

‡ Pen It by Hunter Ridgway – CLASS OUTLINE ‡

[Every Pen It by Hunter Ridgway class presents a similar, broad (and deep!) survey of screenwriting “how-to” topics/sub-topics. The virtual version of the class, however, moves faster than the in-person version, and as such does not cover quite as much material as the in-person class. The Pen It by Hunter Ridgway In-Class Workbook makes up for this and includes everything covered by the in-person class and MORE. It is meant to be a reusable writing aid.]

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Concept, premise, and hook – general reason for existence

GOT A GOOD REASON

OUTSIDE THE LINES

ISSUE IN A NEW CLASSIC

THE DILEMMA DILEMMA

DON’T PLAY IT SAFE

ONLY HUMAN

Concept, premise, and hook – uniqueness

1 + 1 = 0

“WOW” FOUNDATION?

OUT ON A LIMB

NEW AROUND HERE

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

GRAND FUNK PAPERLOAD

Concept, premise, and hook – workable idea

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

PICTURE THE MOTION

Concept, premise, and hook – universality

THAT'S ME

Concept, premise, and hook – great (emotional) story

UNFORTUNATE TO THE MAX

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

END OF ROPE

HEART OVER HEAD

INNER STORY TIME

CRAFTY END

Concept, premise, and hook – rich inner-state dramatic action

RICH DRAMA LIST

Concept, premise, and hook – great characters

I'M A PEOPLE PERSON

I DARE YOU

PYSCHOANALYZE ME

NEED TO FIND MYSELF

BEST SUPPORTING ACTORS

Concept, premise, and hook – winning middle stretch

CENTER OF YOUR ATTENTION

Concept, premise, and hook – commerciality

POSTER CHILD

BRIDGING THE GAP

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE KIDS?

BUDGET FOR IT

Genre – conformation

WHAT ARE YOU?

Genre – singularity/exclusivity/consistency

CONSISTENTLY CONSISTENT

EXCESSIVE DRAMA

Genre – some genre-related conventions

DON'T GIVE 'EM BLOODY HELL

ISN'T THAT SPECIAL?

LOSE CONTROL

Genre – extra-reality/fantasy situations

PLAY BY THE RULES

Filmic/visual nature of the story/script – core material/approach

HAVE A VISION

ACTION!

World of the screenplay

NEW TO ME

OH, THE HUMANITY

Cinematic structure – voice-over narration

(NOT) TAKING THE “EASY” WAY OUT

VOICE-OVER, INCORPORATED

DON’T REPEAT AFTER ME

Cinematic structure – ambiguous or unreliable narration

THE REAL STORY

Cinematic structure – flashbacks

LAST RESORT

NOT A CRUTCH

STORYTELLING

Cinematic structure – non-linear time structure

GLUED TOGETHER

OUT OF ORDER

Story time structure

TIME CRUNCH

TICK TOCK

Point of entry to the story

FASHIONABLY LATE

Initial images/scene

GREAT OUTDOORS

IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

First page

QUESTIONABLE BEGINNING

First few pages

BUCKLE UP

SURPRISE, SURPRISE

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Background/exposition

STATE OF SHOW ME

RELATE TO MY PROBLEMS

FOR ARGUMENT'S SAKE

SAVE IT FOR LATER

Protagonist – generally

THE ONE AND ONLY

FOREVER YOUNG

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

THIS IS WHO I AM

Non-perfect protagonist

FAR FROM HOME

OUT OF BOUNDS

IMPERFECT IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD

I HAVE SOME BLIND SPOTS

I CONTRADICT ME

Relationships – fundamental basis for the story

POPULATION CONTROL

IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR

Relationships – part of plot or as subplots

TANGLED WEB

QUITE A STORY

TWO-SIDED COIN

Relationships – dynamic, evolving, changing

DONE IN STAGES

IT'S JUST US

Relationships – some story devices

A MATTER OF TRUST

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

First 17 pages

DON'T BE SO DENSE

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT

BEST FOOT FORWARD

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

YOU'VE BEEN FOREWARNED

Act 1 – initial goal/problem/conflict/emotions

TELL ME A STORY

PRE-PROBLEMATIC

I FIRST THE EMOTION

Act 1 – set-ups

HIGH BAR SET

INNER FOUNDATION

LIGHTING FUSES

AND CO-STARRING...

