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Go Into The Story Resource: Screenwriting 101

Scott Myers Follow
May 24 · 44 min read

Hundreds of observations about the craft of screenwriting from professional writers.



On May 16, 2021, Go Into The Story turned 13 years old — you can read the very first blog post here. I led with this paragraph:

> *Welcome to Go Into The Story! Right now, it's nothing but a humble, threadbare blog, but I hope it will evolve into an active resource for aspiring screenwriters, as well as a community for anyone interested in storytelling and the creative life.*

And evolve it did! To the point where it was recently named **"Best of the Best" Scriptwriting Website** in the 20th Annual Writer's Digest Best Websites for Writers list.

To celebrate **13 years of blogging** about screenwriting, writing, Hollywood, movies, TV, and the creative life, each day in May, I'm going to feature a piece of Go Into The Story trivia, plus a writing resource you can find in the site's archives. This is not an exercise in self-congratulations so much as I figured readers could use some tips about how to best use the site. With — to date — **over 100 archive topics**, there is a **LOT** of content here. Hopefully, these posts this month will clue in more recent followers and remind long-time readers about resources you can use to facilitate deepening your understanding of the writing craft.

Today's trivia: While Go Into The Story is the official screenwriting blog of the Black List, I receive no money from them for what I do here. This was at my insistence to Franklin Leonard when we first began our partnership some seven years ago. It's also why I have refused multiple offers to have ads on the blog promoting a variety of writing related consumer goods.

Why? Two reasons. First, I find ads tacky. I want visitors to my site to experience it for what it is: a resource for writers and screenwriters, free of the clutter of advertisements.

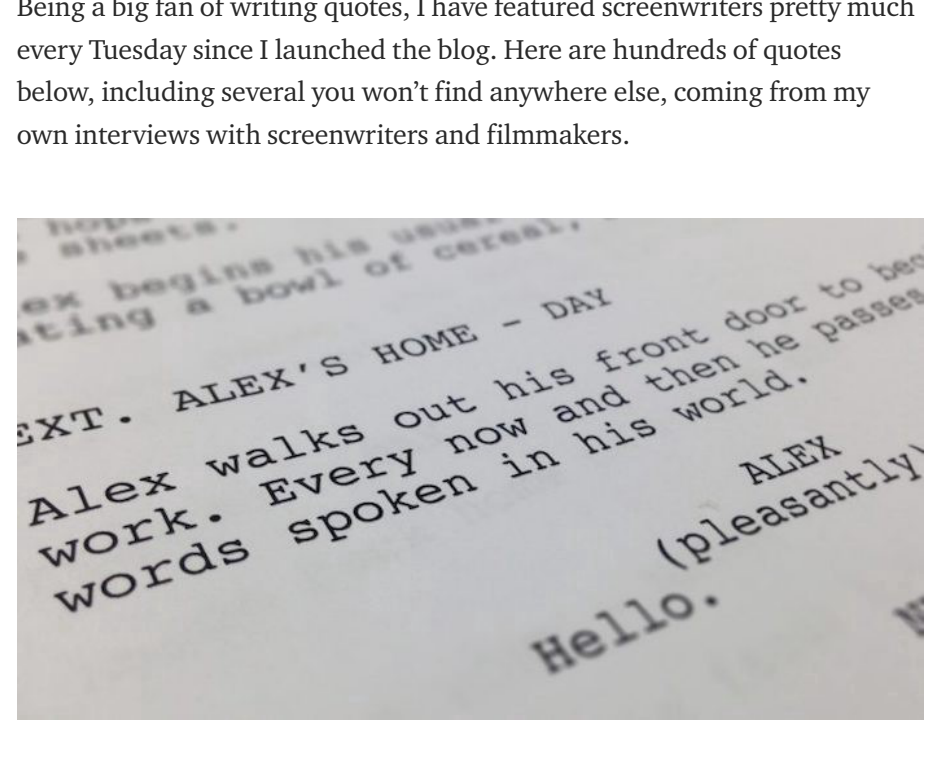
Second, I want complete editorial control over the content on the site. That way, visitors know what they are going to get. Only with my interviews and the occasional guest blog is there a voice different than my own.

As the saying goes, "What you see is what you get."

And I intend to keep it that way.

Today's Go Into The Story resource: Screenwriting 101.

Being a big fan of writing quotes, I have featured screenwriters pretty much every Tuesday since I launched the blog. Here are hundreds of quotes below, including several you won't find anywhere else, coming from my own interviews with screenwriters and filmmakers.



Abrams, J.J.: "The idea that this world we know isn't just this world we know but that a package might arrive at your door…"

Adamson, Isaac: "Screenwriting is a kind of format where you spend six weeks or eight weeks… and you can have something that's actually done."

Adamson, Isaac: "If you want to sell a spec, concept is really important. Studios already have plenty of their own properties — you have to bring…"

Alexander, Scott: "But through the scripts, I'm able to act out and scream at everything that bugs me…"

Alibar, Lucy: "Writing that scene, I ran a lot that day. I would write, go for a run, and come back."

Allen, Jay Presson: "I do a script very fast, because I don't stop. All day. All night, until I'm too sleepy…"

Allen, Jay Presson: "I've always been interested in the *why* of human behavior. I think most dramatic writers are natural psychologists."

Amel, Arash: "I am a great believer in the psychology of character in screenplay. I think that almost…"

Amel, Arash: "It's all about that conflict between passion and discipline and making yourself write when you don't want to write. That's the difference…"

Amini, Hossein: "I love trying to find the simplest way to say something with the maximum impact on the person who's…"

Anderson, Paul Thomas: "Bad movie dialogue speaks in complete sentences without any overlapping…"

Anderson, Paul Thomas: "If emotional logic is betrayed, then you've got a problem. Not that none of it's plausible — it seems to be vaguely plausible…"

Anderson, Paul Thomas: "If I've ever had a theme in mind, usually that's the worst. You feel yourself writing and there's nothing worse than that…"

Anderson, Wes: "When I'm on a movie, part of that process is creating a setting for the story and a world that they live in."

Arndt, Michael: "On Tuesday, May 23, 2000, at 4:27 p.m., I sat down to write Little Miss Sunshine…"

Aronofsky, Darren: "Then comes the great leap which is the first draft, I call it 'the muscle draft…'"

Arriaga, Guillermo: "I want to have dark parts of my characters' history so they can surprise me…"

Arriaga, Guillermo: "…when I have read all these manuals of screenwriting, they say things that I will never follow."

Arriaga, Guillermo: "I put every effort in a screenplay to having beautiful language and a beauty of structure and a beauty…"

Arriaga, Guillermo: "I'm not here for the money, I'm not here for the job, I'm here because I want things. I think that I have something to express, so I…"

Asante, Amma: "When I'm starting a script, I write two or three thematic words down on little pieces of paper. I fold them up, stick them in a drawer…"

Atkins, Michele: "Write what you love. Write with what you can align with, and feel good about. Whether it's a success or it's not a success, at least…"

August, John: "I don't write in sequence at all… I just write whatever scene appeals to me to write…"

August, John: "While working on Big Fish, I got very Method: I'd stare at a mirror until I could get myself crying…"

August, John: "If you have four ideas, all equally viable, I'd recommend writing the one that has the best ending…"

August, John: "A writer can always write. That's one of the great luxuries we have: Words are cheap."

August, John: "A lot of screenwriting is disciplined daydreaming. It's like you're trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle, but you're not quite sure…"

Axelrod, George: "The first half of any script of mine has been rewritten forty — fifty times…"

Axelrod, George: "The first part of a movie has got to be not only engaging their attention, but building their trust. They've got to feel they're in good…"

Baker, Sean: "My hope is that the more stories that are told about marginalized communities and subcultures, the more awareness will spread."

