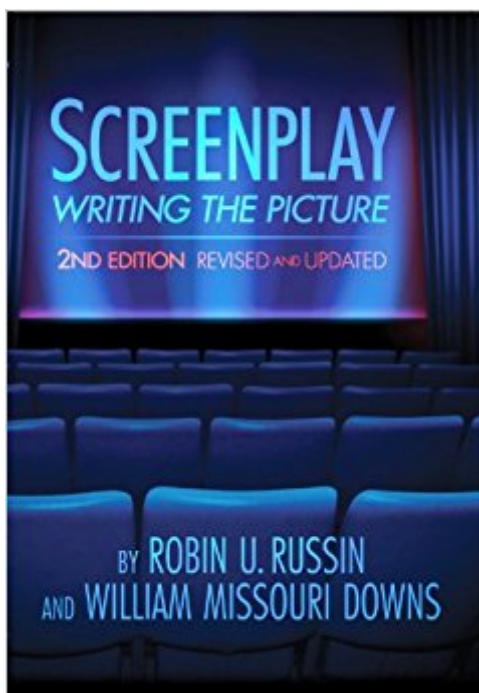


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# Screenplay: Writing The Picture, 2nd Edition



## Synopsis

Screenplay is a complete screenwriting course from initial idea through final script sale providing in-depth discussions of theme development; story research; script plotting and structuring; character development; dialogue; writing and rewriting methods; formatting; the ins and outs of marketing and pitching scripts; writing for TV, the Web and video games, and much more. Well-written, comprehensive and filled with both innovative and tried-and-true writing techniques, illustrative screenplay examples and sage advice from veteran writers, Screenplay will help novices as well as working screenwriters improve and sell their scripts. The second edition of this popular manual is completely revised, reflecting current film industry practices, and includes new chapters on such subjects as Webisodes and video games, as well as updates to its many examples.

## Book Information

Paperback: 424 pages

Publisher: Silman-James Press; 2 Rev Upd edition (July 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1935247069

ISBN-13: 978-1935247067

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.9 x 9.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 41 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #25,302 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > Humor &

Entertainment > Movies > Screenwriting #49 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Performing

Arts > Film & Television #83 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Television

## Customer Reviews

"Screenplay: Writing the Picture's newly minted edition is an absolute gem. It updates the classic, indispensable screenwriting craft book and makes it rock for the ever-evolving entertainment marketplace. This book is comprehensive, insightful and genuinely fun to read. I always recommend it on my syllabus as essential reading." --Neil Landau "book cover"

ROBIN U. RUSSIN Robin was educated at Harvard, Oxford, RISD and UCLA, where he received his MFA in screenwriting. A Rhodes Scholar, he has written for film, theater, television and many national publications. He has won or been a finalist for many awards, and credits include the hit film On Deadly Ground with Steven Seagal. His other scripts have been bought or optioned by studio

and independent producers, and he co-produced the film *Shark In A Bottle*. He has written, produced and/or directed for America's *Most Wanted*, was Senior Producer of ABC's *Vital Signs*, and co-produced *Alcatraz--the True Story* on FOX. His original pilot and bible sold to ABC, now adapted and in production as *Of Kings and Prophets*. Among his produced plays are *Painted Eggs* and *The Face in the Reeds*. Robin taught at UCLA and is currently Full Professor of screenwriting at UC Riverside. WILLIAM MISSOURI DOWNS Bill earned an MFA in screenwriting from UCLA and an MFA in acting from the University of Illinois. For many years, he studied playwriting under Lanford Wilson and Milan Stitt at the Circle Rep Theatre in New York. In Hollywood he wrote for such NBC sitcoms as *My Two Dads*, *Amen* and *Fresh Prince Of Bel Air*. He sold the movie *Executive Privilege* to Tri-star, and won the Jack Nicholson Award for screenwriting. His plays have been produced all over the world, from the Kennedy Center to the Berkeley Rep, and from the International Theatre festival in Israel to the Hexis in Singapore. A few highlights are: *Innocent Thoughts* winner of the National Playwrights Award, *Jewish Sports Heroes* and *Texas Intellectuals*, which took first place at the Mill Mountain Theatre's Festival Of New Plays, *Dead White Males* a Eugene O'Neill semi-finalist and *Kabuki Medea*, winner of the Bay Area Critics Award for best production in San Francisco and the Jefferson Award for best production in Chicago. Bill is the co-author of the book, *Playwriting: From Formula To Form*, published by Harcourt Brace. He lives in Wyoming.

