

= Closure ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Closure " is the eleventh episode of the seventh season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files , and the 150th episode overall . It was directed by Kim Manners and written by series creator Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz . The installment explores the series ' overarching mythology and is the conclusion of a two @-@ part episode revolving around the final revelation of what really happened to Fox Mulder 's ( David Duchovny ) sister , Samantha . Originally aired by the Fox network on February 13 , 2000 , " Closure " received a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 1 and was seen by 15 @. @ 35 million viewers . The episode received mostly positive reviews from critics ; many felt that the final reveal was emotional and powerful , although some were unhappy with the resolution .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder ( Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work , but the two have developed a deep friendship . In this episode , after Mulder is forced to accept that his mother ' s death was by her own hand , he is led by a man whose son disappeared years earlier to another truth : that his sister , Samantha , was among the souls taken by ? walk @-@ ins ? , saving the souls of children doomed to live unhappy lives .

" Closure " was a story milestone for the series , finally revealing Samantha 's fate ; this story @-@ arc had driven a large part of the series ' earlier episodes . The episode was written as a continuation to the previous episode , " Sein und Zeit , " but branched off into different territory . Although a majority of the episode was filmed on a soundstage , several scenes were shot on location , such as the scenes at the former Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino , California . Several of the sequences , specifically those featuring the souls of dead children , required elaborate filming techniques . The episode has been analyzed due to its themes of belief and hope .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

For the first five seasons of the series , FBI federal agents Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) sought to gain understanding about the disappearance of Mulder 's sister , Samantha , who was abducted when Mulder was 12 years old . In the previous episode , " Sein und Zeit " , Mulder and Scully tracked down a serial killer who targeted children . While investigating the case , Mulder began to get emotionally involved , due to the similarities with his sister 's disappearance .

= = = Events = = =

Mulder and Scully aid the Sacramento Police in the investigation of a brutal murder committed by Truelove , the owner of the Santa Village . As the remains of more children are discovered , he admits killing twenty @-@ four children , but denies murdering Amber Lynn LaPierre , who disappeared from her home in the previous episode . Mulder is approached by psychic Harold Piller , who tells Mulder that he has helped law enforcement across the world , and has proved in various cases that children had been taken by " walk @-@ ins " , beings composed of starlight . Piller believes that walk @-@ ins save children who suffer terrible fates .

Scully becomes worried about Piller 's influence over Mulder . The agents return to Washington , D.C. , where Mulder keeps searching for evidence in the case . Meanwhile , Piller gets another vision of Samantha , leading Mulder to April Air Force Base . Scully finds evidence that Samantha 's disappearance is linked to The Smoking Man ( William B. Davis ) ; when she returns to her apartment , she finds him waiting for her . He tells her that he had called off the search for Mulder 's sister when she vanished because he knew she was dead .

When Mulder returns to April Air Force Base , he uncovers proof that Samantha lived with the Smoking Man along with his son , Jeffrey Spender , and that she was forced to undergo painful tests . Scully finds a 1979 police report of a girl matching Samantha 's description , and learns that she was taken to a hospital emergency room . She and Mulder find the nurse who treated her , and the nurse describes how Samantha disappeared the same way as Amber ? without a trace . Mulder later walks through the forest and receives a vision of Samantha along with the spirits of other children . Upon telling Scully and Piller ? who reacts badly upon hearing that his son is dead ? of his vision , Mulder accepts that his sister is dead and in a better place . When Scully comforts Mulder and asks if he is all right , he responds with a choked " I 'm fine . I 'm free . "

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Closure , " written by series creator Chris Carter and executive producer Frank Spotnitz , brought an end to Mulder 's quest for his sister , Samantha , who had been abducted when he was a child . The idea to close the story arc received mixed reactions from various production and crew members . However , many of the show 's producers realized that the time had come to answer one of the show 's biggest questions . Spotnitz explained that , " I think [ series star , David Duchovny ] grew tired of playing the man who is missing his sister . [ ... ] I told him , ' This is going to be the last time you 're going to have to play [ that part ] . ' " Paul Rabwin noted that , " It 's been seven years . I don 't think any of us are going to miss Samantha Mulder . That device and motivation were very strong in the early years of the show . But as the years have gone by , the speculation kind of melted away . "

" Closure " continued the story of the previous episode " Sein und Zeit " and branched off into different territory . Carter later explained that , " emotionally , it was heavy stuff for everybody , but necessarily so . These episodes involved two very personal cases , the search for a serial killer [ in ' Sein und Zeit ' ] and the search for Mulder 's sister [ in ' Closure ' ] . " Marc Shapiro , in his book All Things : The Official Guide to The X @-@ Files , Vol . 6 noted that , in addition to bringing an end to the Samantha story arc , the episode was " very much a [ Smoking Man ] episode " in that it explored his involvement in Samantha 's abduction and revealed to the audience that he was seriously ill . The episode 's tagline was changed from the usual " The Truth is Out There " to " Believe to Understand " .