Ball, Alan: "[In American Beauty] Lester's a man who in midlife has completely lost his passion…"

Baron, Sam: "There are some great quotes that I always keep in mind. One is the David Mamet quote 'Who needs what from whom, and what will…'"

Bass, Ron: "Everything I write is in three acts, and I actually start with three pieces of paper…"

Bass, Ron: "I've always felt that writing was communication… making your reader see exactly what you see in your mind."

Bass, Ron: ""I've always felt that writing was communication — not showing off how articulate you are, or showing off your vocabulary. It's about…"

Baumbach, Noah: "When something strikes me, I write it down in a notebook. I'll often find I write versions of the same idea over and over with slight…"

Beall, Will: "The process is that I force myself to sit down and write and hope it doesn't turn out shitty…"

Beaufoy, Simon: "With adaptations, all I promise the author I'll do is remain true to the spirit of what they wrote… You've only got 90 minutes or…"

Beck, Scott: "When we're honing in on a single project, we start having our own brainstorm meetings… We always love having our conversations first…"

Beckwith, Nikole: "I think if you're inviting people into a story, you should invite them into all parts…"

Bendinger, Jessica: "Your movie has to be about something. A movie is not a plot. What's it about? What is it about thematically? There's a symbolic…"

Bendinger, Jessica: "If you can get in touch with who you are as a writer, this is huge. What do you want to write? What's your point of view? How…"

Benedek, Tom: "Every script we write is a piece of ourselves. We may say we are writing a script…"

Benedek, Tom: I wrote ten spec scripts before I got a decent job. I kept trying to figure out how to do it better. I am still doing that. I look forward to…"

Bennett, Charles: "The construction [of the story] is the most important goddamned thing…"

Bentivegna, Roberto: "I think it's very dangerous when you get bogged down in rules, because that's…"

Bentivegna, Roberto: "Remember how much you love movies. Remind yourself of those movies when you're struggling to get your stuff out there…"

Benton, Robert: "We made a set of decisions, the first of which was to not pass moral judgment…"

Berg, Amy: "There's more rising and falling tension in a television show versus a film where it tends to be a more steady build to the climax."

Bernstein, Walter: "I accept the cooperative nature of filmmaking. It's one of the things that attracts me to movies, that idea…"

Bird, Brad: "To make something really great and different and interesting means taking risks and…"

Black, Dustin Lance: "That's where I start, taking an idea… not just what you're going to tell, not that it's entertaining or interesting, but why…"

Black, Shane: "I'll write down… snippets for scenes and… dialog… and throw them all in a shoe box."

Black, Shane: "I think about the audience in the sense that I serve as my own audience. I have to please myself that way…"

Black, Shane: "I assumed there weren't many rules and you just sort of did whatever you wanted to…"

Blanchard, Carter: "If you grab people that early in a script, they're going to keep reading."

Blanchard, Carter: "Writing a script is like running a marathon. But it's also about training for that marathon. Research, plotting, character work…"

Boal, Mark: "So the structure came about in an attempt to be faithful to the reality of the situation…"

Boam, Jeffrey: "Plot tries to engage intellectually but that's not how an audience responds…"

Bomback, Mark: "A big misconception people have about these franchise movies is that all the studios care about is the action."

Borrelli, Chris: "You should always be open to ideas and stories. I have an idea file. I look back over it…"

Borrelli, Chris: "I'm always thinking, what's the emotion I'm trying to convey, what's the fun of the movie, what are the moments?"

Borrelli, Chris: "Sometimes, as screenwriters, we get into structure as we should, and all these character moments, but then, an actor looks at it…"

Borten, Craig: "For me, it's the characters, breaking the characters. That's what I spend most of my time with. Once I've done that…"

Boyer, Jon: "A bad script written is still better than an amazing one that isn't."

Boyer, Jon: These 12 sequences, I just find that in trying to keep it down to very simple, pithy statements, it really helps you trim the fat off of your…"

Boyle, Danny: "Beyond persistence, the only advice I ever give to young filmmakers is, don't be shy in the way you tell a story."

Brackett, Leigh: "I was very poor on construction when I first began. If I could hit it right from…"

Brickman, Marshall: "The first script of *Annie Hall* was much more episodic, tangential, and novelistic…"

Brancato, John D.: "I've read screenplays, plenty of them, where the writer obviously hates what he's…"

Brooks, Albert: "I got so good at writing to a budget, my brain was restricting myself. I'd write, It's a stormy night. Then I'd cross out…"

Brooks, Richard: "I can make a movie with half-assed camerawork, or with actors who are not quite up to par…"

Brooks, Richard: "Sex is a tremendous drive, and love, but that is not enough. People have to care about each other. Then the picture means something."

Brophy, Alisha: ""When you're writing the pages, as long as you're sticking to that throughline, it's sticking to the promise that you made in that logline."

Brown, Rita Mae: "You sell a screenplay like you sell a car. If somebody drives it off a cliff, that's it…"

Brown, Rita Mae: "Character is destiny. The resolution of any plot must come from within the character…"

Broyles, William: "Writing really is a process of discovery. The biggest enemy is being satisfied…"

Bujalski, Andrew: "Write out the scene the way you hear it in your head. Then read it and find the parts where the characters are saying…"

Burnett, Allison: "A lot of writers try to get approval and love way too early. Get the script right first."

Burnett, W.R.: "The trouble with most film writing is that too many writers have no feel for film…"

Burnham, Bo: "I have to work inside out. It has to work moment to moment before I even start to extrapolate from a scene to feature-length…"

Bynum, Elijah: "There's a difference between characteristics and character. It's not until you really throw yourself…"

Bynum, Elijah: "Writers have to be curious by nature. Curious about life, curious about human beings, curious about what makes the world…"

Cain, James M.: "Slack is one fault and slick is another. Both are bad faults in story."

Cameron, James: "Writing a screenplay, for me, is like juggling. How many balls can you get in the air at once? All those ideas have to float out there…"

Cameron, James: "People ask me all the time, 'What would your advice be to a young filmmaker?' It used to be, pick up a camera and start making a movie."

Cannell, Stephen J.: "I was self-taught, but I also was using a lot of rules that I developed myself for plotting and for character construction."

Carolin, Reid: "There's a magic to being present when you're actually writing a character…"

Carrière, Jean-Claude: "The language of film is very complex. It is made up not only of images…"

Chandler, Raymond: "The challenge of screenwriting is saying much in little and then take half of…"

Carpenter, John: "You need some thematic element that gets the audience going, reaches out to them."

Cassavetes, John: "People who are making films today are too concerned with mechanics — technical things instead of feeling."

Chan-Wook, Park: "A common beginner's mistake would be to try and be perfect about everything that you write, and each line that you write…"

Chayefsky, Paddy: "I have no compassion when it comes to cutting. No pity, no sympathy…"

Chayefsky, Paddy: "My dialogue is precise. And it's true. I think out the truth of what the people are…"

Chayefsky Paddy: "Artists don't talk about art. Artists talk about work. If I have anything to say to young writers, it's stop thinking…"

Chazelle, Damien: "I know my strengths, and I know my weaknesses… I'm very good at sitting around and brainstorming…"

Chazelle, Damien: "The thing I learned [from *Whiplash*], especially after having written a bunch of stuff that wasn't personal, was that the more…"

Chazelle, Damien: "I feel like you can tell when movies start from a theme or intellectual question, and they're not that interesting. I want to start from…"

Cheryin, Stan: "I think it's always easier to revise a script, even a truly awful one, than face the tyranny…"

Cheryin, Stan: "If your goal as a screenwriter is to make a lot of money, you're doomed to fail. If your goal as a screenwriter is to produce the best…"

Cholodenko, Lisa: "So it's really important to know not to panic, it's all going to come together…"

Chomko, Elizabeth: "Write. Write write write — grocery lists, journal entries, emails, short stories, whatever, it doesn't matter. Write at every opportunity."

