

# Finding the lightbulb moment: creativity and inspiration in the teaching of the craft of screenwriting

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## Abstract

The writing of a screenplay requires inspiration and its development via the processes of creativity and the tools of craft. This paper explores a practical integration of creativity and craft in *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting*, a workshop intensive where university screenwriting students were encouraged to seek inspiration through a structured series of creative exercises and develop an awareness of their own creative process in the writing of the proposal for a screenplay.

This paper overviews key theories of creativity and the treatment of creativity in screenwriting craft manuals and considers the importance given to the creative process as an element of the teaching of screenwriting craft. It builds on earlier work by the author in the paper *Can Creativity Be Taught?* (McVeigh, 2014) which outlined the stages of the creative process in the teaching of screenwriting.

## Introduction

Literature on the teaching of screenwriting is scant. As Batty (2016) and Baker (2016) have acknowledged, the status of screenwriting research in the academy is recent and this body of research continues to expand. Readman (2003) has written about the teaching of screenwriting in the production context and Cordaiy has written about teaching the essential craft elements of screenwriting and overviewed the key texts and resources in the field in his series for *Screen Education* (2003; 2004; 2005). This article adds to the research of screenwriting pedagogy by proposing a way of encouraging students to reflect upon how they engage in the dual processes of creativity and craft as they write a screenplay.

In this paper, I canvass theories of creativity relevant to the initial stages of teaching screenwriting, as explored in *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting*, a two-day workshop conducted as part of the 2016 Summer Semester University Screenwriting Intensive, Script 2, an elective taken by students who may wish to focus on screenwriting during their undergraduate screen and media production degree at Griffith Film School. I outline the methods and creative exercises used to encourage students to “be creative” while working through the inspirational stages of screenwriting to establish a key element of craft, the story concept (Screen Australia, 2016). While it is acknowledged the rules of structure are also pivotal to screenwriting craft, crafting for structure was not explored within the limits of this two-day workshop.

The aims of the workshop were to outline the stages of the creative process as theorised by McVeigh (2014), building on theories of the creative process espoused by Lubart (2001) and Paris (2008), to help students ‘find the lightbulb moment’ for their Script 2 assessment and also to provide them with time to develop and reflect upon their own creative practice as a tool to use in their future screenwriting endeavours.

## What is creativity? What is craft?

To understand how students may be encouraged to harness their creativity in tandem with the deployment of their craft skills, it is useful to consider the long history of theory regarding the importance placed on the roles of inspiration, creativity and craft in the creation of art. In the workshop students were encouraged to reflect on the part creativity and craft plays in their own writing. This was contextualized by discussing the author Elizabeth Gilbert’s 2009 TED talk on creativity, “Your elusive creative genius” where she relates the dual process of creativity and craft and the idea that creativity may come from a source outside oneself, a Muse or a God:

*That’s not at all what my creative process is ... You know, even I have had work or ideas come through me from a source that I honestly cannot identify (Gilbert 2009, 11:55).*

The ancient Greeks regarded the Muses as the source of inspiration for the arts and the artist as the channel for this inspiration (Ledbetter 2003 in Wright 2005, 154). However, Aristotle in the *Poetics*, also carefully outlined the craft elements of dramatic tragedy, one of the earliest forms of dramatic writing. As McVeigh (2009) notes

*The original term “poetics” is derived from the Greek word “poiesis” or “active making” and the Poetics established the elements that a craftsman should address when writing dramatic poetry (Aristotle Poetics, Section 1, Part VIII: 7 in McVeigh 2009, 13-15).*

Like the ancient Greeks, the romantic poets acknowledged the dual processes of craft and creativity. William Coleridge wrote widely on the active and creative power of the “shaping spirit of the imagination” (Stauffer 1951, xviii). In *The Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge reflects on the imaginative and craft facets of writing and proposed “that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties”. Scholars of romantic poetry have interpreted Coleridge’s belief that while imagination and fancy were part of inspiration and writing, imagination provided the unifying power of poetry, and fancy was responsible for the organizing power: “Imagination modifies its materials because it organizes them into unity, and they have to be adapted to each other and to the total poetic effect ... Any operation not characteristic of the power to transform or to unify is attributed to Fancy” (Hardy 1951, 337).