= = = Filming = = =

Manners noted that " Closure " was one of the first episodes in which the production staff was able to " shoot in Los Angeles with the sun out " . According to Manners , the show was struggling with the fact that " we weren 't in Vancouver anymore and that our show had suddenly become very bright and cheery " . To amend this , Bill Roe , director of photography , used tree branches and c @-@ stands to block out the sunlight . The first scene with the walk @-@ ins rising up from their grave , shot at Griffith Park above the playground , was " tricky , " according to director Kim Manners . Manners felt uncomfortable telling the children to rise out of " graves " , feeling it could psychologically hurt them , so instead the crew called the holes in the ground " forts . " The scenes taking place at April Air Force Base was shot in San Bernardino , California at a closed airfield , the former Norton Air Force Base . On the airbase was a large abandoned house complex of over 400 buildings constructed and used by the United States military . According to Manners , the entire area was " eerie " , and many of the houses still had furniture in them . Originally , the producers wanted to name the fictitious air force March Air Force Base . However , the presence of an actual air force base with the same name necessitated a change to April Air Force Base . One of the shots in the April Air Force Base was filmed at a sound stage in Los Angeles . The scene at the restaurant was shot in a location on Sepulveda Boulevard , at a hotel that had been standing there for 30 to 40

years .

During filming , David Duchovny decided to act out the reunion scene in a manner contrary to what the script called for . Manners later noted , " In the script , it called for his sister to run up and hug him , and Mulder was to start crying . David didn 't want to cry . I said , ' David , you 're finally realizing your sister is , in fact , dead . [ ? ] He said , ' Just watch what I do ; trust me . ' And , he held that little girl actress ? there was a beatific smile on his face that was absolutely astounding . " Manners was very happy with the change and included it in the final cut of the episode . To create the scene featuring the ghosts of the dead children interacting with the characters , various layers of film had to be overlaid onto each other . Many passes of the shot were taken , which took hours to complete . After the shots had been secured , the film of the ghosts had to be made transparent . The scenes wherein Mulder is interacting with the walk @-@ ins was actually shot in daylight . However , specialized " day for night " photography was used to make the finished scene look as if it had been filmed at night . To achieve this , the subjects were illuminated with bright lights and the sky was completely avoided . The entire scene was shot at 48 frames a second , twice that of normal speed . Rebecca Toolan was flown down from Vancouver specifically for this episode , and " Sein Und Zeit " . To create her ghostly apparition , the production staff had to shoot multiple frames , which were then spliced into footage of Duchovny . Manners played the part of the hypnotist in the video which Scully watches of Mulder under hypnosis . Manners later noted that " I only act when you can 't actually see my face " . Manners was critical of Duchovny 's wig ? which had been added to make the footage seem older . He sardonically noted that " this is [ not ] one of the episodes that Cheri Medcalf [ the show 's make @-@ up director ] won an Emmy for . "

Composer Mark Snow described his score as possessing a " sense of biblical fervor and religiosity ? an elegy ? a feeling about it that was so poignant and touching to me . " " My Weakness " , a song by Moby from his 1999 album Play , is used in this episode , during the first scene when the FBI discover the mass grave and near the end when Mulder encounters his sister 's spirit . Carter never told Snow about the decision to use someone else 's music , although Snow has since said that his reaction to the use of the song was very positive and that the song was a " perfect " fit for the scenes in which it can be heard . Another Moby song , " The Sky is Broken " also from Play , would be featured in the late seventh season episode " all things " .

= = Themes = =

According to Amy M. Donaldson in her book We Want to Believe : Faith and Gospel in The X @-@ Files , Mulder 's opening monologue may be an example of " Mulder now being more receptive to the possibility of God 's intervention " . Throughout much of the series , Mulder has shown a disdain for religion . However , in " Closure " , Donaldson points out that " Mulder 's belief in God , as always , revolves around his beliefs about his sister 's fate " . As such , Mulder expresses hope that those who die in a cruel fashion " live on in some other way " . Furthermore , she argues that because " Closure " opens with the tagline " Believe to understand " , Mulder must " take the leap of faith " in order to find enlightenment , and ultimately the truth about his sister . The first half of the episode plays out according to the tagline ; Mulder first believes in " his desire stated in the opening voiceover " , and then finds closure .