Chun, Tze: "When I want to come up with a new project, I will sit down and I will try to write 25 ideas a day for a week…"

Chun, Tze: "When I was out of college I just wrote from page one. I'd just start writing a script, having a vague idea of where things were going…"

Clarke Jr., Joey: "If writing is important to you, in order to make a proper effort, you have to sacrifice other facets of life — be it going out with…"

Cody, Diablo: "Every week I learn some new word the kids are saying and I try to integrate it…"

Cody, Diablo: "I don't have a formal rewrite process; I just compulsively groom and re-groom scenes…"

Coen, Dana: "Is the scene driven by the intent of the characters? Are there external and internal obstacles, and are…"

Coen, Joel: "Every movie ever made is an attempt to remake 'The Wizard of Oz.'"

Cohen, Larry: "When I write, I'm watching the movie in my head, imagining it. I want to be in it…"

Cohen, Spenser: "People always say, write what you know, and I think it's write what you know…"

Coogan, Steve: "To write from personal experience, you also need the

humility to be able to…"

Coppola, Francis Ford: "Always try to discover what the theme of the movie is in one or two words."

Cretton, Destin Daniel: "When I start writing, I just have to keep reminding myself to make every…"

Cretton, Destin Daniel: "I love that moment in a story's development when the characters begin to feel like real people who I can't wait to spend time with."

Crowe, Cameron: "The most exciting thing is when you take the pages you've *just* written and heft…"

Cuarón, Alfonso: "That's something so important in the process of screenwriting, that sense of time that binds us with the now."

Curtis, Richard: "I like to really live with an idea. A film is not a flirtation, it's a relationship."

Curtis, Richard: "I'm always choosing between three films I'd like to make and I always choose the one that means the most to me."

Daniels, Sean Robert: "Steven King said this amazing thing in his book on writing. 'Don't write what you know. Write what you believe is true.'"

Daniels, Sean Robert: "I think the first thing you have to do is listen to other people. A lot. And not just when you are part of the conversation.'

Darabont, Frank: "How much do you love it? How much are you willing to give it? Only the person…"

Darabont, Frank: "Everybody wants to hear, 'I can teach you a three-act structure, I can give you a…'"

Denis, Claire: "In terms of writing a script, I have to figure out moments, and if I see a moment that is fulfilled, I think, now I can start writing because…"

Densham, Pen: "I interpret this to mean that all stories come from fundamental issues of human…"

DePalma, Brian: "The problem with writing a movie is you've got to have a great idea."

Derrickson, Scott: "Many filmmakers, especially young ones, are afraid of being 'pigeonholed', but…"

Derrickson, Scott: "Reading a mediocre screenplay is like driving when you're sleepy — every minute is work."

Derrickson, Scott: "The Divine Comedy of Filmmaking: Writing = Inferno. Shooting = Purgatorio. Editing = Paradiso."

Devlin, Lindsay: "I look at articles, whether it's true stories, or scientific–based things, to kind of find those kernels…"

Devlin, Lindsay: "There's structure, there's craft to it. You can't just sit down and puke out a script and think you're a genius."

DiPego, Gerald: "The first thing the executive said was, 'We really like your script for what it *can* be.'"

DiLapo, James: "Emotional authenticity… is more important than historical authenticity. If you can get…"

DiLapo, James: "The midpoint is very crucial. It doesn't have to be as overt as it is in the middle of this script, but there needs to be that transition on.."

Dobbs, Lem: "You have to inculcate movies, not 'screenwriting.' There are shapes and patterns…"

Duffield, Brian: "Interesting things happening to interesting people is basically the only rule of screenwriting."

Duffield, Brian: "I find that by starting with theme, you instantly gravitate towards a character who is almost at an opposite place to deal with that…"

Duncan, Patrick: "Every time I write, I find myself going through a form of self-examination…"

Dunham, Lena: ""It's amazing to me that Hollywood persists in writing these two-dimensional female…"

Dunne, Philip: "Every scene should advance the story. The other thing… let the characters tell the…"

Dunne, Philip: "If you get an idea in the middle of the night, it's a good idea to write it down, or it's…"

Duplass, Jay: "Every question I hear when I speak at colleges or film festivals is, 'How can I get my script in the hands of someone…"

Durand, Allan: "The way I did it is every 5 to 10 pages, I wanted a big fist to come out of the…"

Durand, Allan: "If you're going to write a screenplay, it better interest the living hell out of you, either the story or the amount of money you're…"

DuVernay Ava: "When I write a screenplay, I'm writing for myself. I'm the director and I need to create…"

DuVernay, Ava: "My mind immediately went to an all or nothing scenario. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way. You can dream a bit at a

DuVernay, Ava: "The best thing is when you see people and you're wondering, 'What's their story? How do they fit together? Where did they come from?

Elliott, Ted: "If you look at a movie and say, 'That's crap, I can do better,' then basically all you're…"

Ellis, Trey: "I haven't always loved Hollywood, but I've always loved roller coasters. It wasn't till I…"

Ephron, Nora: "Don't write what they want, they don't know what they want, just make it GOOD."

Epps, Jack: "This is going to take time, it's a marathon, not a sprint. If you're impatient this probably isn't the business for you."

Epps, Jack: "What is really hard is that you have a draft and an intention of what you wanted to write when you started."

Epstein, Julius: "It's the words, it always gets back to the words…"

Eszterhas, Joe: "Write it from your heart. Life is short; shorter than you think…"

Eszterhas, Joe: "Don't pitch stories, write spec scripts. Why try to convince a roomful of unread egomaniacs…"

Farrelly, Peter: "Our feeling is you need three-dimensional characters for our type of comedy to work…"

Federman, Matthew: "Biggest mistake writers make when pitching is getting bogged down in details. You don't describe every scene. You talk about a…"

Feig, Paul: "I say [dialogue] out loud. If I can't say it and make it sound convincing and not clunky…"

Fergus, Mark: "They're [actors] giving you a truth test on your own material."

Ferguson, Larry: "Take a yellow Marks-A-Lot and highlight every verb in this screenplay…"

Ferguson, Larry: "Get an audience to care before you throw 'em into an action sequence."

Ferguson, Larry: "There's only one difference between a writer and somebody who isn't a writer. One writes."

Fincher, David: "The thing I always say to any writer that I'm working with is: Just make sure that in any argument, EVERYONE is right."

Fisher, Carrie: "Stay afraid, but do it anyway. What's important is the action. You don't have to wait to be confident. Just do it and the confidence will follow."

Fisher, Mickey: "Now when I sit down to write the script, I know scene by scene who wants what and why and all the basic…"

Fisher, Mickey: "The best thing I ever did for myself was to not wait around for someone to give me a break. I kept writing, I kept making my own stuff…"

Folsom, Stephany: "Don't worry about getting an agent or a manager. When you have enough quality work under your belt…"

Folsom, Stephany: "Structure is so important in visual storytelling, and your structure lives or dies by your outline."