AT INTIMATE ODDS

Act 1 – general content

SAIL THE DETAIL

BUT HAIL SOME (REALLY GOOD) DETAIL

EMOTIONAL COMPLETE DEDICATION

Act 1 – inciting event

REAL GAME-CHANGER

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

YOU'RE (GOING TO BE) A MESS

Act 1 – “ending” points

COUNT ME IN

UNDERESTIMATORS

Act 1 --> Act 2 turning point

BEGIN AGAIN

Protagonist's quest – specific, tangible, immediate goal

SEEING IS BELIEVING

THIS MUST END

NOT ALL IN YOUR HEAD

Protagonist's quest – motivation

VERY NEEDY

MOST “NEEDY”

Protagonist's quest – active quest

GRABBING HORMONES

Protagonist's quest – stakes

THIS COULD BE A PROBLEM

Protagonist's quest – rising stakes

TWO-PRONGED GREATNESS

THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED

Protagonist's quest – degree of difficulty

YOU KNOW IT DON'T COME EASY

BUFFERING THE SUFFERING

SLIGHT (OR, BETTER, HUGE) MISCALCULATION

Protagonist's quest – non-linear progression

TOUGH GOING

Protagonist's quest – shifting/changing quest

REVISION IS VISION

(Partially) Irrational protagonist

PASSION PLAY

Antagonist – generally AND specifically

IT ACTUALLY IS A CONTEST

YOU OPPOSE ME AT EVERY TURN

(MAYBE) SOMETIMES IT TAKES TWO

A FACE TO THE FORCE; ANOTHER FORCE TO FACE

SWITCHING SIDES

Antagonist – worthy, formidable opponent

UNFAIR FIGHT

THAT'S STILL NOT A FAIR FIGHT

DIFFERENT FOLKS

Antagonist – “perfect” antagonist

DAMN, YOU'RE GOOD

THE DARK SIDE OF THE HERO

Antagonist – sympathetic opponent

NOT ALL BAD

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Antagonist's quest

THE OTHER QUEST

THE OTHER PLAN

“Internal make-up window” function of the story

A JOURNAL OF THE INTERNAL

GREAT NOVEL-LIKE?

Characterization – protagonist – likable or compelling/fascinating

YOU REALLY LIKE ME

I COULD BE GOOD+

Characterization – protagonist – most interesting/deeply developed

LEADING THE LEAD CHARACTER TO DRAMATIC LEADERSHIP

REALLY GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Characterization – protagonist – development devices

CHANGE WILL DO YOU GOOD

THE AWESOME POWER OF SELF-DENIAL

Characterization – protagonist – motivation

WHAT MAKES ME TICK

FORCED TO FORCEFULLNESS

Characterization – protagonist – weaknesses and vulnerabilities

IMPERFECT LIABILITIES

HOW EMBARRASSING!

MISTAKE STAKES

Characterization – protagonist – complexity

IT'S COMPLICATED

YOU SURPRISE ME

Characterization – protagonist – good and bad

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE BIZARRO

Characterization – protagonist – emotional wound, internal flaw, and their effects

INNER JOURNEY NEEDED/TAKEN

I'M MY OWN ANTAGONIST

PINPOINTING THE BELIEVING IN GRIEVING

Characterization – protagonist – level of internal conflict

IT HURTS SO GOOD

Characterization – protagonist – external vulnerabilities

UNFORTUNATE CONDITION

Characterization – antagonist – general points

YOUR REPUTATION PRECEDES

Characterization – antagonist – thoroughly defined/developed

WHOLE PERSON

Characterization – antagonist – non-stereotypical

STEP INTO THE MODERN WORLD

Characterization – antagonist – multi-sided

I'VE GOT IT ALL

Characterization – antagonist – motivation

MY PASSION IS (FILL IN THE BLANK)

Characterization – supporting characters – character complication chemistry

YOU'RE JUST IN THE WAY, BUT THAT'S GOOD

Characterization – supporting characters – unique traits

RARE GEMS

NICKNAMES THAT FIT

Characterization – supporting characters – in depth

ALLIED FORCES

A STAR IS GRAZED

A STAR IS BORN

Characterization – supporting characters – purpose and placement in the story

CHANGING THE COURSE

YOU INDIRECTLY LABEL ME

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE

Characterization – supporting characters – anti-character

I HATE EVERYTHING YOU'RE DOING

Characterization – supporting characters – other special purposes

SAYING THE NAY

GOOD COACHING

GOOD INTERNAL ANALYSIS

BAD COACHING

Characterization – all characters – initial points/introductions

1 + 1 = 1

ARBITRARY CAN BE SCARY (TO A SCRIPT'S CHANCES!)

WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?

ALL IN A NAME

NOT ALL IN A DESCRIPTION

RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE

Characterization – all characters – unique traits

HOW INTERESTING!

RATE MY TRAITS

Characterization – all characters – in depth

CHARACTER CARE

CHARACTER VEHICLES

Characterization – all characters – “pace”/revelation of traits

I CAN COUNT ON YOU

THAT COULD BE A PROBLEM

Characterization – all characters – surprises

THE REAL ME IS THE MORE ME

Characterization – all characters – outing inner selves

ALONE TIME

DO ASK WHY

AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

Characterization – all characters – good and bad, all together

HOT AND COLD, SWEET AND SOUR

SLIPPERY SLOPE

Characterization – all characters – differences

WE'RE FROM DIFFERENT WORLDS

Backstory – protagonist

THE STORY BEFORE THE STORY

PASSING “BACK-MUSTER”

Backstory – antagonist

MY PAST WILL (ALSO) LAST

Conflict – main plot

THE MOST BASIC “QUESTION” OF A SCREENPLAY

WANTON WANT

YOU'RE IN MY WAY

WE CAN'T WORK IT OUT

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Conflict – depth level

DRILL DOWN

THAT'S NOT VERY DEEP

DISROBING PROBING

GUT CHECK

Conflict – generally

NO BIG WONDER

DIFFERENT WAVELENGTHS

I SAW THIS COMING

BOY, THAT WAS HARD

VARIETY IS STILL THE SPICE OF LIFE

LEVELED CONFLICT

Plants/set-ups and pay-offs

NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU SEE IT AGAIN

SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING

Act 2 – generally

GET ON WITH IT

GET THICK WITH IT

GET COMPLEX WITH IT

GET LAYERED WITH IT

GET EMOTIONAL WITH IT

Act 2 – contrasts

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

Act 2 – active/proactive protagonist

ACTIVE TACTICS

Act 2 – complications, obstacles, and reverses

THE DIFFICULT PATH FORWARD

WHAT KIND ARE YOU?

SEESAW

INTEREST FUEL

Act 2 – escalating problems

FROM BAD TO WORSE

Act 2 – escalating conflict

LIKE THE STRANDS OF DNA

Act 2 – escalating jeopardy

HOTTER AND HOTTER WATER

Act 2 – escalating risk-taking

OUT ON LIMBS

Act 2 – suspense requirement

THE BIG SQUEEZE

Act 2 – non-linear requirement

THIS DOESN'T LOOK SO GOOD

SPICES OF GOOD WRITING

ROUGH ROAD ROLE REVERSALS?

Act 2 – protagonist-caused setbacks

I'M MY OWN WORST ENEMY

MY DRAMATIC FLAW IS TO BLAME

Act 2 – help for the protagonist

SUPPORT SYSTEM

MY GURU FRIEND

Act 2 – supporting characters' importance to the conflict

CATALYST TO CONFLICT

SELLING OUT

Act 2 – slow down

REST STOP

COVERING LOTS OF GOOD GROUND

Act 2 – momentum, movements, milestones, mountings, etc.

DOUBT OR NEARLY CHICKEN OUT

THE HERE AND THE NOW

SHIFTING SANDS

SLOW AS MOLASSES

NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WAS EXPECTING

NO WAY BACK

ESCALATING DEADLINE

LAYERING THE (ACTION-) STORYING

Act 2 – midpoint

CHALLENGE MIDPOINT

APPROACH MIDPOINT

EITHER WAY, SHIFTY MIDPOINT

Act 2 – vexing quest

WHO COULD DECIDE?

