

The Film Connection – Chapter Four

- 1.) Explain the problem with only "writing what you know". How will you, as the screenwriter, go about creating stories that exist outside your realm of experience?

The problem with writing only what you know is that writing directly about your own life might not be most entertaining story. The experiences in our life are limited and there might be some cultural aspects from our own lives that many people might not understand. As a screenwriter, I need to use my own unique perspective to write the types of stories only I can write, which might mean writing the types of stories I wish that existed. "Write what you know" doesn't necessarily mean write about your own life, but it means to take your own unique perspective on life and use it to create something new.

- 2.) Explain what makes a fantastical story believable.

People will believe a fantastical story if the writer shows that he/she understands people well. The people within the story, whether they're in a fantasy land or New York City, need to be relatable and possess the types of qualities that are recognizable in people. Good writers put everyday characters in fantastical situations.

- 3.) How do you move a story idea beyond simple spectacle?

The writer can succeed in moving a story past spectacle in allowing the viewers to have a connection with the characters. Visuals help a film, but a film cannot rely only on visuals. The characters have to possess human-like qualities that enables the audience to empathize with them.

To create "believable" characters, the characters need to be relatable and appear as if they could potentially exist. This will allow the audience to connect with them and become interested in the obstacles they're going through.

4.) What ingredients are necessary to create a compelling story?

One of the elements that should compel your audience is the motivation behind the characters and their actions. The characters should express a need or desire to accomplish or obtain something, whether it's a mission, two million dollars, or even a quest to stay alive.

5.) Explain the difference between the "inner" and "outer" focus of a story.

The "inner" focus relates to how the film is structured to arrive at your proposed resolution. The story should be crafted in a way that will allow your character to get somewhere, rather than just wandering. Therefore, Chuck Nolan in *Cast Away* builds a raft to leave his island. In contrast, the "outer" focus entails the plot points utilized to engage your audience. One example of these is dramatic irony, which is when the audience knows something that the characters don't know, which will ultimately reveal a fraud or a liar in the long run. In consequence, the "inner" focus emphasizes the planning of the resolution, and the "outer" focus emphasizes the reasons for the impending action.

6.) What is the biggest mistake beginning writers make? Why is it a problem?

The greatest error novice screenwriters make is writing their screenplay like a novel. But a screenplay cannot entail all the little individual details like a novel can. The plot and characters should be the focus, not the scenery. A screenplay cannot also be too verbose. It has to be to the point and easy to read over. Screenwriters do not exactly have the liberty of making the film how they envision it. The producers and executives have that job, and it's the screenwriter's job to write a compelling enough script that will convince the producers that the film has to be made.

7.) What are the structural elements of a script?

Every script should follow a 3-act structure. The first act introduces your characters and presents the plot point which causes them to take action, the second act reveals that action taking place, and the third act put an end to the action and closes the film. A script should specify location, time of day, which character enters first, which character is speaking, direction for the character, film editing instructions, page number, etc. A script is very specific and organized, but most focus is based on the characters, dialogue, and setting, not so much background details.

8.) Why is it important to predict Hollywood's upcoming trends?

A screenwriter's pitch should set new trends instead of riding on old ones. Therefore, it's advisable for a screenwriter not to write a script based on the current trends of Hollywood, otherwise the script will become amalgamated with the others. A script needs to stand out, and show the audience that the writer knows what he/she is talking about, and invite them to welcome a whole new concept.

9.) Describe what a synopsis should entail.

A synopsis should tell your entire story in just a few pages and intrigue the reader to consider your script. It shouldn't include actual dialogue or little scenes from the story. A synopsis should be very direct, to the point, and be engaging enough that the reader wants to see the entire script.

10.) What is "creative discipline? Why is it important?

Creative discipline is the ability to work on your ideas constantly and consistently. To be a screenwriter, writing should be a priority and not an afterthought. If you don't take your writing seriously, others will not take your writing seriously. Consistency will make it easier to remain creative and keep your mind active. On the other hand, inconsistency will cause

your mind to become idle and uninspired. A writer needs to remain inspired to produce quality work.