

Page One: "Cool Hand Luke" (1967)

[Scott Myers](#)

Screenplay by Donn Pearce and Frank Pierson, based on the novel by Donn Pearce

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTHERN CITY STREET
EXTREME CLOSEUP PARKING METER

NIGHT

Its irritating head opens a glaring red eye: the red flag pops across the entire screen:

VIOLATION

INSERT: PARKING METER SUPPORT

NIGHT

CLOSEUP of a pipe cutter attached to the meter neck, metal slivers curling out. From o.s. we HEAR -- LUCAS JACKSON, cheerfully humming and mumbling Auld Lang Syne and then:

LUKE:

Okay, Mister General, you son of a bitch. Sir. Think you can put things right with a piece of tin with a ribbon hangin' on it? Gonna put you right.

CLOSEUP PARKING METER

NIGHT

as the meter head falls out of FRAME.

NEW ANGLE ON METER

NIGHT

as it falls to the ground amidst a forest of meter stands and Luke's hand comes into the FRAME to pick it up and we SEE him in CLOSEUP for the first time. He is cheerful, drunk, wearing a faded GI Field jacket. A bottle opener hangs on a silver chain around his neck. He addresses the next meter.

LUKE:

All right. Helen, honey. I lost my head over you. Now its your turn.

Suddenly the beam of headlights crashes in, FLARING the SCREEN.

ANGLE ON PROWL CAR

NIGHT

sliding up to us, headlights glaring, red toplight revolving menacingly. TWO OFFICERS, black shapes, get out and start warily toward Luke.

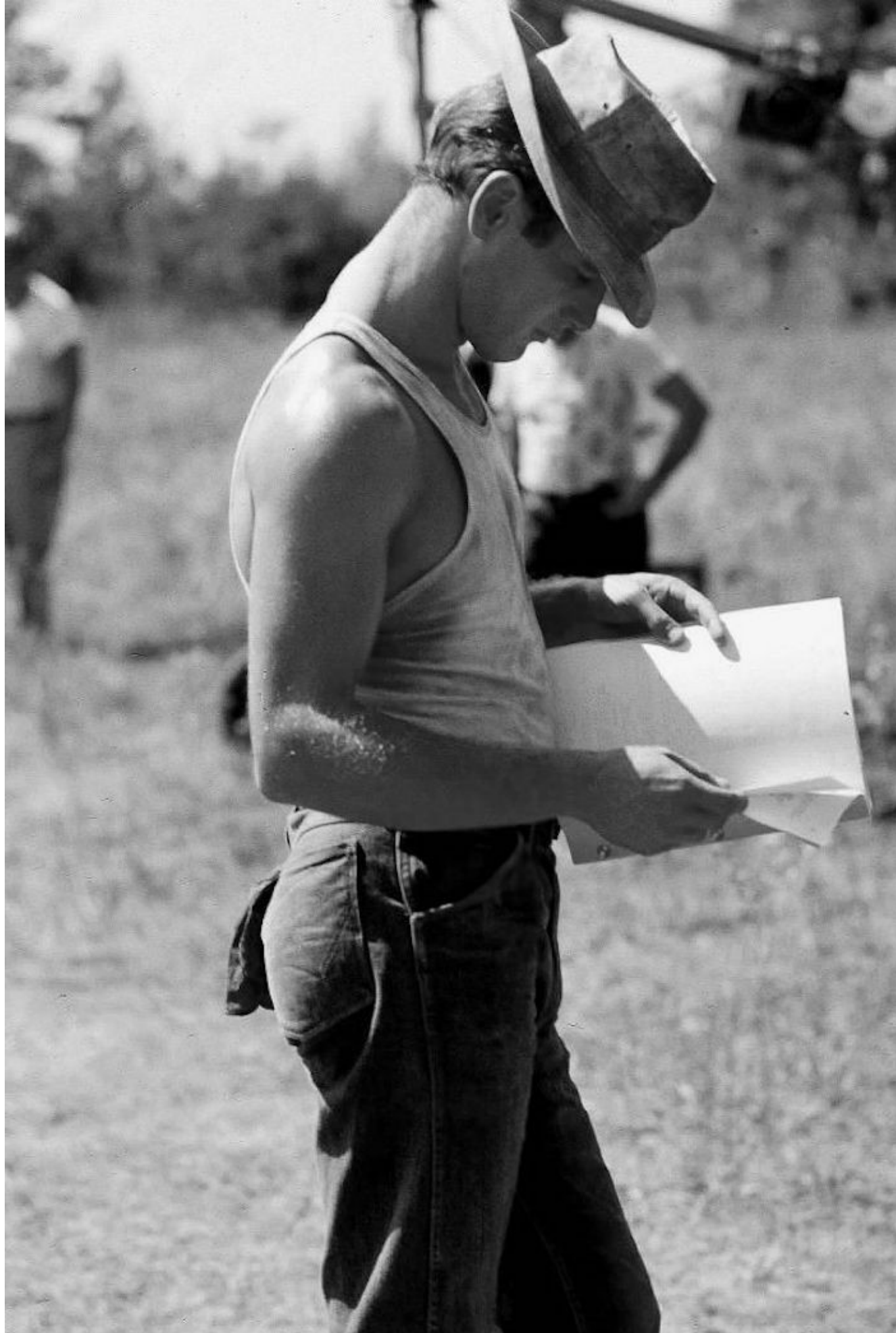
The movie version of the opening:

The movie cuts some of the dialogue, but it's essentially the

same scene. When busted, Luke doesn't lie. Doesn't try to escape. When informed by the cop, "You'd better come along with us," he just grins and starts to laugh. Says a lot about his psychological state of being. He doesn't give a shit what happens to him. And that right there creates a question: *Why not?* And **that** creates a mystery: *Who is this guy and why is he this way?*

You may read the screenplay [here](#).

Speaking of reading the screenplay, here's a photo of Paul Newman doing precisely that on the set of *Cool Hand Luke*.



Wanna be cool like Paul Newman? Start reading scripts!

FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY!

Page One is a daily Go Into The Story series featuring the first page of notable movie scripts from the classic era to contemporary times. Comparing them is an excellent way to study a variety of writing styles and see how professional writers start a story.

For more Page One posts, go [here](#).