**), and their dog

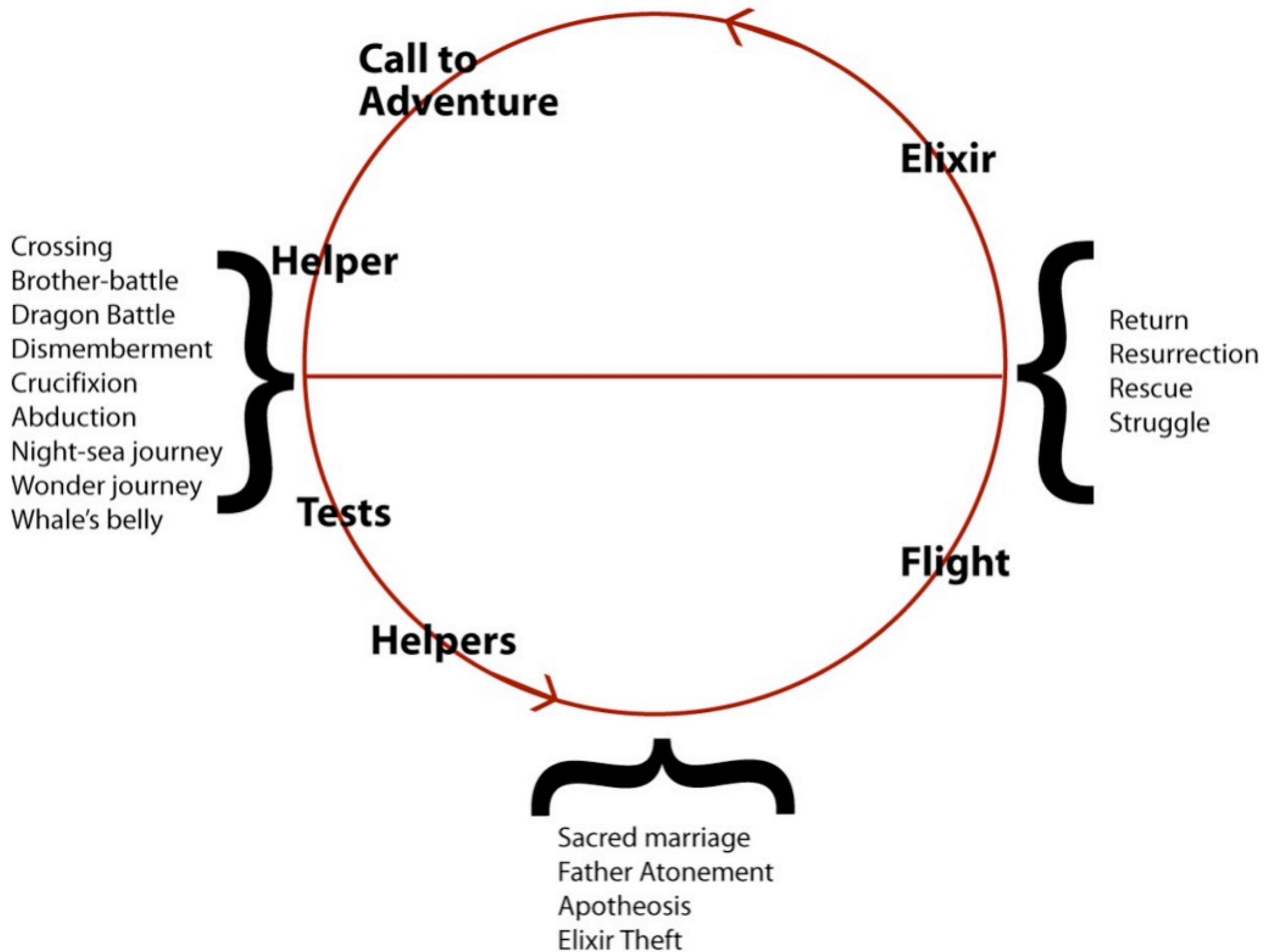


michael (**c**hris **r**ebello in his only film role), proudly displays the blood on his hand in the family kitchen.



while ellen deals with the domestic crisis in the background, the chief fields a phone call. in joseph campbell's classic narrative monomyth, **the hero's journey**, this phone-call is the **call to adventure**.