Act 2 – character development and change

REALLY GETTING TO KNOW YOU

TURN SLOWLY AND FACE THE CHANGES

Act 2 – latter part

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

RUN AWAY

Act 2 and Act 3 – plot points, turns, twists, surprises, and jams

FAKE YOU OUT

SO SURPRISED TO BE SO WRONG

TWIST AND SHOUT

BETRAY, THEN UN-BETRAY

IN BETWEEN BORED AND CONFUSED

Act 2 and Act 3 – protagonist thinking, learning

PROVE I'M IN THE GROOVE TO IMPROVE

GET YOUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER

Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 – scenes – timing

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS NO BEGINNING

I (DON'T) SAY HELLO, AND YOU (DON'T) SAY GOODBYE

LICKETY SPLIT

LEAN AND MEAN

Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 – scenes – essential content

HIGHLY EMOTIONAL

AN EMOTIONAL STRETCH FOR YOU

YET ANOTHER EVER PRESENT ELEMENT

AND AN "ALMOST ALWAYS" ELEMENT...

TWO CONFLICTS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 – scenes – devices

LET'S GO OVER THE PLAN (OR NOT)

END WITH A BANG (OR A "BUTTON")

Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 – scenes – sluglines

SLUG IT OUT

SLUG IT LONG

ZERO IN

DASH TO THE FINISH

MEANINGLESS TIMES AND ORANGE SKY

LATER, ALLIGATOR

Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 – scenes – action and action sequences

SHORTER IS USUALLY BETTER

GRAMMAR RULES DON'T ALWAYS APPLY

Subplots – generally

SUBLPOT STORY ELEMENTS

SUPPORTING CHARACTER = SUPPORTING STORY

Subplots – devices

UNDERCASTING TRICK

OVERCASTING TRICK

Subplots – integration, overlap, and enhancement

TIED TOGETHER

BUILD ME UP

Subplots – structure points

ELSEWHERE ACTION

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – 2nd of 3 protagonist stories

IT TAKES THREE, BABY

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – generally

I'M A PEOPLE PERSON

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – separate story

YOU CAN'T PUT TWO IN ONE

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – good story

JUST AS IMPORTANT

JUST AS DIFFERENT

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – integrated story

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – an actual quest

OVERACHIEVING OTHER ODDYSEY

MUDDLING THROUGH IS THE BEST WAY

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – emotional content

WARM AND FUZZY

TEARS, FEARS, AND VEERS

THAWING FLAWING?

LET IT SINK IN

Visible personal emotional relationship (VPER) story – conveyed off-the-nose

IT WHICH SHALL NOT BE NAMED

Subtext

IT'S NOT THERE, BUT IT'S THERE

BEARING A LOAD

SOME CATEGORIES OF SUBTEXT

ANOTHER INDIRECTNESS

Crisis point

SWING LOW

OR AT LEAST SWING DIFFERENT

BAD VIBES (TEMPORARY) VICTORY

EVENT PLANNING

THIS KILLS EVERYTHING

I'M ALL NERVOUS AND TENSE

SUFFER ME THIS

MEANING GLEANING

FRESH EYES

THE (HIDDEN) WAY FORWARD

Act 2 --> Act 3 turning point

RESTART THE STORY A FINAL TIME

CHANGE OF DIRECTION

KICK IT INTO OVERDRIVE

BOOST IN THE FACE OF LONG ODDS

Act 3 – generally

LIKE A MINI-STORY

HERE'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO

I NEED YOU TO GIVE 110%

SO MOTIVATING!

PAY US BOTH

Act 3 – pre-climax

KICK ME WHEN I'M DOWN

WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN

NO WAY OUT

Act 3 – really, really big and conclusive clash

SCREENPLAY ARMAGEDDON

MAY THE ODDS EVER NOT BE IN YOUR FAVOR

NOTHING IS OVER UNTIL I SAY IT IS

Act 3 – climax

LAST-SECOND SHOT

I'M SHOCKED! AND FILLED WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE...

IT'S DONE

Act 3 – denouement/resolution

CRISIS/PROBLEM MANAGEMENT, MANAGED

RE-FINDING EQUILIBRIUM

WRAP IT UP POINTS

SUPERIOR CONSOLATION PRIZE

YOU CAN ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT...

Act 3 – conclusion of the story – structure points

GET IT OVER WITH

Act 3 – conclusion of the story – storytelling points

KEEP EARNING IT

Act 3 – conclusion of the story – final scene/image of the movie

HOME/TOGETHER AGAIN

BACK WHERE WE STARTED

ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

BUTTONED OUT

FINAL VIBE

GREATEST KISS IN THE HISTORY OF CINEMA?

