

# Big Fish

Exploring the Themes, Visuals, and Language of Tim Burton's Classic Film





## The Storyteller

Edward Bloom is an old man famous for telling impossible, magical tall tales about his past.



## The Fact-Finder

Edward is dying. His son, Will, is a journalist who resents these stories. He wants the unvarnished truth before it's too late.



## The Journey

The film flashes back and forth between Edward's wild youthful adventures and the quiet, tense reality of his hospital room.

# The Storyteller's Scrapbook



## Edward Bloom (The Father)

- **Worldview:** Believes in myth, magic, and embellishment.
- **Communication Style:** Speaks through tall tales, jokes, and metaphors.
- **Life Goal:** To make people happy, avoid mediocrity, and live a 'big' life.



## William Bloom (The Son)

- **Worldview:** Believes in facts, logic, and strict reality.
- **Communication Style:** Speaks directly and seriously (he is a journalist).
- **Life Goal:** To find the factual truth behind the myth of his father.

# What is a “Big Fish”?



**The Meaning:** A goldfish stays small if it lives in a small bowl, but grows if placed in a spacious river. Edward Bloom embellished his life to build a “larger environment” for himself.

*~ The Metaphor: ~*  
*The biggest fish in the river gets that way by never being caught.*



**The Lesson:** Edward refused to be “caught” by a boring, ordinary routine. His wild stories were his way of surviving mediocrity.

# The Trap of Spectre



Spectre

## The Illusion:

Spectre appears to be a magical, colorful paradise where everyone is perfectly happy.

## The Trap:

The residents take off their shoes and throw them over a wire. They never plan to leave. They stop trying to grow or face challenges.

## The Theme:

Spectre represents the danger of settling for a comfortable but stagnant life. Edward leaves barefoot because he is not ready to stop moving forward.

# Edward's Memories



**Lighting:** Hard light, golden afternoon sun, heavily saturated (Kodak Vision2 500T film stock).

**Camera:** Fluid, tracking, sweeping movements to make the audience feel "swept up in a good lie."

Cinematographer Philippe Rousselot used Panavision lenses to create a painterly, "romantic realism" look.

# Will's Present



**Lighting:** Cool teals, sterile whites, desaturated.

**Camera:** Static, locked-off shots. The stillness highlights the emotional distance and alienation between father and son.

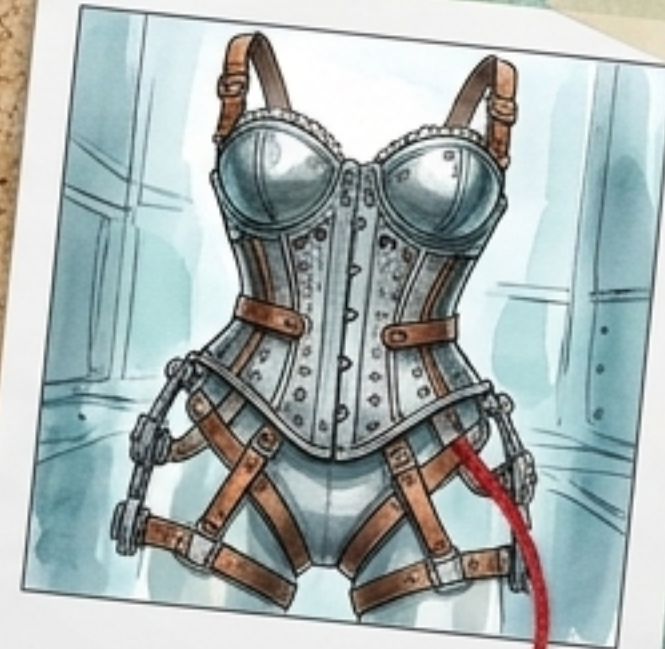
# Practical Magic: Stan Winston Studio



**The Big Fish:**  
A real 5-foot-long mechanical animatronic fish mounted on an underwater track in an Alabama river.



**The Circus Wolf:**  
A highly detailed, moving animatronic puppet worn by actor Danny DeVito during his transformation scenes.