Folsom, Stephany: "We live in a fear–based business and so, you have to make everyone around you feel comfortable and like they're going to be taken…"

Foner, Naomi: "If you're doing it to tell stories that need to be told, you can get yourself through…"

Foote, Horton: "For me there was a whole period of unlearning the bad habits I had picked up in my conventional…"

Foote, Horton: "I keep notebooks, and sometimes just a phrase in a notebook will start me off. I never know. I've also learned that you can't really…"

Foreman, Carl: "When I first came out to Hollywood, it never occurred to me that the story had to be…"

Foreman, Carl: "I rewrite and rewrite and rewrite. I know in advance that my so-called first draft will be my tenth draft."

Forte, Joe: "It's important to build a broad life that feeds you, that nourishes you, gives you stability."

Forte, Joe: "There's a phrase you hear in Hollywood: 'It's a movie.' It's code for, 'This script encompasses everything we need it to be.'"

Frank, Scott: "Then I tell my own story and filter it through my own point of view…"

Frank, Scott: "The best writing is subconscious where you don't know that you're doing it…"

Frank, Scott: "The first paragraph of a screenplay can tell you if they can write. The first five pages can tell you if they have a voice."

Frazier, F. Scott: "I firmly believe that the currency of the screenwriter is a finished script. Not an…"

Friedhof, Andrew: "I think it's an act of folly to write a screenplay as though you're going into production tomorrow. The first thing you should aim…"

Friedhof, Andrew: "The first thing you should aim for is to provide a fun and enjoyable reading experience for the reader."

Friedman, Jeremiah: "It's tricky because you have to walk that line between staying open to feedback…"

Gaghan, Stephan: ""I realized screenwriting was a real art form. I had to prostrate myself before it and study it if I wanted…"

Ganz, Lowell: "We're always trying to have [what a character says be]… specific, honest, and emotional."

Garcia, Liz W.: "You might love and treasure that one script, but you cannot control when that one script is going to get made, get you an agent, or get…"

Garcia, Liz W.: "Outlining is really tough work, it's the necessary work that I loathe. It's necessary so…"

Garcia, Liz W.: "I think there are two kinds of spec scripts. If you're actually writing a spec script that you want to sell, then the story is everything."

Garland, Alex: "Stories are my primary concern because I think they are a… vehicle for themes…"

Gary, John: "Screenwriting is an ocean of nos surrounding a handful of yesses. All you need is one yes."

Gary, John: "A movie is about an emotional struggle. The physical struggle is a manifestation of that."

Gelbart, Larry: "I just know when you're in trouble at the end, it's because you were in trouble in the beginning. There's no…"

Gerwig, Greta: "I have gotten into baseball recently, and whenever I have trouble writing, I think about the pace of baseball. It's slow…"

Gerwig, Greta: "I think structure is so deep in us. We put it in stories we tell our friends or in emails we write. We want it. It's how we create meaning."

Gilroy, Dan: "The style of the screenplay can often not just enhance the screenplay–it can move the screenplay forward…"

Gilroy, Tony: "Screenwriting is the biggest bunch of rules anywhere. It's gotta be 125 pages, gotta be…"

Golden, Joshua: "The concept, of course, has to be original. But if you have strong characters, the rest will follow."

Goldman, William: "Nobody sets out to fuck up your movie. It's not like the director or the star wake…"

Goldman, William: "Rule of thumb: You always attack a movie scene as late as you possibly can…"

Goldman, William: "The first thing is, I read it and decide, 'Do I really care about this project?"

Goldman, William: "The most exciting day of your life is your first day on a movie set, and the dullest day of your life is the second day."

Goldman, William: "Screenplays don't have to read like an instruction manual for a refrigerator. You can write them as a pleasurable read."

Goldsman, Akiva: "Adaptation is always the same process for me, which is some version of throwing the book at the wall and seeing what pages fall out."

Goldsman, Akiva: "Writing is both a pleasure and a struggle. There are times when it's really aversive and unpleasant…"

Grahame-Smith, Seth: ""Writing a novel and writing a screenplay have nothing to do with each other…"

Grant, Susannah: "My goal in the first draft is to create, for the reader, the emotional experience that watching the movie…"

Gray-Rockmaker, Kristen: "Just keep writing and don't get fixated in any one project for too long. Write your project. Get your feedback, rewrite it, and…"

Grieco, Anthony: "You want people to experience a story, not plot. There's a big difference between the two. You won't notice structure and page…"

Grillo-Marxuach, Javier: "A great script… creates an irresistible narrative flow that propels the reader…"

Guggenheim, David: "I think screenwriting is the cleanest and quickest way to break into the industry."

Guggenheim, David: "I think in a spec you need to make sure you're hooking your reader in that first 15 pages, and that it has a strong enough concept."

Guggenheim, David: "In any notes process, I will take any idea and I will try it. I may not agree with it when it's given to me, but I always give the idea…"

Guggenheim, Marc: "Before I go to bed at night, when my head hits the pillow, I will write a scene in my head. That's usually going to be the first…"

Guzikowski, Aaron: "I think learning the craft is how you break into Hollywood. You just need to do it everyday and love it and be passionate…"

Hampton, Christopher: "I don't believe in any of those rules for writing screenplays. What that gives you is a formula."

Hampton, Christopher: "David Lean had several principles, that he repeated more than once. Lesson One was that the most important…"

Hannah, Liz: "Read everything you can. Read every script you can bad, good. Read Paddy Chayefsky's collected works. That's probably the best place to…"

Hannah, Liz: "The perspective of whose point of view you're telling the story from, what character you want your audience to empathize with…"

Hare, David: "But that's when I began to realize why my own films were so bad: I'd never subjected them to this narrative test…"

Hart, James: "Find that material which speaks to you and has a certain truth…"

Hart, James: "So I listen to my kids. Even now, at ages eighteen and sixteen, our story meetings…"

Hart, Julia: "I write a ton and then I'll cut a bunch of it out. I'll write like seven lines where there…"

Hart, Julia: "If I think too much about what my themes are, it becomes laborious, over the top, like hitting you over the head. I just try to think…"

Hartofilis, Sean: "I don't think writing is as much an act as a way of being…"

Harvey, Lloyd: "Give yourself permission to enjoy the small wins along the way. We make it a practice within our creating, our writing, our making…"

Harvey, Spencer: "Tone is so important. If you can make sure you have something, a peg to pop in the dirt there to say, 'This is my tone,' then…"

Hay, Phil: "To me, the main thing I believe qualifies you to be a writer is that you're really interested in other people."

Hayes, John Michael: "I want to put as much as I can into the first draft… to get all the emotion, color…"

Hedges, David: "I think the thing I hate about writing is you have this piece of mashed, bleached wood pulp that you're going to make these black marks…"

Heisserer, Eric: "You know you're in the presence of a screenwriter in command of their craft when…"

Heisserer, Eric: "I think a really strong spec script that has a crackling voice and a unique character can go a long way. But it if it has a solid story concept…"

Hensleigh, Jonathan: "Well made action pictures, the action sequences don't exist in a vacuum…"

Herskovitz, Marshall: "If I have a criticism of many screenwriters, it's that they are too wedded to…"

Higgins, Colin: "The job of the screenwriter is to run the film in the reader's imagination. And nothing should get…"

Hill, John: "Terrific scenes are the coin of the screenwriting realm. But what are some characteristics…"

Hill, Walter: "When I'm writing alone, I do it the old hard way. Longhand. Fountain pen. Legal pad…"

Hitchcock, Alfred: "To make a great film, you need three things — the script, the script and the script."

Hitchcock, Alfred: "First we write the screenplay, then we add the dialogue."

