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In this issue:

[Latest News from
the PAGE Awards](#)

1

[The Writer's Perspective
How I Spent My Summer
Vacation](#)
Ned Crowley

2

[The Judge's P.O.V.
You Have to Read to
Write](#)
Andrew Durtschi

3

[What's Your Genre?
Writing the Romantic
Comedy: *Trainwreck*](#)
John Truby

4

[Spec Writing Tips
Sound Off!](#)
Dave Trottier

5

[Industry Insider
Worried Your Idea Will
Be "Borrowed?"](#)
Marvin V. Acuna

6

[Sell Your Script
Hot Leads
from InkTip](#)

7

[Recommended
Resources](#)

8

Letter from the Editor

The [2015 PAGE Awards](#) season is nearing its pinnacle, as the Finalists will be announced on **September 15**. Best of luck to all of this year's Semi-Finalists, and our sincere thanks and congratulations to everyone who had the purpose and bravery to enter the contest! You have made this a very tough race. We can't wait to see who wins this year's Awards!

The best movies often come out in the autumn, and in this issue of the **LOGLINE** eZine we've got some of our most compelling content of the year. 2014 Bronze Prize winner Ned Crowley shares his experience producing and directing his feature film. PAGE Judge Andrew Durtschi explains why reading the work of others is an indispensable aid to one's own writing. Genre guru John Truby scrutinizes the flashes and failings of Amy Schumer's *Trainwreck*.

Proper use of capitalization in a script is the topic of format whiz Dave Trottier's column. Marvin V. Acuna, our resident industry insider, discusses writers' concerns that their ideas will be "borrowed." And finally, we give you three hot new sales leads from InkTip!

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ 2012 Bronze Prize winners Frank DeJohn and David Hedges have sold an untitled action pitch in the vein of *Taken* and *Man on Fire* to the Shanghai-based financing, distribution and production company Fundamental Films, who co-produced the new *Transporter* reboot with EuropaCorp. Frank and David are represented by UTA and BenderSpink.
- ◇ The 2011 PAGE Award-winning comedy *Jobber*, by Drew Mackintosh, has been optioned by producer Mitchell Peck of Peck Entertainment. Drew is represented by PAGE Judge Joe Riley at Velocity Entertainment.
- ◇ 2006 Silver Prize winner Davah Avena is working as executive story editor on the Lifetime series *Devious Maids*. She wrote this season's episodes *Bad Girl* and *Since You Went Away*, which aired in July. Davah was previously a staff writer on the NBC series *Medium* and the Hulu series *East Los High*. She is represented by Sheree Guitar Entertainment.
- ◇ 2014 Silver Prize winner Tom Hanada been selected as one of the winners of this year's Universal Studios Emerging Writers Fellowship. The year-long paid Fellowship will give Tom and four other new writers an inside look at the inner workings of the studio, allowing them to participate in studio development and learn from some of the most experienced writers and producers in the business.
- ◇ As a result of participating in our Production Arts Group eMeetings program, writer Steve Lewis has now signed with literary manager Tony Zequeira. Steve writes: "After a whirlwind couple of days, I met with Tony and could not have imagined a better fit. Thank you so much for the eMeetings program and all you do with it! Without it, there is no way this could have happened in such a no-nonsense, joyful way. I'm already elbow-deep in the edits we talked about last night and am beyond pumped for what the future holds."

PAGE Awards Finalists Announced September 15!

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

by Ned Crowley

The wonderful folks at the PAGE Awards asked if I'd write a column about my recent experience writing and directing my first feature. The ups and downs. The lessons learned. So here goes.

2014 PAGE Bronze Prize winner Ned Crowley is the chief creative officer of mcgarrybowen Chicago and is the writer and director of *Middle Man*, now in post. He has a very understanding wife and three amazing daughters who do not resent him for spending their college fund.

First, a little background. I have been writing scripts for about 20 years, off and on. Mostly big budget, high-concept stuff. I've had some luck in contests and with industry people who read my scripts and offer advice. But they all pretty much go nowhere in what I call "Hollywood: The Land of Soft Yeses."

So I formulated a plan to do it myself. I'm in advertising and have worked on sets for 25 years. I knew so many producers and production companies through my job, I figured someone was bound to want to take a crack at producing a film on the side. How hard could it be?

