

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ...



THE STORY SO FAR: PART I OF A SIX-DAY STAR WARS SERIES

In 1977, a cultural phenomenon was born when a little space opera called "Star Wars" debuted on the silver screen. In the decades since, the film has sparked two sequels, three prequels, multiple cartoon series, holiday specials, toys, clothing lines and even a religion. In less than a week, fans will flock to see the seventh installment of the beloved franchise, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." But how does this story begin?



Episode I THE PHANTOM MENACE

A dispute breaks out between the Republic and Trade Federation, unknowingly sowing seeds for rise of Empire.

Jedi Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi encounter Anakin Skywalker, who Qui-Gon believes is the one who will bring balance to the Force.



Anakin helps the Jedi and forces of Naboo defeat the Trade Federation, but Qui-Gon is killed in battle with Darth Maul, who is revealed as a Sith of the Dark Side.

Obi-Wan finds that former Jedi Count Dooku is controlling the Trade Federation and its drone armies. He, Anakin and Padme are captured.

Anakin's mother dies after being kidnapped by the Sand People. In his anger, Anakin slaughters the whole village.



Episode II ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Obi-Wan takes on Anakin as his apprentice and trains him as a Jedi.

Obi-Wan discovers a Jedi Master has ordered the creation of a clone army.

With the dispute now a full-on war, Obi-Wan and a grown-up Anakin are assigned to protect Senator Padme Amidala, who's been targeted for assassination.

Episode III REVENGE OF THE SITH



The Chancellor is captured by Dooku and General Grievous, but Obi-Wan and Anakin rescue him. Anakin kills Dooku.

Anakin discovers the Chancellor is a Sith Lord but saves him when Jedi come to arrest him. He becomes Darth Vader.



Mace Windu and the other Jedi come to the rescue and are nearly defeated. Yoda arrives with the clone army and a massive battle ensues.

Dooku escapes and contacts the real force behind the revolt, an evil Sith Lord.

Anakin and Padme, who have fallen in love, get married in secret on Naboo.



Order 66 turns the clone army on the Jedi, leaving Obi-Wan and Yoda among the few survivors.



After Anakin nearly kills Padme, he is defeated by Obi-Wan but the Emperor saves him by making him more metal than man.

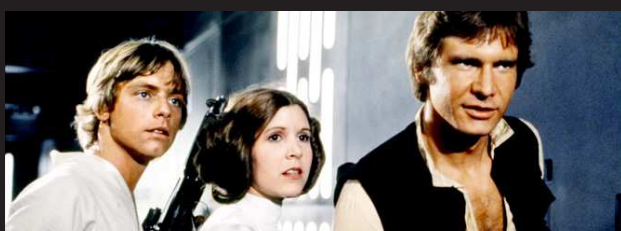


The droids end up with Luke and lead him to Obi-Wan. The Empire kills Luke's family. He joins Obi-Wan to help the rebels.

Rebels steal plans for the Death Star but their ship is intercepted. Princess Leia is captured, but not before sending the plans with R2-D2 and C3PO to Tatooine.

Padme dies in childbirth, and twins Luke and Leia are separated to protect them from the Empire.

Obi-Wan and Luke enlist the help of Han Solo and Chewbacca to get to Alderaan, which they soon discover has been destroyed. The Millennium Falcon is captured by a tractor beam.

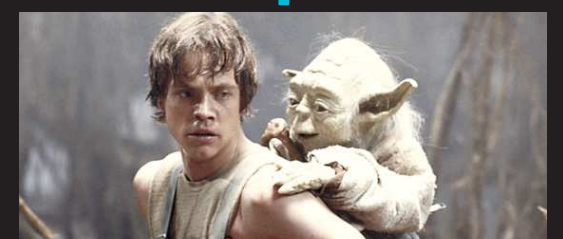


Obi-Wan sets off to disable the tractor beam, while Luke and Han look for the princess. They escape, but not before Obi-Wan is struck down facing Darth Vader. They race to deliver plans to the rebels, who are planning an attack on the Death Star.

Episode IV A NEW HOPE

Luke uses the Force, and an assist from Han, to blow up the Death Star. The rebels celebrate their first major victory.

Episode V EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



The Empire finds the rebels on Hoth. Han and Leia escape to Cloud City, while Luke goes to Dagobah for Jedi training with Yoda.

Leia tries to save Han but becomes Jabba's slave. Luke rescues them, then returns to Dagobah to finish training.

Episode VI RETURN OF THE JEDI

Lando saves Leia, and they rescue Luke. Lando heads to save Han.

Luke abandons his training to save his friends. He confronts Vader, who reveals he is Luke's father.

Yoda dies. Luke, sensing there is good in his father, leaves to confront Vader.

On Endor, Han and Leia, with the help of the Ewoks, destroy the shield generator for the second Death Star.

Vader takes Luke to the Emperor. To save Luke, Vader kills the Emperor, costing him his own life.



Lando Calrissian betrays Han, turning him over to Vader, who freezes him in carbonite and gives him to Boba Fett, who delivers him to Jabba.



With the shield down, the rebels destroy the Death Star and celebrate.

COMING MONDAY » Filming locations Star Wars fans can visit.

ONLINE » Watch a 60-second synopsis at heraldbulletin.com.

Graphic illustration/story by Heather Bremer | The Herald Bulletin