Holderman, Bill: "It's really important for writers to not be defensive and to be open to the collaboration, whether you think the notes from development…"

Holderman, Bill: "Even though it's a blueprint for the moviemaking process, it is its own finished product in its own right and it should be incredibly…"

Houston, Velina Hasu: "The vigorous desire to make something happen… is mandatory for writers…"

Huggins, Roy: "A screenplay is a series of interesting scenes. Too often scenes are boring in order to head to an unusual ending…"

Hyams, Peter: "If you're not prepared to be rejected, don't try to write films."

Hyams, Peter: "If I want to make a film, I'm asking somebody for money. The only reason why they're going to give me money…"

Ingelsby, Brad: "What does a character want and why do they want it? Those are what I look at when…"

Iqbal, Melissa: "I think it's so important to write in the language of cinema. It should always evoke the experience of watching a film."

Jackson, Peter: "I think [humor] helps make these people feel as real as you or I, rather than being…"

Jacoby, Ben: "People talk about a screenwriter's voice. I think a single screenplay's voice is more important. Make me feel like I'm in this movie…"

Jacoby, Ben: "A big way to connect emotionally to a story for me is music. I listen to it all the time when I write. I have different playlists for each project."

James, Elgin: "We have all this beautiful wreckage inside, then you try to get it out somehow…"

January, Michael: "Hollywood lives and dies on something that seems new, but is very much like…"

Jenkins, Barry: "I think it's important to stay in the world of the characters. It's more about once you enter that space, you gotta just stay in it."

Jenkins, Patty: "Every villain has their belief system that makes perfect sense to them."

Jenkins, Tamara: "The stillness that is necessary to write, the act of silencing yourself, your cellphone, silencing everything to think, to bring words…"

Jones, Amy Holden: "Roger Corman taught me a very valuable lesson…"

Jones, Patty: "You might love dialogue like I do, but if it's not directing

towards the plot or towards character development, better get rid of it."

Joon-ho, Bong: "If we think about our friends and relatives, they're both good and bad to some degree. No one's a complete villain. They're in this..."

Joseph, Rajiv: "I feel that every story has to have an idea that transcends the action and the characters…"

Joy, Lisa: "The thing that is first and foremost to me is, 'Do I love the character? Do I empathize with them?'"

Joy, Lisa: "It's important to have a story concept that you as the writer are interested and tickled by and that gives you a fun playground to romp in…"

Kamen, Robert Mark: "Write what makes you excited, and if it makes you excited, and you're any good, it will excite…"

Kamen, Robert Mark: "If you've got craft, you got game. If you got game, you can write your way in and out of anything."

Kasdan, Larry: "Very often my films are about the conflict between our ideas and our desires…"

Kaufman, Charlie: "I'm interested in trying to find a real moment between people…"

Kaufman, Charlie: "That's something I always ask myself: 'Is this a movie that I would go to see?'"

Kaufman, Charlie: "One of the biggest things about writing your first screenplay is that you actually finished a screenplay."

Kazan, Nicholas: "'No' is the single most important thing a writer can say…"

Kelley, David E.: "Writing's hard work. But what fuels you often is the euphoria that comes with hatching an idea, breaking a story…"

Kelley, William: "The secret to screenwriting is short sentences, small words, and BIG pictures."

Khouri, Callie: "It [Thelma & Louise] wasn't meant to be a literal ending…"

Killen, Kyle: "We talk around things, at things, and about things, without ever overtly stating them…"

Kinberg, Simon: "In my experience, audiences go to movies to feel. When the movie starts to break down and it becomes…"

Koenig, Eric: "Write because you love writing. Write because you want to make the reader laugh, or cry, or cringe…"

Koppelman, Brian: "The job of the writer on a studio assignment is to deliver a shootable script as defined by other people…"

Krasna, Norman: ""When you are committed to the skeleton of a beginning, a middle and an end, the cleverness is in concealing…"

Kremer, Justin: "Above all, write something unique that showcases your voice. Readers read so much — at times four or five scripts a day. So many…"

Kubrick, Stanley: "I think the best plot is no apparent plot. I like a slow start, the start gets under the audience's skin…"

Kubrick, Stanley: "A film is — or should be — more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings…"

Kunka, Daniel: "No matter what the concept is, no matter what spectacle you put out there…"

Kunka, Daniel: "Here's a screenwriting tip that seems obvious but is actually maybe the only screenwriting advice you need — something has to happen…"

Kurosawa, Akira: "With a good script a good director can produce a masterpiece; with the same script a mediocre director can make…"

LaBute, Neil: "When you look at the stories I've written, the situations are already ripe for trouble…"

LaTulippe, Geoff: "If something funny or scary or interesting happens to me, the first thing I think is, 'Can I turn that into a script?'"

LaTulippe, Geoff: "Here's the most important thing I've learned about rewriting: my job is to decide what notes I think are worth taking to heart…"

Lance, Max: "The best advice I got was a teacher who said, 'If you want to succeed, then write every day for 10 years, and you'll stop sucking.'"

Launer, Dale: "Take away the story, and you have no movie…"

Lagravenese, Richard: "I have to check whether I lean toward doing something as a temptation or as a…"

Lasseter, John: "There are three things you need to do to make a movie that is successful, a move that truly entertains your audience…"

Lawton, J.F.: "You do have to fully commit to what you do and not be worried about the consequences…"

Lee, Ang: "There is more than one way to make movies. To me it has to be led by emotion."

Lee, Spike: "Write. For screenwriters and directors, you have to write. If you did a survey of the last 25 years and looked at the first films…"

LeFauve, Meg: ""I open a document and start brain dumping anything I can think of… Next I open a new document and do what I call a barf draft…"

Lehane, Dennis: "Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. That first draft is just spaghetti on the wall…"

Lehman, Ernest: "It's a juggling of beginnings, middles and endings so that they… seem to be moving…"

Lehman, Ernest: "One of the most important feats in screenwriting is to convey exposition without it appearing to be exposition…"

Lemkin, Jonathan: "If you let your lifestyle expend your last check, you then say yes to a really bad…"

Lieber, Jeffrey: "If the end of the scene is obvious from the beginning of the scene, there's no point…"

Lieber, Jeffrey: "What separates good writers from great writers is the need to look at your own material and figure out what's wrong with it."

Lieber, Jeffrey: "When I go to pitch a [TV] idea with somebody, I pitch them the world, I pitch them the characters, I pitch them the long arc."

Lochhead, Seth: "That's our job, to spark curiosity and emotion from an audience, to allow them to…"

Lochhead, Seth: "I think story concept is important to the commercial viability of a screenplay because we all say it is — that's the culture of Hollywood."

Logan, John: "I remember writing the line in *Gladiator*, 'Are you not entertained?' that Maximus says…"

Lubitsch, Ernst: "It is the task of the [screenwriter] to invent little pieces of business…"

Luhrmann, Baz: "Packing the house was the primary and foremost concern for him [Shakespeare]."