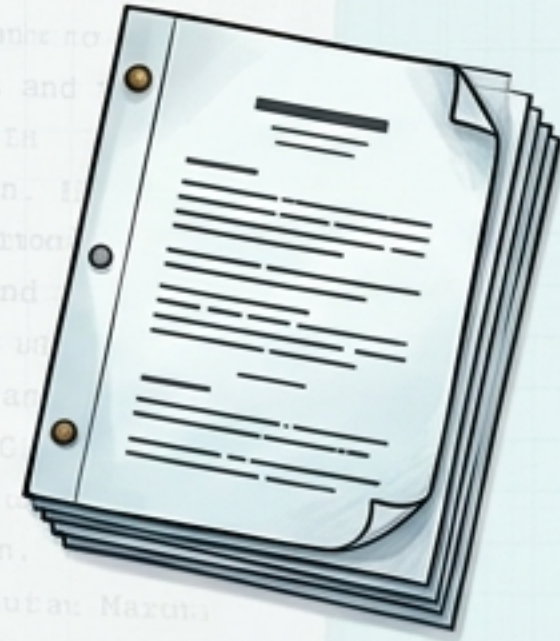
**The Twins:** Ping and Jing were played by real-life sisters Ada and Arlene Tai. They wore a metal corset to attach them at the hip, and their extra legs were digitally removed later.

# Adapting the Myth



## The Book (Daniel Wallace)

Written as a series of short, episodic myths. The son, Will, feels distant and aloof.



## The Screenplay (John August)

Needed a stronger narrative drive.

- **Change 1:** Made Will an active character who desperately needs to understand his father.
- **Change 2:** Added Will's wife, Josephine, to provide a fresh set of ears to listen to Edward's stories.
- **Change 3:** Created a bathtub scene for older Edward and Sandra to show their passionate romance endured.

# The Climax: Fiction Becomes Truth



## The Final Story:

In the hospital, Edward is dying and cannot finish his story. He asks Will to tell it for him.

## The Resolution:

Will invents a wild, magical escape from the hospital to the river, involving all the characters from Edward's tall tales.



## The Synthesis:

By actively telling the story, Will finally understands who his father is. He sees that Edward's stories are his truth. The son becomes the storyteller.

# English Language Focus: 'Fish' Idioms

## A big fish in a small pond

An important person in a small, unimportant place

## An odd fish

A strange or highly unusual person (like Edward Bloom)

## A fish out of water

Someone who feels very uncomfortable in a new or strange situation (like Will feeling alienated from his father's stories)

## Other fish to fry

Having more important things to do

## A fish tale

A big, exaggerated lie or a 'tall tale.'



## Comprehension Check: True or False

*Read the statements and decide if they are True or False based on the presentation.*

Edward Bloom prefers to tell the exact, unvarnished truth about his life.

True  False

The town of Spectre is a trap where people stop trying to achieve great things.

True  False

The scenes in the hospital are filmed with warm, bright, golden colors to show happiness.

True  False

Director Tim Burton used a real, physical 5-foot robotic fish for the river scene.

True  False

Will finally connects with his father by telling a "tall tale" at the end of the movie.

True  False

# Comprehension Check: Short Answer

1. Why does Edward compare himself to a 'Big Fish' that never gets caught?

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2. What is the main difference between how Edward and Will communicate with people?

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3. Based on our vocabulary focus, which English idiom describes someone who tells a highly exaggerated story or lie?

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# Answer Key

## True/False Answers

1. False (He tells exaggerated tall tales).
2. True.
3. False (The hospital scenes are cool, teal, and sterile).
4. True.
5. True.

## Short Answer 1

He wants to live an extraordinary life and avoid being trapped by normal, everyday routines.

## Short Answer 2

Edward uses myths, jokes, and metaphors; Will uses facts, logic, and direct truth.

## Short Answer 3

A fish tale.