

# Page One: 'Django Unchained' (2012)

[Scott Myers](#)

Written by Quentin Tarantino

EXT - COUNTRYSIDE - BROILING HOT DAY

As the film's OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE plays, complete with its own SPAGHETTI WESTERN THEME SONG, we see SEVEN shirtless and shoeless BLACK MALE SLAVES connected together with LEG IRONS, being run, by TWO WHITE MALE HILLBILLIES on HORSEBACK.

The location is somewhere in Texas. The Black Men (ROY, BIG SID, BENJAMIN, DJANGO, PUDGY RALPH, FRANKLYN, and BLUEBERRY) are slaves just recently purchased at The Greenville Slave Auction in Greenville Mississippi. The White Hillbillies are two Slave Traders called, The SPECK BROTHERS (ACE and DICKY).

One of the seven slaves is our hero DJANGO...he's fourth in the leg iron line. We may or may not notice a tiny small "r" burned into his cheek ("r" for runaway), but we can't help but notice his back which has been SLASHED TO RIBBONS by Bull Whip Beatings.

As the Operatic Opening Theme Song plays, we see a MONTAGE of misery and pain, as Django and the Other Men are walked through blistering sun, pounding rain, and moved along by the end of a whip. Bare feet step on hard rock, and slosh through mud puddles. Leg Irons take the skin off ankles.

AS The CREDITS play, DJANGO has a SPAGHETTI WESTERN FLASHBACK. Now Spaghetti Western Flashbacks are never pretty, it's usually the time in the film when the lead character thinks back to the most painful memory inflicted on him or his loved ones from evil characters from his past. In this instance we see Django in a SLAVE PEN at the Greenville Auction.

DJANGO

amongst many other shoulders and heads, sees through the bars of the cell door, his wife BROOMHILDA being led to the auction block. He fights his way to the door, and far off and obscure in the distance, he can see Broomhilda up on the auction block, and in the distance he hears the Auctioneer yell; "Sold." Then she's taken away to whereabouts unknown, never to be seen again.

As the sun continues to beat down on Django's head, he remembers;

DJANGO in the SLAVE PEN

with what seems like a one hundred and fifty Slaves in a cell designed for forty.

WHITE MEN yank him out of the cell, shirtless, shoeless, and lead him down a hallway, into a giant round pen, an audience viewing area circles the round pen floor on three different stories of the structure.

The ground floor is covered by the BIG MONEY BUYERS who stand in front of the auction block.

The movie version of the opening:

A thought experiment: Assume you're new to screenwriting and you read the screenplay from *Django Unchained* or **any** Quentin Tarantino-penned script. You may think:

- I'm supposed to include a **credit sequence!**
- I need to use **we see** to suggest camera shots!
- I'm responsible for suggesting **soundtrack music!**
- I can break the fourth wall and **converse with the reader!**
- I'm allowed to write paragraphs of scene description up to **7 lines long!**

Among other things.

Here's a fact: There's no rule saying you *can't* do any of these things. The reality is there do exist some loosely held expectations and conventions relative to screenplay style and format you should be aware of.

Now if you're Quentin Tarantino, you can do any damn thing you want! He's an established professional and a director to boot. In effect, he's writing something akin to a shooting script and includes elements which suggest how he's going to go about framing shots, use montages to enter the inner thoughts of characters, and so forth.

Even though you're **not** Tarantino, you have the freedom to do any damn thing you want, too. Again, there are no

rules.

And yet, I hear from writers that their scripts get dinged by readers for doing precisely what Tarantino does in his writing precisely because the readers have come to think of these so-called 'rules' as being prohibitive.

The path of least resistance? Avoid breaking conventions. That's the simplest way around this issue. If, however, your story requires you to, let's say, break the fourth wall and comment directly to the reader... or include specific camera shots to make absolutely clear what is happening in the moment...

You can do that. Don't let anything impeded your creativity. As long as what you do serves the story you are writing and that is clear to a reader...

I say, go for it.

[Although speaking as someone who reads thousands and thousands of script pages every year, please try to keep your paragraphs of scene description to a maximum of three lines. It makes the reading experience much easier.]

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