I was determined to make a film that looked like \$30 million for a fraction of the cost. But a lot of my contacts couldn't see past producing the film in a big, expensive way. I ran into that wall time and time again. I finally asked a couple of freelance producers I had worked with if they knew any other producers I could contact. After reading the script, they said, "We might be interested in doing this." And just like that, years and years and years of pushing and searching all came to a head because I happened to bump into some like-minded people who had a bucket-list notion that they too wanted to produce a film.

We needed \$200,000 to shoot this thing. I put up some of my own money but could not foot the entire bill, so we put a huge effort into a Kickstarter campaign.

My film happens to star Jim O'Heir, whom you might know as Jerry from TV's *Parks and Recreation*. Jim and I had been friends for 30 years and grew up in Chicago Improv together. We both saw this film as a chance for him to show his stuff as an actor beyond the bumbling Jerry. I figured with him on board it would be easy to tap into his fan base and raise the money we needed.

All I can say is, it was much harder than I thought. As generous as everyone was, it took way more work than we ever anticipated to raise the money and fulfill all of our promises on the back end.

But we did it. We were off and running. After a lot of prep, I took a four-month leave from my job, hopped in my Jeep, said goodbye to my wife and daughters, and drove from Chicago to L.A. to attempt the impossible.

These are some of the lessons I learned in the process... If you have a good script and can get it to people, great actors will come out of the woodwork to do it. We were so fortunate to attract an amazing bunch of talented people. I work with actors in commercials all the time

who get to do 40 takes on a line. Our actors would get just one or two takes on entire scenes before we had to move on. So hold out for the best actors you can get. You will do all your best directing at the casting table. I promise.

We shot for about 17 days, give or take a few pickups here and there. Sometimes we had trailers. Sometimes the actors were changing in their cars. Sometimes we had catered food. Sometimes water and granola. I was fortunate to have nothing but great people in the cast. No divas. And I went out of my way to protect them. If you show actors you are willing to do whatever it takes to get the shot and get the best out of them, they will be there for you.

The same can be said of the crew. Be kind to every one of them because they will be there for you long after the actors drive home. There may be "better," most expensive people out there, but you want the guy who really **wants** to do it. When you're making your own film, enthusiasm counts for a lot. Especially at 3 a.m. in middle of the desert when the rain machines aren't working.

It was a tight schedule and there were huge challenges. Nights were tough. Special effects didn't work. Actors got sick. We were all tired, but through it all we tried to keep a fun set. I think the fact that we **had** to move fast helped us. In the commercial world we do about 10 setups a day. To make this film we had to do 35. It was exhilarating. You get into this weird tunnel vision zone that's hard to explain.

Now that I'm in the middle of editing, I'm cautiously optimistic. The film has turned out better than I could have hoped. My D.P. was amazing. The actors were all in top form. And as hard as the shooting process was, I never ran into any Terry Gilliam-like disasters. I'd love to say we were smart about it all, but I think we were mostly just lucky.

Some of the most important lessons I've learned? First, before you begin filming, make sure you've really honed your script. I had written *Middle Man* for Jim years ago, so I had the luxury of time and distance on it. When I pulled it out of mothballs and started to visualize actually shooting it, I could attack the script from a fresh perspective. I was tough on scenes, I let go of things I couldn't afford to shoot, and I listened to critics with a less defensive ear.

Know your limitations and surround yourself with people who will support and complement you. And be prepared for your costs to double along the way. You will always need more money. But cry poor to everyone and you will be amazed at what you will get.

Embrace the chaos and enjoy every minute of it. There is so much experience crammed into such a short time period, it's almost beyond the laws of physics. You will bond with people you'll never see again. You will watch all your shortcomings laid bare in front of so many people. And you will come out stronger.

Don't do it to get famous, get a break or get in bed with the star. Set the bar high but keep your expectations modest. Do it for the joy of doing it. After that, it's all upside.

Oh, one last lesson: When shooting in the desert, use sunscreen. Lots of sunscreen.

You Have to Read to Write

by Andrew Durtschi

First off, I want to offer my congratulations to all of the writers who submitted their work to this year's PAGE Awards competition. Completing a script is something that not all aspiring writers can achieve, so you have my sincere admiration.