I purchased this book long ago when I took a screenwriting class in college. As a student used to information delivered didactically, I found that *Screenplay: Writing the Picture* was a breath of fresh air! I loved that the second chapter is devoted strictly to proper format, down to specific tab spacing! The middle of the text is dedicated to adjusting your screenplay to make coherent sense and "passable" to screenplay readers. The book is sprinkled with "War Stories" by the authors that serve as wonderful parables for anyone trying to get into the industry or even write a spec screenplay. The book even goes into "formulas" for genre's and gives useful exercises for beginning and even experienced writers. It is a shame that if you type a search for a "screenwriting" text on standard search engines (even ) this book doesn't come up. They give you half-baked books by Syd Field that are all theoretical hoo-ha and of no real variance whatsoever. To me, this is the the ONLY SCREENPLAY BOOK TO OWN because it was written by people from "The Business" that know how damned hard it is if not impossible to break into the industry. I would say it is even better than buying Screenwriting software. At least this book shows you how to outline your screenplay on notecards to examine your story arc and how to get an agent on top of the format, unlike software

that formats it for you but cannot give you an inside look as to what studio executives look for in screenplays. (Remember, do not put a brass brad in the middle)I may sound like an archaic school teacher, but spend ten bucks on a used copy of this instead of the 100+ dollars you would spend on software that wouldn't really help you grow as a writer.

This is one of the books to have. There is much useful information on placement of dramatic elements for which the audience has expectations. There is also too much other valuable material for me to list. It is of equal import to THE SCREENWRITER'S BIBLE.

If you're looking for some basic ground rules about screen writing and how to format, how to structure a story, and where to take your story after it's finished, I recommend this book. I've been reading scripts for some time now and this book solidified and explained some concepts that I had been trying to memorize. The author really knows his stuff. He does say however that events that happen in movies don't happen in real life, and I beg to differ, but that doesn't stop the book from being extremely useful. Apparently the author has sold a number of scripts to Hollywood directors. You won't regret this buy.

An essential read for any aspiring screenwriter. From formatting character speech to pages and more, it's all in here!

The vast majority of screenwriting books fall into 2 categories: pretty good, or pretty average. Then there is the occasional book that is horrible - Robert Berman's "Fade In" for example - and the very rare book that is extraordinary. Screenplay: Writing the Picture falls into this last category. The problem with most screenwriting books is that they manage to cover only a small angle of the process, or they try to span the gamut and do it so thinly as to be useless. Writing the Picture succeeds in covering every aspect of writing a screenplay (or any work of fiction for that matter), and presenting the info in a way that makes it sink in to an applicable level - more than any other book available. It's written as a textbook, and will surely work its way into all screenwriting classrooms across the country within the next few years. Aside from the instruction, there are several great appendices, including a list of other screenwriting books that you need to have, specific clichés to avoid for each genre, where to find scripts and where to attend graduate screenwriting programs. I do have one complaint though. The degree to which these guys pander to political correctness in the use of gender-specific pronouns is truly staggering - I've never seen

anything like it. If a subject is of an unspecified gender, they will always go with "she," and on the rare occasion they do use "he" they always write "he or she" or "s/he." They can't even write a simple euphemism like "The main man." They write - and this is not a joke - they write "the main wo/man," and then a page later write "right hand wo/man." Personally, this really annoys me. It's distracting from the text, and approximately 1% of the population actually gives a rip about this anyway. It's unfortunate they chose this route over the much more readable usage in Robert McKee's "Story." In his book he states very simply, right up front, "...I have avoided constructions that distract the reader's eye, such as the annoying alternation of 'she' and 'her' with 'he' and 'him,' the repetitions 'he and she' and 'him and her,' the awkward 's/he' and 'her/im,' and the ungrammatical 'the' and 'them' as neuter singulars. Rather I use the nonexclusive 'he' and 'him' to mean 'writer.'" We have no such luxury in Writing the Picture, which is filled with enough "wo/man's" and "he or she's" to, well, write a book.

This book on it's cover totes it being the Screenplay Bible. I agree. It's a great book for entry level, and those who wish to expand their knowledge of screenwriting. It's thorough and to the point. A lot of beginner classes use it as a textbook. Yet, it kind of reads like a textbook. So bust out the lamp and coffee and prepare to learn.

As a screenwriter and writing instructor I've read dozens of screenplay books, all pretty much the same because screenwriting is highly structured with well-defined rules. What I like about this book is the way the authors have used humor, intelligence and both classic and current movie examples to help the writer learn the craft. They know their business and share it in a highly enjoyable and well-informed manner. But what I appreciate most is the section on the 'conventions of genre'. Until now, I have found no book that details what is expected (actually, demanded by the audience) in the various genres. Yes, we could watch dozens of movies and analyze them for similarities but thankfully Russin and Downs have done the work for us. And it is invaluable! If you write genre movies, as I do, this book is a must for your library.

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