Protagonist's character arc story – generally

TWO JOURNEYS+

CHANGE UP

Protagonist's character arc story – backstory and overcoming it

THE WAY, WAY BACK

IDENTITY CHECK

Protagonist's character arc story – story milestones

REFERENCE POINT ESTABLISHED?

COMPARATIVE CHANGE

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

MORE ARC MARKS

PAGES OF PAINFUL STAGES

Protagonist's character arc story – depth of change

HOW SCREWED UP ARE YOU?

THIS IS DEEP

THANK YOU, ANTAGONIST(!?)

Protagonist's character arc story – internal-external tie

YOU SHOULD CHECK THIS BOX

ANOTHER WAY TO SAY

Protagonist's character arc story – meaningful change

IT'S ABOUT INTENSE LEARNING

IT'S ABOUT BROAD LEARNING

IT'S ABOUT BROAD CARING

Protagonist's character arc story – (exclusively?) demonstrated change

DON'T SPEAK OF IT

Antagonist's character arc story

ME TOO

Supporting characters' character arc stories / other changes

US TOO

YOU TOO

Dramatized political or policy statement (or not)

WEAK IS STRONGER

HOW SMART YOU AREN'T

FAIR AND BALANCED

Theme – presence

REMEMBER ME FOREVER (...AND TEASE ME ON THE DEFINITION OF THEME!)

A **DEFINITION** OF THEME

WHO AM I?

Theme – universality

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Theme – intellectual challenge level

AP CREDIT

Theme – development in the story

AGAIN AND AGAIN

THERE'S ONLY YOU AND ME AND WE JUST DISAGREE

Theme – no heavy-handedness

WIPE YOUR SLEEVE

POUND NO THEME

DON'T EVEN SAY IT

DON'T EVEN DECIDE IT (= AN ALTERNATE, EVEN LIGHTER APPROACH TO THEME)

Filmic/visual nature of the story/script – settings and senses

NOT IN A COFFEE SHOP

SHORT BUT SWEET

ALWAYS THERE

REMEMBER (AND ADVERTISE) ME

Filmic/visual nature of the story/script – filmic/visual devices

WHERE? THERE!

MOOD ENHancers

SHOW IT, DON'T DIALOGUE IT

SHOW IT, DON'T DECLARE IT

I'M NOT AN EXPERT

Filmic/visual nature of the story/script – talking heads

TALK IS CHEAP

TALK COULD BE REDUNDANT

FIDGETY OR SNOOZING AUDIENCE

TALK MUST (AT LEAST) BE REVEALING

Filmic/visual nature of the story/script – filmic/visual systems

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

SEE THE MOOD OR THEME

Dialogue – conventions

DON'T DASH AROUND

DON'T EXCLAIM AROUND

DON'T CURSE AROUND

DON'T ABBREVIATE AROUND

NUMBERS GAME

Dialogue – no speeches

BEND (OR END) THE WIND

PING PONG

Dialogue – catchiness

(LIMITED) SHOT AT IMMORTALITY

Dialogue – indirectness

WALK AROUND WITH TALK

IN SUMMARY...

DIRECTING THE CREATIVE INDIRECTING

Dialogue – less is more

SNUFF THE FLUFF

DOUBLE DIALOGUE TROUBLE

THAT'S DOUBLE TOO

Dialogue – non-dialogue is better

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

YOUR FACE IS MY CASE

DANCING (AROUND A SUBJECT) WITH MYSELF

Writing style – description/action – no “ing” words

THERE'S NO “ING” IN SCREENWRITING

Writing style – description/action – no passive voice

GET ACTIVE

Writing style – description/action – no adverbs

KILL THE PROVERBIAL ADVERB

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF SCREENPLAY DEATH

SHOW IT, DON'T ADVERB IT

Writing style – description/action – conventions

THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY

DON'T MASTER THE OBVIOUS
HEAD GAMES



MORE on the **Description Overwriting** Problem



Writing style – description/action – grammar/language rules

PRONE TO GET IT WRONG

SIGN, SIGN, EVERYWHERE A SIGN

BREAKING OUT

SEVEN WORD SEARCHES TO DO AFTER YOU'RE DONE



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