Andrew Durtschi has worked in both development and production at such companies as Full-Length Feature Films, Wayfare Entertainment, Flynn Picture Company and Creative Artists Agency. One of his own feature scripts is currently in pre-production. Andrew is a graduate of Harvard College.

This was my first year serving as a judge for the PAGE Awards, and it was a pleasure to read so much fresh writing, with such an impressive spectrum of styles, themes, and narratives. Reading your scripts was a real education for me on many levels, and I want to thank you for that!

As a screenwriter myself, I can tell you that reading others' work is an essential, but often overlooked, part of becoming a better writer. Embarking upon a career in screenwriting without first reading other screenplays would be like writing a novel without having read any fiction. Maybe you understand the mechanics, you've had a classic structure described to you, and you grasp how character perspective functions, but you'd be at a huge disadvantage right from the start.

Watching a lot of films or television is not a substitute for reading scripts. While it's certainly an excellent use of your time, and working in Hollywood requires that you watch new films and television as part of your job, if you're serious about having a successful career you need to be serious about reading other writers' screenplays.

What you see on the screen is the result of many creative people coming together and collaborating, based on the foundation that has been established in the screenplay. The screenplay is the movie's skeleton, conceived and put together by a solitary writer or a team of writers. As the writer, your job is to first assemble those bones and, to belabor the metaphor, it is difficult to truly understand how the bones fit together if you only look at a fully fleshed-out body.

I'm very lucky to actually live and work here in Hollywood. One of the advantages of working in the film business is that you are exposed to a huge number of scripts. You get to see what works, what sells, what notes are commonly given, and what the rewrite process entails. You also see a tremendous number of scripts that do NOT work, which can be equally valuable.

But the good news is, you no longer need to work in Hollywood to have access to this information. In past decades, scripts of completed films or TV shows could be difficult to find if you weren't already working in the business, but this is thankfully no longer the case. Many screenplays and teleplays are now easily accessible on websites like simplyscripts.com and imsdb.com, where you can read them free of charge.

It's important to note that the scripts you find online might not be the exact spec script that sold. Instead,

they're often the final shooting draft of the film or TV episode, with formatting that includes scene numbers and camera directions. Do not be confused by that! When writing your spec, always adhere to standard spec screenplay format, as described in [The Insiders' Guide to Screenwriting](#) and [The Screenwriter's Bible](#).

But by using these websites, wherever you live, you can create your own private film school – and it won't cost you a penny! Simply download a few scripts from the genre you're writing. Start with some old favorites, then pick out a few films that you haven't gotten the chance to see yet. Read the scripts thoroughly, thinking about what you like and don't like, and jot down some notes. Then watch the films. See how the written word on the page becomes the completed work on the screen, and think critically about how that transition succeeded or failed.

Watching films with a script open, following along, is another good way to expand your understanding of pace, dialogue and plotting. Watching a film with the script as your companion will help you with the technical aspects of your craft – just like a DP can't help but watch a film for its lighting and camera movements.

And having a person to discuss this with makes the experience even more useful! I always enjoy watching films at home with my friends who are directors, production designers or film composers. There tends to be a lot of pausing and rewinding so that people can point out how the lighting doesn't match, or where the sound design seems off. It would be tedious if it weren't so interesting!

Here's another valuable way to create your own no-cost film school. Identify a few other writers who are willing to share their scripts and who are willing to evaluate yours. Exchanging screenplays and evaluating each other's work – either one-on-one or in a writers' group – will definitely help you grow as a screenwriter.

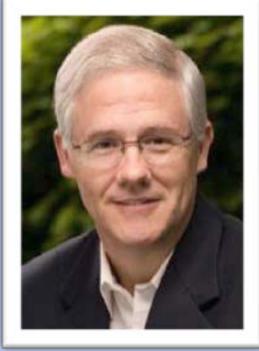
As you formulate notes for other people, it is impossible not to think of your own scripts. You may realize that problems and tics in other writers' pieces are also present in your own screenplays. Studying the strengths of other writers can inspire you to improve in those areas. Learning how to take notes and give notes is a huge part of becoming a professional writer, and practicing this skill with friends is a great way to start.

