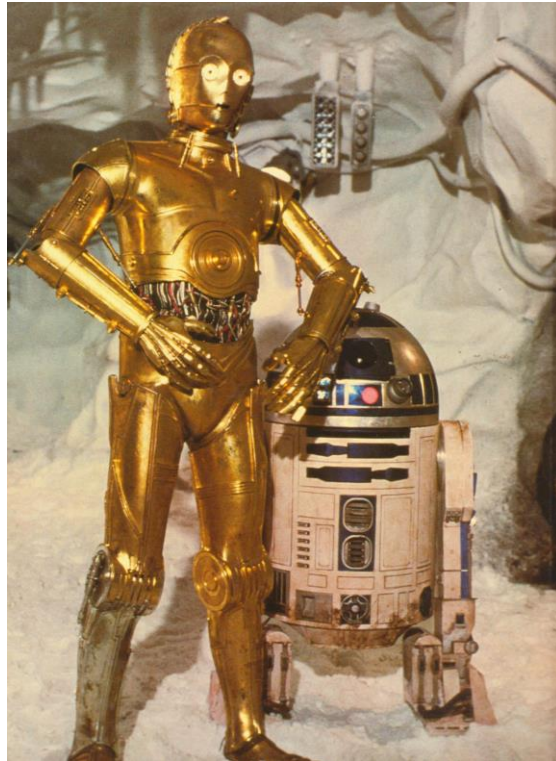# THE HISTORY OF STAR WARS
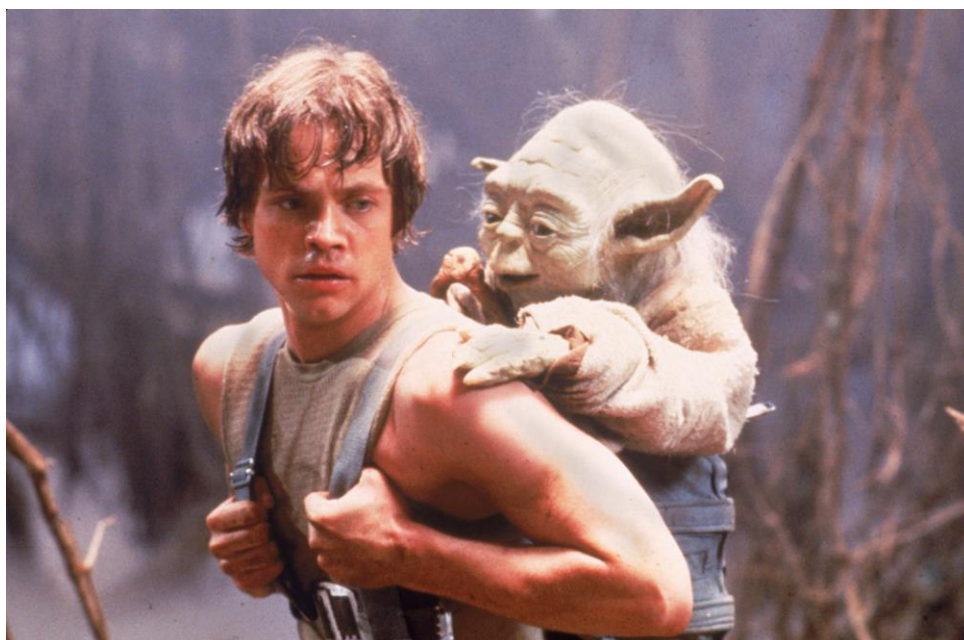
Star Wars, space opera film series (created by George Lucas) that became one of the most successful and influential franchises in motion picture history. Begun in the 1970s and '80s and resuscitated at the turn of the 21st century, the Star Wars films continually advanced the field of motion picture special effects and developed into an enormously lucrative merchandising industry.

Lucas's success as a writer and director with *American Graffiti* (1973) gained him the backing of 20th Century Fox, which put up $9.5 million for the production of the first Star Wars film. The film, directed by Lucas, was in production for four years, with scenes shot in Tunisia and Death Valley, California, and on soundstages in England. When it was released on May 25, 1977, *Star Wars* (later retitled *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope*) met with runaway success. A space opera set "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away," the film centres on Luke Skywalker (played by the then relatively unknown Mark Hamill), a young man who finds himself embroiled in an interplanetary war between an authoritarian empire and rebel forces. Skywalker and the opportunistic smuggler Han Solo (Harrison Ford) are tasked with saving Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) from captivity on a massive space station commanded by the menacing Darth Vader, whose deep mechanically augmented voice (contributed by James Earl Jones) became instantly iconic. At the core of the film and the series it initiated are the Jedi Knights—a group of either benevolent or malevolent warriors who harness and manipulate the Force, an all-pervasive spiritual essence that holds in balance the forces of good and evil—and Skywalker's quest to join their ranks.