Donaldson also parallels elements in the episode to the plots of other episodes such as the fourth season entry " Paper Hearts " , wherein it is suggested that a serial killer murdered Samantha . In " Paper Hearts " , a father of a victim notes that the uncertainty of his daughter 's murder allowed those who were involved to " consider the possibilities , both for the best and for the worst " . However , once it is revealed that his daughter was murdered , all hope was removed . Conversely , Mulder holds onto the possibility that Samantha is alive through much of the series , but when he realizes that she is indeed dead in " Closure " , hope is removed but in its place is found peace . To parallel Mulder 's acceptance , Harold Piller refuses to believe his son is dead ; as such , he " cling [ s ] to the possibility [ because ] uncertainly allows him hope . "

= = Reception = =

### == Ratings ==

" Closure " first aired in the United States on February 13 , 2000 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 1 , with a 13 share . Nielsen ratings are audience measurement systems that determine the audience size and composition of television programming in the U.S. This means that roughly 9 @. @ 1 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 13 percent of households watching television , were watching the episode . It was viewed by 15 @. @ 35 million viewers in the United States . On May 28 , 2000 the episode debuted on Sky 1 in the United Kingdom and gathered 0 @. @ 68 million viewers , making it the eighth most watched program shown on Sky 1 that week , in front of Angel and The Simpsons . The episode was later included on The X @- @ Files Mythology , Volume 3 ? Colonization , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien Colonist 's plans to take over the earth .

### == Initial reviews ==

Initial reviews were mixed , with some critics applauding the story 's conclusion , and others deriding it . Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @- @ Files , opined that the episode worked best " if some of the previous Samantha @- @ related clues were forgotten " , such as when the Alien Bounty Hunter told Mulder that she was still alive in " End Game " . Despite this , he wrote that " it was only right that Samantha be dead since Mulder 's life had always been defined by what he has lost , not what he has found " . He surmised that the episode was not " perfect " , but that its " plusses greatly outweighed any missteps along the way " . He was also complimentary towards " the ethereal quality of the final few moments " , writing that they " lifted this episode up and made it one of the season 's most memorable " . Kenneth Silber from Space.com was pleased with the episode , and wrote , " ' Closure ' is a satisfying episode , one that puts to bed the now @- @ tiresome search for Mulder 's sister Samantha . " Jeremy Conrad from IGN referred to the episode as " excellent " and noted that a large portion of The X @- @ Files mythology ended with the resolution of Samantha 's abduction , saying , " [ ' Closure ' is ] a final , and concrete , answer to the single thing that was driving Mulder for the entire run of the series . In some ways , when he got that answer a major part of The X @- @ Files story ended . "

Not all reviews were positive . Paula Vitaris from CFQ gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half stars out of four . She wrote , " Instead of a grand , breath @- @ taking , heart @- @ breaking finale that should be the climax of Mulder 's search for Samantha , the story expires limply with some nonsense about Samantha being of the starlight children . " Bobby Bryant and Tracy Burlison of The State named the episode the " Worst Conspiracy " episode . The two noted that because " a tenet of The X @- @ Files was that Mulder 's sister , Samantha , had been ( a ) kidnapped by aliens or ( b ) kidnapped by government conspirators " , the fact that she had actually been turned into a spirit " insanely offers a supernatural explanation to a science @- @ fiction mystery " .

### == Later reviews ==

Later reviews , however , have seen " Closure " in a much more positive light , with many critics praising its ending . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A ? " . He argued that the episode worked due to two scenes : the sequence in which Mulder reads aloud from Samantha 's diary , and the final shot of Mulder being reunited with his sister . He wrote that the " stark simplicity " of the former made it emotionally powerful , and that the latter was " a bit sappy , a bit surreal , a bit lovely " but nonetheless " a beautiful moment " . Meghan Deans of Tor.com felt that the story was " silly " , but that , when paired with the idea that Samantha was truly an innocent victim , successfully becomes a " comfort " . She called it a move that " the show must give Mulder , and us , in order to shut down this storyline for good . " Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their

book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X-Files, Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , rated the episode four stars out of five , and called it " brave " . The two noted that while some of the sentimentality is pushed too far ? such as when Mulder finds his sister 's diary speaking to him , or when Mulder talks about all lost souls being stars ? the " critical moment " featuring Mulder reuniting with his sister 's spirit is " extraordinarily moving " .