At the end of the day, screenwriting can be a solitary experience within an industry that is fundamentally collaborative. But you don't need to write in a vacuum! Sitting alone or with a writing partner, endlessly noodling away at the problems you've been having with your script, is not healthy or productive. Explore and discuss what other people have written. Find points of reference within the genre. Talk to friends and other writers.

Once again, thanks for putting so much thought and care into your work this year! Studying and critiquing so many interesting pieces has helped me learn and grow as a writer, so this process has been a "win" for me on many levels. I think you will find that reading and evaluating other writers' work will be a "win" for you as well.

Writing the Romantic Comedy: *Trainwreck*

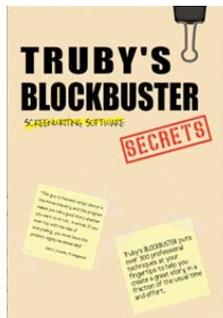
by John Truby



John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his Anatomy of Story Masterclass to more than 40,000 students worldwide. He is the author of [The Anatomy of Story](#). To learn more about Truby's classes and screenwriting software, please visit www.truby.com.

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Amy Schumer is a classic example of a comedy writer with lots of natural talent, matched with tremendous experience in standup and sketch comedy. But when you jump up to the screenplay you move into the longer story forms. That's where knowing your genres is the key to being both popular and great. Schumer does not yet have that level of craft.

In my genre classes, I say that the most important strategy for success, both commercially and critically, is to transcend the genre you're working in. That requires taking the 8-15 story beats unique to your form and twisting them in a way we've never seen. In *Trainwreck*, Schumer transcends the Romantic Comedy form in a number of original and entertaining ways. Unfortunately, though, there's no romance in her Romantic Comedy, no love in this love story. Before you can transcend the form, you have to execute the form in the first place. The easy out is to say there just isn't any chemistry between the two leads, Amy (Amy Schumer) and Aaron (Bill Hader). But chemistry first has to be written in the script. And that takes special techniques.

Let's look first at how *Trainwreck* transcends the Romantic Comedy. First, and this is a big deal, the woman drives the story. This is not going to be the typical Rom-Com about the guy who is attracted to a pretty girl and uses some deception to sleep with her, only to fall in love in the process. Second, Amy's character takes the traditional male role, wanting to sleep with as many guys as she can with no commitment. Third, *Trainwreck* tries to be much more real about relationships today by pushing sex, especially from a woman's point of view, way ahead of love.

All that is very refreshing, and worth a lot of humor you probably haven't seen before. But these techniques, which are designed to show that this film is breaking the limits of the extremely tired Romantic Comedy form, also have a high cost. *Trainwreck* never gets started as a love story. One reason for that has to do with basic story structure. The first two of seven major structure steps found in any good story are Weakness-Need and Desire. As you can see right from the title, *Trainwreck* opens with lots of Weakness-Need. Amy has a big problem with alcohol, has lots of sex with strangers and cannot accept even a touch of human emotion from a man.

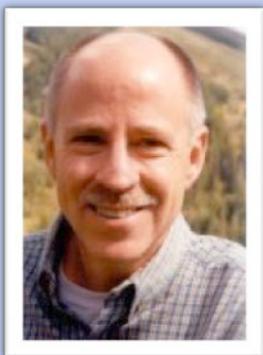
The audience's investment in a Romantic Comedy is the love between the two people. In *Trainwreck*, there is no romantic love going either way. I can guess why Amy likes Aaron. But how an intelligent, normal guy like Aaron could fall in love with Amy (the character) is beyond me. He is repelled by her alcoholism, her unsafe sexuality and her complete lack of emotion. You would think that at least he would be strongly attracted to her sense of humor. But he isn't, really. They don't banter. They don't laugh together. Her jokes are mostly for the benefit of the audience. What Amy and this movie don't have is **Desire**.

Why is there no Desire line here? That's where genre technique comes into play. The love story has the strongest Desire line of any genre. Desire is so important that many of the special beats in Love Story have to do with breaking the Desire into small but intense moments. Two of these are First Gaze – when the characters first see each other – and Meet Cute, when they actually meet, but in a serendipitous way.