Lynch, David: "If you want to make a film, you get ideas for 70 scenes. Put them on 3-by-5 cards…"

Lynch, David: "The world to me is a mixture of the two. Intuition is thought and feeling working…"

Macpherson, Jeanie: "Each scene must be a drama in itself. The whole picture must be made up of…"

Mamet, David: "Theoretically… what one wants to do is put the protagonist and the audience…"

Mamet, David: "[Screenwriting's] all about working on it and working on it until it comes out even…"

Mamet, David: "Forget every rule Syd Field, Robert McKee or any other screenwriting guru ever taught…"

Manfredi, Matt: "Write the thing that absolutely best expresses your voice. Don't worry about getting an agent. Don't worry about anything like that…"

Mann, Michael: "I can arrange the sequence of all these encounters without regard to chronology…"

Marlowe, Kelly: "Every scene has to be doing something. It has to be moving the story along, peeling off a layer…"

Margulies, Donald: "Research can be seductive. Writers try to convince themselves that research is writing but the truth is research is research…"

Marion, Francis: "It is true… that a character exists only in his emotions and sensations…"

Marks, Justin: "Sometimes you're swinging your way through a first draft like a blind miner with a…"

Marks, Justin: "There's not a single battle a writer can win on a conference call, a notes meeting, anything. We win the battle…"

Marks, Justin: "The mark of experience isn't the ability to write a lot of good pages, it's the ability to generate shitty pages faster without worrying…"

Marlowe, Andrew: ""Sometimes you'll get a note, 'This scene is boring, can we put in a car chase?' What you should take from that note is…"

Marshall, Garry: "There are three drafts of a screenplay in the development process…"

Marshall, Garry: "My main mentor was Carl Reiner because he took the time to explain stories…"

Martin, Steve: "Pure writing is the most rewarding… because it is constantly accompanied by a voice…"

Martin, Steve: "I want three comic scenes in the movie that are funny because they have been set up…"

Matheson, Richard: "I'm a storyteller. The story is the thing. They can put that on my tombstone: Storyteller."

Mazin, Craig: "I want comedies to be about something. I want movies to be about something. I want…"

McCanlies, Tim: "That second act, for me, is the most fun, because the first and third act have such clearly defined functions."

McCoy, Chris: "Good dialogue comes from character development. The better you know your…"

McCoy, Chris: "It's important to be as specific as you can with your characters — the more specific you make them, the more ideas will pop into your head."

McCoy, Chris: "Trying to cater to the market is a big error a lot of younger screenwriters make. Your first scripts are there to establish what your voice…"

McKee, Robert: "Screenwriting is the art of making the mental physical. We create visual correlatives…"

McKenna, Aline Brosh: "Young writers seem to forget that people in the industry are desperate for good material…"

McKenna, Aline Brosh: "There are two things that are the mark of a great writer: How well you exposition and how well you do your transition."

McMurtry, Larry: "What's needed in screenwork is imagination, an agile mind, and a facility for on-the-spot invention…"

McQuarrie, Christopher: "Screenwriting tip: A mystery is only as good as its conclusion, especially if that conclusion is…"

McQuarrie, Christopher: "Screenwriting tip: It's as simple as giving them exactly what they expect in a way they've never seen before."

Melfi, Theodore: "If you give an actor an honest role, they'll want to play it, and they'll know how to play it."

Melfi, Theodore: "As a writer and as a director, your sole purpose in life is to make your work for the audience, period."

Meyer, Nicholas: "The only change I made was to eliminate the words 'cut to,' which always seemed…"

Meyer, Rob: "Even in an indie film it's important to have a logline that 70 to 90 percent of people are going to perk up and say, 'That sounds cool.'"

Meyers, Nancy: "My first draft was exactly 250 pages. I didn't have brads deep enough, long enough…"

Meyers, Nancy: "It's a mistake to write something you think people will like, this year's version of last year's movie. I think you're only going to get…"

Miles, Scott: "When you're writing a spec spec script, I think it's so important that you're not chasing a trend, that you're not chasing what you think…"

Milius, John: "I used to tell a screenwriting class, 'I could teach you all the basic techniques in fifteen…"

Milius, John: "A writer's greatest fear now is not that he's going to be no good when he sits down to write. A writer's greatest fear is that he's going to be…"

Mills, Mike: "Usually, I find writing to be an ongoing process of failure. I'm like a World War One infantry unit. I just march forward every day…"

Minghella, Anthony: "The first words anybody in the movies wants to say is no, and the job of the director or producer or writer…"

Minghella, Anthony: "Waiting is part of writing. When I write the word 'waiting' by hand it even looks like 'writing.'"

Morris, Jeff: "I think quality prep work makes writing the script much easier. My writing is more focused…"

Morris, Tess: "Don't spend too much time on your own. If I do any seminars or any talks and there are lots of people sitting there and they're saying…"

Morris, Tess: "You have to be persistent, you must not give up, and you must find all sorts of ways not to give up. Because it's a terrible job for your…"

Nathanson, Jeff: "A big mistake people make is to over-research, and it seems to show in the movies."

Nelson, Tim Blake: "I have to be responsible to a schedule to be the sort of writer/director I want to be. Every day I get up…"

Neustadter, Scott: "Jeffrey Katzenberg used to make his animation writers put the theme of the movie at the top of every single page of the screenplay…"

Neustadter, Scott: "I love writing, but what I really love is having written."

Nichols, Jeff: "When working out a story, I try to stay away from traditional outlines. Trying to sit down and begin by listing the scenes…"

Nolan, Christopher: "The thriller is the one genre where it's absolutely demanded that character be…"

Nolan, Christopher: "Writing is a combination of objective and subjective approach. You take an objective approach to get you through things, and…"

Norman, Marc: "The thing you have to remember is that you better put some passion on the page…"

Norman, Marc: "My best writing has been on the the scripts I wrote as suicide notes to the industry…"

O'Dwyer, Declan: "Cinematic language tells us there's going to be showdown at high-noon…"

O'Dwyer, Declan: "Work hard. Learn the craft. Work hard. Learn your craft. If your script is good, it gets noticed. If it doesn't, write another fucking script."

Otto, Shawn Lawrence: "I took a class in screenwriting because I wanted to strengthen my sense of…"

Palmer, Nick: "Clever writing and smart dialogue are great, but they can't make up for a weak, central…"

Palumbo, Dennis: "They're not in trouble if they say No. Nothing bad can happen to them and they won't lose any money. The moment they say Yes…"

Payne, Alexander: "Humor comes from the most painful situations you can think of…"

Payne, Alexander: "I don't think you can have drama without comedy and vice versa…"

Perry, Eleanor: "Each writer starts differently, but I think the only valid way is to start with character…"

Phelan, Anna Hamilton: "Your first enemy… is yourself… that little critic that says, 'This is terrible'…"

Pierson, Frank: "One thing I've discovered about writing is to form a habit that becomes an addiction…"

Pierson, Frank: "It is our craft that gives us the ability to hang on year after year and keep on writing…"

Pizzo, Angelo: "A few ideas important to me. Before writing Fade In…"

Powell, Ashleigh: "You start the story with the main character's flaw, you show how that character is transforming…"

Price, Richard: "There's such a difference between written dialogue and spoken dialogue…"

Price, Richard: "The one thing that never fails to surprise me is how even a little dialogue is always too…"

Price, Richard: "It's all about what happens next, what happens next. It's speed chess, not chess."

Prince-Bythewood, Gina: "I absolutely take pride in creating characters. It's so much a part of the writing process. For me, once I have the idea of what I…"

Rabinowitz, David: "Write as much as you can. Quantity leads to quality. Show your work early and often, and embrace feedback."

Ramis, Harold: "For me, a screenplay starts with something I can tell other people in five minutes…"

Randolph, Charles: "I like the experience of reading to feel like an experience of film. So I use spacing, add more air for a scene that should move…"

Ray, Billy: "Putting a scene in a location that puts your characters under pressure is a good thing."

Ray, Billy: "When I know what it is I'm going to be writing next, I'll go out and buy a soundtrack…"

Ray, Billy: "At the top of my computer in big, bold letters, it says, 'What is the simple emotional journey?'"