More recently creativity has been seen as a vital part of the creative economy and key theorists in the field of psychology and the creative industries who write about creativity from the perspective of innovation, have emerged. For example, the theories of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) are based on a systems approach which incorporates ‘flow’ and proposes creativity as part of a system that recognizes the creative output as a tangible cultural, social or economic product with ‘symbolic rules and procedures’, acknowledged as making a major contribution to the system. Creativity is ‘any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 28). Richard Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class* proposes that creativity is a driving force for change in society and the creative economy: “The creative impulse – the attribute that distinguishes us, as humans, from other species – is now being let loose on an unprecedented scale” (2003, 4). However, it must be noted that while these conceptions of creativity are useful for discussions of creativity as part of the system in a creative industries approach to creativity, they do not consider creativity from the perspective of the tangible process of how to be creative.

One of the key writers who does write about creativity in the artistic domain is Betty Edwards who, in her seminal text, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979), explores the intangible process of creativity linked with left brain/right brain theories of thinking, where the left brain is deemed responsible for logical thinking and the right brain responsible for creative thinking. Edwards proposes that:

*Creativity is the ability to find new solutions to a problem or new modes of expression [...] My aim is to provide the means for releasing that potential, for gaining access at a conscious level to your inventive, intuitive, imaginative powers that may have been largely untapped by our verbal, technological culture and educational system (1979, 5).*

What is useful from the above theories of creativity from the viewpoint of a writer, as discussed with students in the workshop, is that while creativity may appear for some to be God given or derived from the Muses, there is a process that one may follow and it is different for every writer. Students found discussions regarding definitions of creativity and right brain/left brain theory a useful part of the workshop. As Student A noted, “Great to hear this stuff [sic]. It’s really encouraging to hear that my process isn’t wrong... All great stuff. Particularly the right brain left brain stuff [sic]” and Student B reflected, “[It is] Important for writers to understand how the creative process works. I like that I learnt tips and tricks to help with my creative writing” (2016).

## Screenwriting in the academy: what to teach? Creativity or craft?

In the teaching of screenwriting it must be noted that successful Hollywood screenwriting manuals written by “gurus” (Field 1979; Seger 1994; McKee 1999) designed to address the step-by-step craft aspects of screenwriting, have been influential in the development of emerging screenwriters (Batty 2016, 2). However, it must also be noted that they do not emphasize the importance of the creative process as a vital part of the practice of craft. For example, Robert McKee in his seminal book *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting* (1999) asserts that:

*There is no conspiracy to keep secret the truths of our art. In the twenty-three centuries since Aristotle wrote the Poetics, the “secrets” of story have been as public as the library down the street. Nothing in the craft of storytelling is abstruse ... I’ve written story to empower your command of the craft (1999, 5-10).*

But McKee does not set out to address the creative process, rather craft is placed in the role of saviour that frees the subconscious to “do its thing” spontaneously. McKee states: “Without craft, the best a writer can do is snatch the first idea off the top of his head, then sit helpless in front of his own work ... But when the conscious mind is put to work on the objective task of executing the craft, the spontaneous surfaces. Mastery of craft frees the unconscious” (McKee 1999, 22).