Someone intent on transcending this tired genre might purposely skip these early beats. But there's a reason those two beats are always present at the beginning of a good Romantic Comedy. They are the moments that turn a "like" story into a love story. They're the spark that catches fire, and then the fire can build. And those beats are completely missing here. Maybe Schumer felt that a more realistic Romantic Comedy like *Trainwreck* couldn't get away with such contrived and predictable moments. But that means she doesn't set up the spark of romance between the lovers. That's a big loss. (For all the Romantic Comedy beats and how to write them, see the [Comedy Class](#) and the [Love Story Class](#).)

There are plenty of good things in *Trainwreck*, including a hilarious opening bit and a good finale. My guess is that Schumer really polished her screenplay skills here. It's not easy to jump from sketch to screen story. She took on the tough Romantic Comedy form and gave it a good spin. I would also guess that next time she will be much more conscious of the power of the beats that create the form she's writing.

If she can match her ability to spin and riff with an ability to tell a good story, Amy Schumer will be very dangerous.

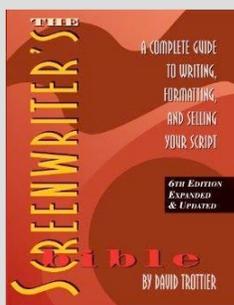


Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market.

To learn more about Dave Trottier's books, classes and mentoring services, visit: www.keepwriting.com. For \$20 off a script evaluation done by Dave, email him at dave@keepwriting.com.

Dave Trottier's

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Sound Off!

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

I understand that sounds are sometimes written in caps, but I have also seen characters (after their initial introduction), places, and actions put in all-caps. For example:

1. The door swings open and BILL saunters into the room with a handful of QUARTERS.
2. The CAR dims its lights and turns into the CONVENIENCE STORE LOT.
3. The boy STRIKES his father and FLEES on a bike.

What is your opinion on caps being used in this manner? I see it all the time, yet I've never read anything about it in formatting books or the like.

DAVE'S ANSWER:

The reason you see it a lot is because you are (likely) reading **shooting** scripts. In a shooting script, sounds, objects, and props are usually capped so that the production manager can easily break down the script (prepare a shooting schedule, make lists of props and sound effects, and so on).

Let's review each of your three examples in view of generally accepted spec writing conventions.

1. If this is not Bill's first appearance in the screenplay, his name should not appear in all caps. Also, the quarters are a prop and shouldn't be capped in a spec script. Thus, this sentence should be written as follows:

The door swings open and Bill saunters into the room with a handful of quarters.

2. The word "car" should not appear in all caps. It's a prop in the movie. The CONVENIENCE STORE LOT appears to be a new location. If so, it should be included in a scene heading (slug line), as follows:

The car dims its lights and turns.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE LOT - CONTINUOUS

The car slows to a stop.

If the convenience store lot is a secondary location that is part of the master scene location, then this sentence would be written as follows:

The car dims its lights and turns into the

CONVENIENCE STORE LOT

where it slows to a stop.

Or you could just write this:

The car dims its lights and turns into the convenience store lot, where it slows to a stop.

3. In this example, the caps emphasize action and imply sound effects. The words "strikes" and "flees" do not need be capitalized in a spec script. Although you are no longer required to cap sounds in a spec script, it is okay to cap important sounds, if you wish. So you might want to cap the word "strike." It's your choice. Here's what I would probably write:

The boy strikes his father and flees on a bike.

Hope that helps. Keep writing!



Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He recently produced the features *Chez Upshaw*, starring Kevin Pollak and Ileana Douglas, and *Lovelace*, with Amanda Seyfried, Peter Saarsgard and James Franco.

Previously, he executive produced *The Great Buck Howard* (starring John Malkovich) and *Two Days* (Paul Rudd, Donal Logue), among other films.

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Worried Your Idea Will Be "Borrowed?"

by Marvin V. Acuna

I get asked this question pretty frequently:

"How do I make sure that my story idea doesn't get stolen?"

So I thought I'd take the time to answer it today...

At some point, a great story idea has probably struck you like a bolt of lightning. I bet you've even taken some of these "lightning bolt" ideas and transformed them into entire screenplays.

Great ideas can come from interesting and sometimes random places. I know screenwriters who have been in the shower when a brilliant idea forced them to stumble sopping wet to the nearest pad of paper to scribble down some notes.

