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## Movie screenplay books

The first book I ever read about screenwriting. Syd Field is the forefather of the how-to for screenwriting. He cracked the code of the three-act structure and paved the way for all other screenwriting gurus that would follow. As far as I know, he created the terms like “turning points,” and “pinch”, and much of the language that screenwriters use to describe elements and devices used in their scripts. (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 2) Story: by Robert McKee Immortalized by the film Adaptation, McKee delves deeply into the components necessary for making a great script. I find his principles of “controlling idea” (which closely resembles Lagos Egri’s concept of “premise” in The Art of Dramatic Writing) and “gap between expectation and result” incredibly useful. I always turn to McKee’s teachings for guidance. (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 3) Making a Good Script Great by Linda Seger Seger’s book I found as a great companion piece to Syd Field’s Screenplay. What I particularly like from this book is her method of ramping up conflict by the use of “obstacles,” “compilations,” and “reversals.” Also, check out Linda’s amazing podcast interview here: Making a Good Script Great with Linda Seger (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 5) Save the Cat by Blake Snyder You can see echoes of all the other aforementioned writers in this book. What I like about Save The Cat is that it’s a stripped-down, fun read with a lot of helpful information. I especially appreciate Snyder’s Beat Sheet which shows with almost page number accuracy where to place those particular plot moments that help keep your story moving. Some might find it formulaic, but I think it functions very well and points to exactly the kind of scripts Hollywood has come to expect from writers. One of the best screenwriting books. (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 6) The Screenwriter’s Bible by David Trottier Not only do I dig this guy’s first name, but I found his book to be more current as far as the conventions of formatting. It covers a lot of ground with how to write a screenplay and everything else that goes with being a screenwriter and Filmtrepreneur, like how to register your script and how to write a query letter to literary agents. It’s a broad overview, but one of the most informative screenwriting books. (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 9) The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri This is actually a book for the aspiring playwright, but most if not all the principles can apply to screenwriting. Egri gives examples of poorly constructed scenes and explains why they don’t work — then compares and contrasts against scenes that do. This is one of my favorite books, and one I strongly recommend. One of the best screenwriting books out there. (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) 10) The 101 Habits Of Successful Screenwriters by Karl Iglesias (FREE AUDIOBOOK VERSIONS HERE) Have you ever wondered how successful writers do it? If you’ve reached this point on my top ten, I would say, “of course you do!” There are good work regimens and not so constructive methods. This book gives us a glimpse into how the top Hollywood writers work, how they fight writer’s block, as well as deal with the daily grind of writing. I found it very insightful and definitely worthwhile. A must-read for any screenwriter. Tarantino...nuff said! These are our Top Ten Screenwriting Books You Need to Read. We hope they help you on your journey as a screenwriter. Remember just keep writing! David R. Flores is a writer and artist (aka Sic Monkie) based in Los Angeles. He is the creator of the comic book series Dead Future King published by Alterna Comics and Golden Apple Books. Website: www.davidrflores.com & www.deadfutureking.com Amy Adams in “The Woman in the Window.” Photo Courtesy: Netflix Rating: 5/10 Ever since I read A.J. Finn’s debut novel The Woman in the Window, I’ve been obsessed with its film adaptation. The 2018 book is the perfect heir to the throne of previous unputdownable psychological thrillers Gone Girl and The Girl on the Train. Finn — pen name for Daniel Mallory — worked as a book editor, studied Patricia Highsmith’s Tom Ripley novels at Oxford, and “has a history of imposture, and of duping people with false stories about disease and death,” according to a 2019 New Yorker profile on the author that only makes his work seem more intriguing. If all this hasn’t piqued your interest yet, let me tell you about The Woman in the Window’s movie version. It was adapted for the screen by Pulitzer Prize-winner and playwright Tracy Letts (August: Osage County), who also plays a small role in the movie; directed by frequent book-adaptor Joe Wright (Atonement, Pride & Prejudice, Anna Karenina); and stars six-time Oscar nominee Amy Adams, as well as Gary Oldman, Anthony Mackie, Fred Hechinger, Brian Tyree Henry, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Julianne Moore. It was supposed to be released in October of 2019 — primed for awards seasons and on the heels of the book’s success — but after test screenings that left early audiences confused, the movie underwent reshoots and the release was postponed until