Reese, Rhett: "The iterative process of writing and rewriting and bolding things that have changed…"

Refn, Nicholas Winding: "I've always liked characters who have to transform themselves…"

Rhodes, Justin: "Writing is a journey through complexity to simplicity. What is the simple emotional…"

Rhodes, Justin: "I think concept is the most important aspect of the whole process. Dialogue can be improved, set pieces can be improved…"

Rhodes, Justin: "The tropes are there because they provide a grammar the audience speaks and can use to understand your story. What hopefully…"

Riddell, Brad: " In the end, scripts are actor bait, plain and simple — no matter what the medium. So it all starts with character and concept…"

Rifkin, Adam: "It's always good to write something that you know you can write really well especially…"

Rifkin, Adam: "If you're a purist and you don't want your words touched, you should either be a novelist or an author…"

Rivera, Jose: "I did a film for Disney. It was a one-word idea they had: 'shadows'"…

Robinson, Phil Alden: "One of the reasons that people resent writers is because where we are writing…"

Rodriguez, Robert: "The trick is not getting up to get coffee or other distractions. Hours will fly by."

Roessner, Chris: "Know if it's that independent, quirky comedy. Know if it's that big, $200 million action film…"

Root, Wells: "The most important thing in a script is to have strong leading characters. Plot and structure and the rest…"

Rosenberg, Scott: "My rule is always, if I finish a spec script, there's five people that I give it to…"

Rosenthal, Mark: "The joy of screenwriting comes from its pure narrative requirements. It's a little like haiku…"

Ross, Gary: "So many kids work backward methodically, calculatingly… instead of from the inside out…"

Ross, Gary: "You have to be patient enough to let the movie talk to you and to listen to it."

Rossio, Terry: "Plot problems are always character solutions."

Rossio, Terry: "To the writer, a screenplay is a finished painting. To the studio, more an exploratory sketch."

Roth, Eric: "I think part of being a good screenwriter is being as concise as possible…"

Rothman, Scott: "Your story needs to matter to you. You're not just writing it to entertain yourself. It's got to be…"

Rothman, Scott: "I believe in a very thorough outline, of really cracking the story. I think that's where you make your money."

Russell, David O.: ""I have to write down all the things about an idea that excite me and I have to…"

Russo, Greg: "Never stop learning. If every day I'm learning something new as a writer…"

Russo, Greg: "The story idea really is everything. It's the beginning of everything we do, everything follows that idea. To me, I think that's…"

Rubin, Bruce Joel: "If you trust the moment as you write, it will always bring you what you need…"

Sargent, Alvin: "You must write everyday. Free yourself. Free association. An hour alone a day…"

Sargent, Alvin: "Rigidity is the mother of rigidity. It's very exciting to be ridiculous. I wish I could be even more so…"

Sayles, John: "When I'm writing a script for myself, my rule of thumb is it's my story, I focus on what…"

Scorcese, Martin: "The films I constantly revisit have held up for me over the years not because of plot but because of character."

Scott, Allan: "I think the craft of fiction is just a jigsaw puzzle; and half the fun is doing it."

Schrader, Paul: "I endlessly chart and re-chart a movie. Before I sit down to write, I have all the…"

Schrader, Paul: "Art and screenwriting are functional… they can help you see your life in perspective."

Schulman, Tom: "I want to know my whole story works before I start writing."

Seltzer, David: "If you go in with formula, you come out with formula. The whole thrill of being a…"

Shannon, Stephanie: "I think it's important to just sit down and to do it. That was my biggest obstacle I had to overcome, was that it took me years…"

Shannon, Stephanie: "To me, writing is a lot like playing God. You've got these people down there with free will. And you don't want to tell them exactly…"

Shannon, Stephanie: "Writing is so hard. If you don't care about your story, if you're not writing something that is personally important to you, that…"

Shelton, Ron: "Movie stars like to shine. They like to have their movie-star moments…"

Shelton, Ron: "When I pitch, I pitch like Roger Clemens or brush them back like Sal Maglie used to do. I'm throwing…"

Sheridan, Jim: "Emotion, by definition, is invisible. So cinema is, by definition, dealing with the…"

Sheridan, Taylor: "I have 50 great ideas but what helps me choose what to write is knowing how it ends. You gotta know how it ends…"

Sheridan, Taylor: "That's the goal of a screenwriter: to allow audiences into a world where they can't predict what's going to happen."

Sheridan, Taylor: "I've made up little mantras for myself, catchphrases from a screenwriting book that doesn't exist. One is 'Write the movie you'd pay to…'"

Sherman, Grace: "If there is a story inside of you that's burning to get out, we need to hear it. There are audiences out there that need to hear your voice…"

Sherman, Grace: "How is it flowing? How is it sounding? Is this scene advancing the plot? Is it needed? Is this dialogue sharp enough?"

Shyamalan, M. Night: "*The Sixth Sense* started out as a serial killer movie. Malcolm started out as a…"

Silliphant, Stirling: "The writing is the easiest part of it. The trying period is the period of…"

Silliphant, Stirling: "I map out five pages a day, thirty-five pages a week. I keep revising the schedule and the four weeks…"

Silliphant, Stirling: "You go to your work DETERMINED to put poetry on the page — for in setting, stage directions, time, place, feeling, the writing in…"

Simmons, Will: "This fast-food style of storytelling is bad for movies. Catharsis comes in many forms…"

Simmons, Will: "If you're about to spend months writing and developing a script, you want to be certain that the central concept is worthy of your time."

Simmons, Will: "Transitions between scenes are absolutely essential to a script's pacing. There should be a rhythmic quality to the writing, where…"

Simon, David: "Exposition sucks the life out of your story."

Simon, Neil: "At this point, I don't make outlines at all. I make an outline only in my mind…"

Simon, Neil: "I try not to write villains per se because I think life is the villain. I think how we cope with life is the conflict."

Simon, Roger: "Dreyfuss said Spielberg used to tell him the way to adapt books was to throw the book away and start writing what he remembered…"

Smith, Kirsten "Kiwi": "You can't write a movie without watching tons of movies and deconstruct them and what makes them tick…"

Solomon, Ed: "The easiest thing to remember about writing comedy is if it generally makes you laugh…"

Soloway, Jill: "The people who I believe in the most create work about people who are real…"

Sorkin, Aaron : "I'd write it to the end and go back and write it all over again, go back and write it…"

Spaihts, Jon: "So much of screenwriting is information management. A script is made of interlocking…"

Spaihts, Jon: "Very often, theme emerges in the polishing if it didn't emerge in the structural work…"

Sparling, Chris: "No matter how big or high concept your story is, it only works if there's a small, personal story at its core."

Stepansky, Barbara: "The most time I devote to is character. I think that plots develop out of character needs and wants…"

Stepansky, Barbara: "When I write scenes, I want to make sure that it drives the plot forward. If a scene doesn't have a cause and effect built into it…"

Stevens, Dana: ""The truth is, I couldn't solve my [writer's] block with location. Or silence or…"

Stillman, Whit: "If the observation is right, and funny or interesting things are happening right along…"

Stillman, Whit: "For me, there's a bad year of getting started on something. You write bad stuff and it's awkward to throw it out, and you wait around…"

Straughan, Peter: "I understand why they want to turn writing into a science, but I think it's a mistake."

Straughan, Peter: "Like a lot of male writers, I naturally gravitate toward male characters. I tend to think…"

Stone, Oliver: "The first draft, the first structure is really important… Do it fast, don't get stuck."