I even know a writer who was once driving on the freeway and was struck with such a great story idea that he immediately pulled over to the side of the road, just to jot it down.

Sometimes it's a news article, a magazine clipping, a children's book, even a passing conversation that inspires a great idea. And that great idea could turn into the next great feature film.

So with all that said, I certainly get it when screenwriters are wary about sharing their ideas with others.

But is this a legitimate concern?

I've had screenwriters refuse to share their ideas with **me**, a Hollywood producer and someone who could open a lot of doors for them, in fear that I would steal their ideas!

Interesting, eh?

Sure, there are horror stories of unethical executives tricking gullible screenwriters into giving up their story ideas, then turning around and passing them off as their own. So I understand why those stories make writers hesitant to reveal their best ideas.

But how do you handle this scenario, then? Who can you trust?

Here's the truth of the matter...

Great ideas are a great first step, but honestly, they're fairly common.

I'm telling you this as a Hollywood producer with 20 years in the business. Sorry if that crushes your belief that **your** idea is the greatest idea that Hollywood has never heard of.

But guess what?

What's extremely rare is a great idea executed originally. You can spout amazing ideas until the cows come home, but unless you can write a jaw-dropping script around that idea, you're just putting lipstick on a pig.

There aren't many writers who can get away with that!

So the bottom line is, I wouldn't be worried about sharing your killer ideas with others. I would be more concerned with making sure that your execution of the idea is congruent with what you promise in your logline.

Once you can do that, you become one of the rare writers in Hollywood who can turn thoughts into gold...

And that's a skill that can never be stolen.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES



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Hot Leads from InkTip.com

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER!

Please submit your work only if it seems like a **perfect fit** for these companies' needs. If you aren't sure your script meets their criteria, please check with jerrol@inktip.com before submitting it. **Do not contact the production company directly.** Thanks!

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR SCRIPT:

1. Go to <http://www.inktippro.com/leads/>
2. Enter your email address
3. Copy/paste the corresponding code

Silver Produced

[code: xfh25gruqb]

We are looking for feature-length action/thriller scripts that do not involve cookie-cutter characters like ex-cops, CIA or drug cartels. We want straight-up actioners that flip the conventions of the genre (in the vein of *Maggie*, *Extraterrestrial* or *Pound of Flesh*).

Budget won't exceed \$5 million. Both WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

Our credits include *Sink Hole*, among others.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

2C Entertainment

[code: hgn6aww34f]

We are looking for feature-length, life-affirming dramas featuring a male lead in his 40s. Material should be contemporary and preferably set in a small town or nondescript setting for which a small town could work.

Budget will not exceed \$500K. Both WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

Our credits include *Soda Springs*.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

Willowood Films

[code: ykz7s2xejz]

We are looking for female-driven, true-story scripts with a strong female lead.

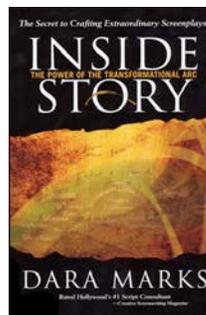
Budget TBD. Both WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

Our credits include *Tru Love*, among others.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!



INSIDE STORY

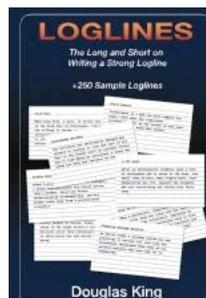


Step by step, *Inside Story: The Power of the Transformational Arc* guides you through an extraordinary new process that helps identify your thematic intention – what your story is really about – and teaches you how to turn that intention into the driving force behind all your creative choices.

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LOGLINES



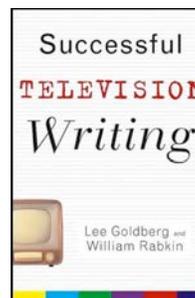
The importance of a strong logline cannot be underestimated.

In 35 to 45 words, writers must be able to distill down the very essence of their film story, including protagonist, antagonist, setting, inciting incident, conflict, and jeopardy. (Describing a logline just took 33 words.)

This quick reference guide offers step-by-step instructions to learn the art and craft of writing the all-important logline.

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