Heroic Monomyth





the first phone brody picks up is the domestic line. this is **not** the line that the **call to adventure** comes through on! spielberg often uses this type of shot: something happening in the background while the focus is on a character in the foreground. he tells the story in **layers**.



great, economical visual storytelling. that brody wasn't expecting the "adventure" phone to ring tells us everything we need to know about amity and its level of crime and incident. "in this town?"



Amity is a community of white picket fences, though the Brodys' fence is not quite up to standard. They're newcomers, **outsiders**.



brody leaves domesticity behind as he answers the missing person report's **call to adventure**



more visual storytelling. **w**e see that **b**rody, **a**mity's new chief of police, lives some way outside the community he serves. **w**e also learn that it's the **4**th of **j**uly weekend, and an important event for the town.



brody and tom cassidy walk along the same dune chrissie ran along the night before. brody has an armful of chrissie's discarded things. the broken line of the fence is between them and the sea. next shot follows the 30° rule, showing them from the reverse angle, with the sea in the background.



the deputy (jeffrey kramer) is blowing his whistle, turning in horror from chrissie's remains. the beach huts in the background are the prime location on the pleasure beach. again, the jagged line of the broken fence is between him and the sea. instead of a **big close-up**, it's another foreground/background shot.



reaction shots. **g**reat acting is **reacting**. **t**his wide shot gives us **c**overage of the scene. **w**e already know that what we're not seeing is horrible, so the audience is prepared to be disgusted. **n**ote the **fence** between the deputy and the other pair, like a jagged row of teeth.



what we actually see: a **hand**, some **hair**, and some **crabs**.
this **cutaway** illustrates the aphorism: **less is more**



the horrified chief, the fence, and the sea, now looming behind him.



note that the chief's eyeline **exactly** matches the horizon.



the following scenes show the chief dealing with trivia while his mind is in turmoil. the phone call is from the coroner. cause of death...?

DESCENT COC	HAIR BRN	EYES BRN	LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE SOUTH BEACH SHORES
DATE/TIME ORIGINAL ILL./INJ. 7-1-74 11:50PM			
OCCUPATION OF DECEASED STUDENT			
DATE/TIME DECEASED DISCOVERED 7-2-74 10:20 PM			
DATE/TIME DEATH OCCURRED 7-1-74 11:50PM			

7-1-74 11:50PM	STUDENT
REMOVED TO (Address) CORNERS OFFICE	
PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH ROAD, VINEYARD WOODS	
REASON (Quarrel—illness—revenge, etc.)	

7-1-74 11:50PM	STUDENT
REMOVED TO (Address) CORNERS OFFICE	
PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH SHA	
REASON (Quarrel—illness—revenge, etc.)	

7-1-74 11:50PM	STUDENT
REMOVED TO (Address) CORNERS OFFICE	
PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH SHARK ATTACK	
REASON (Quarrel—illness—revenge, etc.)	

...SHARK ATTACK.

note the details: july 1 1974, 11.50 pm (what? with the sun setting?)



amity. white picket fences galore. these perfect fences **double** the broken, jagged fence on the dunes... and the fence in disrepair at the **brodys'**.



look what these kids did to my fence! the **kung fu** craze was going strong in 1974/5. just in case you weren't sure about the **fence symbolism** in jaws.



chief brody is the kind of man who's alone in a crowd.



the **m**ayor (**m**urray **h**amilton) learns that **b**rody plans to close the beach whilst surrounded by all the pressing reasons that it can't happen...



strong-arm politics. a **red** cadillac (note the **menacing** shark-like front **grille**!) disgorges six men. brody is up against the fence. the coroner backtracks on the shark attack, setting up the next scene, which is one of the most extraordinary in movie history.

see part 2 of this slide show for an exploration of that scene.