Though *Star Wars* initially opened in only 42 theatres, the film earned almost $3 million in its first week and had grossed $100 million by the end of the summer. The film won six [Academy Awards](#) along with a special-achievement award for accomplishments in sound, and it revolutionized the motion picture industry with its advancements in special effects. Lucas's effects company, Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), designed a slew of imaginative alien creatures and mechanical "droids" that populated a variety of exotic locales. Perhaps most impressive, however, were the elaborate space battles accomplished with scaled miniatures. The series continued to make remarkable advancements in the field of special effects into the 21st century, and ILM became one of the most successful effects studios utilized by Hollywood. Lucas followed the first Star Wars film with two sequels, *Star Wars: Episode V—The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Star Wars: Episode VI—Return of the Jedi* (1983). The franchise thrived in the 1980s and '90s through the release of videos, a substantial merchandise line, and the theatrical re-release of the trilogy in 1997.

More than 20 years after the first film appeared, Lucas began releasing a second trilogy of films depicting events that had transpired before those in the original series. Lucas returned to the role of director (he had directed the first film but not its two sequels) and utilized a new cast of popular young actors—including Ewan McGregor and Natalie Portman—as well as recent advancements in digital video technology. *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) were all box-office successes, though they received markedly less critical acclaim than the original trilogy. The Star Wars franchise, however, remained incredibly lucrative into the 21st century. It included not only clothing, action figures, and multiple extensive book series but also the animated feature film *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008)—which depicted events occurring between *Episode II* and *Episode III*—and numerous successful video game lines created by another of Lucas's companies, LucasArts. By the time the sixth film was released in 2005, nearly 30 years after the series began, it was estimated that the franchise as a whole had brought in some $20 billion, an achievement thus far unparalleled in the motion picture industry.

A seventh film, *Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens*, was released in 2015. It was the first entry in the series to be produced by the Walt Disney Company, which had purchased Lucasfilms Ltd. in 2012. The film, which was directed by J.J. Abrams, introduced new characters to the Star Wars mythos and expounded upon the stories of favourites such as Han Solo and Princess Leia. *Star Wars: Episode VIII—The Last Jedi* (2017), directed by Rian Johnson, carried on the saga with the reintroduction of Luke Skywalker. *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019; also called *Star Wars: Episode IX—The Rise of Skywalker*), with Abrams at the helm, was the final installment in the nine-film series that began with *Star Wars*. *Rogue One* (2016) and *Solo* (2018) were installments in the series A Star Wars Story, which comprised stand-alone films.

Questions related to the History of Star Wars:

(Please answer using complete sentences)

1) Which successful George Lucas film, released in 1973, provided him the financial backing of 20ᵗʰ Century Fox Studios in order to begin filming of the original Star Wars film?

2) What was the budget for the original Star Wars movie? Where were the shooting locations, and when was the film originally released?

3) Which iconic Star Wars characters were played by the following actors:

A) Mark Hamill:

B) Carrie Fisher:

C) Harrison Ford:

4) How many Academy Awards did Star Wars win, and how is it credited with revolutionizing the movie industry?

5) What did George Lucas do nearly 20 years after the original Star Wars trilogy to jump start the movie franchise?

6) What is the correct order (according to the story timeline, NOT the movie release dates) of the first six Star Wars movies? (*You may need help from the video I posted on the (Literacy) English Page called Star Wars Order Timeline: 1977 – 2020*)

7) When the seventh film was released in 2015, there were a number of big changes behind the scenes. Who produced Star Wars: Episode VII – "The Force Awakens", and who directed it?

8) In addition to the nine Star Wars Saga movies made, there have been two other stand-alone Star Wars films? (*One of which is my favourite Star Wars movie!)* What are their titles?

9) Do you have a favourite Star Wars movie? If so, why? If not, why? If you don't like Star Wars, why?

10) Who is your favourite Star Wars character and why? If you don't like Star Wars, then who is your favourite character from another movie franchise/series and what do you like about that character?