March 2020. Then the pandemic happened, movie theaters closed and The Woman in the Window ended up in a sort of movie limbo until it was sold to Netflix. Now, the streamer is releasing it on May 14, 2021. Adams plays Anna Fox, an agoraphobic child psychologist who never leaves her New York brownstone and has a penchant for spying on her neighbors out of pure boredom. “Curiosity is evidence of a decreased depression pattern,” her therapist, played by Letts, tells her during an in-house session. She’s taking a new medication that doesn’t go well with alcohol. Yet she has a routine consisting of drinking generous amounts of red wine, looking out of the window to snoop on her neighbors, going online to snoop some more and watching film noirs. Otto Preminger’s Laura (1944), Delmer Daves’ Dark Passage (1947) and Alfred Hitchcock’s Spellbound (1945) make brief appearances in the movie as part of Anna’s entertainment, as does Rear Window. The Hitchcock film about a photographer (James Stewart) with a broken leg who can’t leave his place and believes he’s witnessed a crime in his neighbor’s apartment was a reference for the book — the home-bound Anna is also convinced she’s witnessed something sinister in the house across the street — and is paid homage in the movie. There are some Hitchcockian shots of Anna pointing the zoom lens of her camera toward her neighbors’ place that will make you want to rewatch Rear Window. Joe Wright’s Vision for “The Woman in the Window” Amy Adams and director Joe Wright on the set of “The Woman in the Window.” Photo Courtesy: Netflix When I read The Woman in the Window, I kept imagining Anna’s three-story 19th century Harlem brownstone. I wanted to wander through it. According to the movie’s production notes, the townhouse in the film was constructed on sound stages and “designed so Wright could peel back the walls and create shots which bring the audience into the house itself.” The thing is though, while watching the movie I never had the impression it was a real house. It looks like scenery, like the movie set it actually is. The fact that for most of the movie we’re inside of Anna’s home only reinforces the theatricality of it. As do the ominous camera movements Wright uses to establish the protagonist’s precarious state of mind. The film, like the novel, plays with the idea that Anna is an unreliable narrator and none of the other characters in the story are who they first appear to be. Anna, who at some point is described by Oldman’s character as a “drunken, pill-popping cat lady,” is dressed in sleeping gowns, oversized shirt dresses, woolen leggings with thick socks and an array of other home garments that leave her in a very unguarded position every time she’s confronted by someone from the outside world. There’s a particular sequence in which almost all of the cast ends up in Anna’s living room. She’s trying to figure out whether what she believes she’s seen really happened. She’s dressed in a pink kimono not suited to receive company, while the rest are attired in suits, coats and outerwear, prepared to brave the outside public world. Amy Adams and Julianne Moore in “The Woman in the Window.” Photo Courtesy: Netflix Even though I enjoyed David Fincher’s movie version of Gone Girl, I can’t say the same about Tate Taylor’s The Girl on the Train. Other recent genre adaptations to the screen, like Sharp Objects, Big Little Lies and The Undoing, have proved that miniseries tend to be a more fitting format than films when it comes to complex psychological thriller novels. The book on which this movie is based has the space to be meticulous about Anna’s mental health but also that of other key characters. The need to abbreviate a 427-page novel into a 100-minute movie calls for the elimination of certain characters and subplots. It also reduces the treatment of the characters’ mental health, making The Woman in the Window one more title in Hollywood’s list of inaccurate or oversimplified depictions of mental illness. The slow-burn that is the book becomes a movie that at times feels rushed and in need of advancing its plot with every scene. Some reveals come too fast. In the translation from the page to the screen, some things need to be spelled out in dialogues for the audience to understand — like the fact that Anna is agoraphobic or that she’s taking a drug that can have a particular kind of side effect. If you haven’t read the book on which this movie is based, there are some twists that you won’t see coming. You’ll understand why the novel became such a sensation. If you’ve read the book, the film doesn’t provide anything new other than muted colors, dreamy cinematography by Bruno Delbonnel (Amélie) and a mostly underused cast of solid actors. Not even Adams abandoning her good looks and glamour to play the distressed Anna manages to elevate this adaptation. After waiting almost two years for the release of The Woman in the Window and finally watching it, I realized what I need now is to figure out what’s the next installment in the Gone Girl-The Girl on the Train-The Woman in the Window trail and start reading. I just hope that, when Hollywood decides the next best-seller needs to be adapted, they make a miniseries out of it instead of a movie. It just tends to work better. MORE FROM ASK.COM

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