



Understanding Screenwriting: Learning from Good, Not-Quite-So-Good, and Bad Screenplays

Tom Stempel

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From the author's introduction:

This book isn't about me, it's about you. I am a teacher, not a guru. As a wise teacher once said, "With a guru it is all about the guru-his vision and the students' loyalty to him. Whereas with a teacher, it is all about the students learning." You should be reading this book because you, as screenwriters, directors, producers, development executives, critics, historians, students in those disciplines, and just plain movie fans want to learn about screenplays.

Feisty, clever, entertaining, and at times incredibly arch and cutting, Tom Stempel's *Understanding Screenwriting* delivers a practical how-to (or how-Not-to) guide to writing a screenplay. Why study a bad screenplay? For the simple fact that it will train you to look for problems in your own work and avoid them in the future.

* Why does *Rear Window*'s success owe more to John Michael Hayes's screenplay than Alfred Hitchcock's directing?

* Why is *Bull Durham*'s "I believe in the church of baseball" one of the great opening lines in the history of movies?

* Why is James Cameron's first draft screenplay for *Titanic* better than the film?

* What can we learn from *Kinsey* about writing about sex for American audiences?

* Why is *Lawrence of Arabia* one of the best examples of "writing for performance" in films, not only the performances of the actors, but also of the director, cinematographer, and composer?

Stempel guides the reader through a cross section of cinema: historical epic, adventure, science fiction, teen comedy, drama, romantic comedy, suspense-films with budgets large and small. selective in its discussions and (sometimes withering) analyses, Stempel dissects the blockbusters and the bombs, discusses why certain aspects of a screenplay work and others d

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