Strick, Wesley: "I have two tricks. One is that I write every day, regardless of whether I want to or not…"

Strong, Danny: "I always try to make the opening image of the film reflect the theme or the story in its entirety. I don't always succeed…"

Susco, Stephen: ""Look, we don't who the fuck you guys are. So we're not going to really do anything for you.""

Sweeney, Mike: "There seems to be a lot of 'if only' floating around the amateur screenwriting world. If only I can get a rep. If only I can get on a list…"

Sweeney, Mike: "Remember that not every idea is a movie. You don't want to run out of plot before you run out of pages."

Swetnam, John: ""People complain about how Hollywood won't give them the time of day. Well, here's the truth — 99% of the time it's the script. Period."

Swetnam, John: "The question to ask about a new story idea: Can you really see it opening at a theater…"

Swetnam, John: "Even if you don't feel like it, you have to show up. It's a job, and you must always show up and do the work."

Swicord, Robin: "You have to understand how the business works. Sometimes, I'm so mystified I can't believe this is a business."

Swicord, Robin: "I think that all of this dialogue comes out of the characters themselves…there's a kind of mystical transference that happens…"

Tally, Ted: "The only thing that matters in a screenplay is the first ten pages, and the only thing that…"

Tally, Ted: "It [a treatment] is about twenty-five or thirty single-spaced pages normally, in paragraph outline…"

Tarantino, Quentin: "I need to know where these [characters] come from. It's a universe I'm creating…"

Tarantino, Quentin: "The final draft of the script is the first cut of the movie, and the final cut of the…"

Tarantino, Quentin: "You know every script will have four to six basic scenes that you're going to do. It's all the scenes in the middle that you've got to.."

Tarantino, Quentin: "I don't know what a writing adjective is. I always use acting adjectives. To me writing's almost the same thing because you're…"

Taylor, Lori Evans: "That's what this business is about, doing good work, and ultimately if you do good work, you're going to develop fans."

Taylor, Lori Evans: "Whenever I start to write, I think about, 'Would I go see this? Does it pass my babysitter test?' If not, I'm not going to write the movie."

Terrio, Chris: "I have a theory that a good screenplay gives us memorable dialogue; a great one, memorable silences."

Tofte, Amy: "There's a strange intersection of journalism and poetry in dramatic writing. The poetry part is the economy of it and the beauty, but…"

Towne, Robert : "The single most important question… one must ask about a character is…"

Towne, Robert: "In the case of *Chinatown*, I wrote at least 20 different, long, long step-outlines…"

Towne, Robert: "In rewriting what you have to be able to do is read a piece of material, say what's…"

Towne, Robert: "if you don't set everything up in the beginning, you'll pay for it in the middle or in…"

Towne, Robert: "A movie is really only four or five moments between two people; the rest exists to give those moments their impact…"

Towne, Robert: "If you have a good ear for dialogue, you just can't help thinking about the way people talk. You're drawn to it…"

Towne, Robert: "Good dialogue illuminates what people are not saying."

Tracy, Aaron: "Sometimes it feels like you have to be incredibly careful choosing your topic because it's going to dominate your life for so…"

Tracy, Aaron: "She said the director of Midnight Cowboy simply decided that Jon Voight's character never received any kind of physical affection from…"

Turner, Guinevere: "I stay positive because most days, I don't have to get up until I want to get up."

Turney, Catherine: "Never attack a scene head on, always do it obliquely, if possible. Never have anything on the nose…"

Turpin, David: "I'm quite simple–minded, and I tend to begin in quite a simple way. I start at the beginning and I write until the end, in sequence."

Turpin, David: "You have to hold on to that initial feed that came out of your subconscious, that comes out of your dream life. You have to hold on…"

Uhls, Jim: "I write those scenes first, out of order. I call it 'the scent of blood.'"

Verbinski, Gore: "It's very important to me that when you watch the movie, any character is a door…"

Vitale, Cesar: ""Dissect movies. Dissect scripts. What worked in that story? What didn't? What made me happy, or sad, or cry? Do that a lot, then write…"

Vitale, Cesar: "I have to feel that the film has purpose, that it's not just shooting everywhere hoping to hit a target. Every scene I'm writing…"

Wachtel, Charlie: "You've got to have a strong concept. It's a necessity. You could be an incredible writer, but, if you pick the wrong concept…"

Wallace, Randall: "That's what stories do. They aren't philosophy… or sermons or propaganda…"

Wambaugh, Joseph: "Screenwriters are like little guppies swimming in an aquarium filled with sharks…"

Ward, David S.: "If you're working on something you're not really into, you're not gonna do it very well…"

Waters, Daniel: "The first draft is the one thing they can't take away from you, so revel in it…"

Weber, Michael H.: "I used to hate on bad movies. Now I'm amazed that any movies ever get made."

Weber, Michael H.: "I really like, when I'm alone, and when I've figured out something's not working, and then I figure out a way to make it work…"

Weber, Michael H.: "We don't have a set format for the outline. t's just a map for us. How do we get into the scene? How do we get out of the scene?"

Weitz, Chris: "That's the worst thing about most comedy writing that goes wrong: nobody has respect…"

Wells, Audrey: ""One day, you will sell your screenplay, and then your problems will begin…""

Wendig, Chuck: "Whenever you encounter the urge to info-dump, pause. Take a deep breath. Then ask: what does the audience *need* to know?"

Werwie, Michael: "When you're first breaking a story and when you're doing that first pass, it's important to not really censor yourself…"

Werwie, Michael: "If you expect the studio to pay you a lot of money to write a script for them, they're going to want to see the architecture first."

Werwie, Michael: "In my early scripts I put a lot of thought and a lot of energy into crafting and shaping theme, weaving it through the story to the point…"

West, Sallie: "I invent people I like, people with whom I would like to spend time. People with depth and humor and humility… If you didn't like your…"

Whedon, Joss: "Write it. Shoot it. Publish it. Crochet it, sauté it, whatever. MAKE."

Whedon, Joss: "If you don't know who everybody is and why they're there, why they're feeling what they're feeling, and why they're doing what…"

White, David: "Breaking in' is a mirage. What you do is earn the right to work hard for the next success. Through small successes, you earn the right…"

Whitta, Gary: "Allow yourself to experiment, to bend and break the rules you've learned…"

Whitta, Gary: "It used to be that I'd start each writing day by reviewing the previous day's pages. But that would usually wind up with me spending…"

Wilder, Billy: "If you have a problem with the third act, the real problem is in the first act…"

Wilder, Billy: "I find with young writers, and some of them with very good ideas, that they get lost in technical…"

Wilder, Billy: "People think when it comes to a screenplay, you start with absolutely nothing. But the trouble is that you have a million ideas…"

Wilms, Wenonah: "For me, it's character first. I have a person in my head and I just go through the basics like, 'What are their flaws. What are their goals?"

Wilms, Wenonah: ""Conflict. I know that's trite, but it's always in the back of my head. Ramp it up, ramp it up. My husband will read my pages…"

Winslow, Don: "I'm not one of those novelists who looks at screenwriting as a lesser form — it's an extremely demanding art that requires incredible…"

Wisdom, Victoria: "Ideas are a dime a dozen, execution is everything…"

Woods, Bryan: "With *A Quiet Place*, we weren't comfortable writing the script until we knew that the theme was going to be about communication…"

Zackham, Justin: "For me, screenwriting is all about setting characters in motion and as a writer just chasing them…"

Zaillian, Steve: "The word sympathetic is not one I think about. I don't try to make a character sympathetic, or unsympathetic, in anything I write. I just…"

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4

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Scott Myers

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