While McKee places craft as the most important element of screenwriting, other screenwriting manual authors do acknowledge the importance of creativity in the realms of inspiration, albeit minimally. Australian Linda Aronson’s acclaimed craft-focused manual *Scriptwriting Updated: New and Conventional Ways of Writing for the Screen* (2000) devotes “Part 1: Getting Ideas” (the first 35 pages of her 291-page book) to ways to utilize other screen and story models including genre, myth and behaviours, themes, ideas, life events, art, music and images to generate ideas. American screenwriting manual author Linda Seger, in *Making a Good Script Great* (1994), also devotes a chapter, “Gathering Ideas” to creativity. Seger considers many acknowledged creative strategies for generating ideas including journaling on paper or using index cards to gather and shape random ideas, since “the creative process wants to move from chaos to order, your mind will naturally begin to see the relationships of one card to another” (Seger 1994, 7).

In *Writing Great Screenplays for Film and TV*, American Dona Cooper also devotes a chapter, “Creativity: The Building Process” to creativity in screenwriting. Like Seger, Cooper sees the creative process as a means of imposing order on chaos and contends that to avoid uncertainty many writers “cling to the seeming certainty of formulas” but in doing so they lose contact with their “own personal insights and passions” which make writing more vivid and original (Cooper 1997, 27-29). The answer to this conundrum for Cooper is to see the integral nature of creativity and craft as a type of system of questions and answers where “you can focus on the craft to trigger the ‘function’ questions in your mind, then search through your creative instincts to find the answers” (Cooper 1997, 29). Cooper states:

*The reason you need craft and creativity is that each serves a different function. Like the left brain/right brain interaction of the human mind, both have a vital place in the creative process ... Therefore a great script needs the spark of creative passion and excitement that only inspiration can provide, as well as the clarity and logic that craft can ensure (Cooper 1997, 28).*

While Cooper does not provide answers as to ways of tapping into creativity and craft at the same time, beyond noting the visceral “click” that “happens when something feels right, and the nudging discomfort when something is wrong” (Cooper 1997, 30), she does offer the suggestion to the teacher of screenwriting that creativity and craft are inextricably entwined.

More recently screenwriting theorists have incorporated creative exercises as part of the teaching of the craft elements of screenwriting. Christina Kallas in her excellent book on *Screenwriting, Creative Screenwriting Understanding Emotional Structure* (2010) provides an alternative to structure-based screenwriting manuals. Her work offers a system for “creative screenwriting” based on her work as a screenwriting teacher and provides a comprehensive and insightful journey through her philosophy of screenwriting grounded in the work of theorists including Aristotle (Kallas 2010, 24-35), the German theorist, Freytag (Kallas 2010, 18-19), the Czech screenwriting teacher, Frank Daniel (Kallas, 2010, 19-21) and her own screenwriting teacher, Linda Seger (Kallas, 2010, 21). Kallas’s work also provides a rationale for the importance of improvisation and play as vital elements of the creative process of screenwriting (Kallas, 2010, 16) as well a comprehensive bible of how to teach screenwriting from beginning to end. In chapters devoted to the structural elements of the screenplay she incorporates the creative exercises she uses with her students to address specific elements of screenwriting craft.

In *Writing for the Screen Creative and Critical Approaches* (2008), Craig Batty and Zara Waldenback also provide an insightful and comprehensive guide to the development of the key craft elements of a screenplay as supported by creative exercises with for example, the chapter “Key Points and Foundational Exercises” dealing with the creation of characters, structure and narrative, dialogue and visual storytelling (2008, 89-100). In both this book and the later *The Creative Screenwriter: Exercises to Expand Your Craft* (2012), Batty and Waldenback specifically acknowledge the importance of creativity as part of the ability to generate ideas for the craft elements of screenwriting. As Waldenback and Batty assert, “no other book focuses purely on creative exercises as a way of learning the craft” (2012, 3). In chapter one, “Being Creative” Waldenback and Batty also explore the importance of being open to inspiration in the world around you as part of the regular work of the writer. They note “To be a good writer, you need to have something to write about... This exercise helps to open your eyes to what is around you and find inspiration from a larger canvas” (2010, 10).

There are also excellent books which focus on the creative generation of ideas for film projects but do not specifically tie these ideas to the craft processes of screenwriting as do the aforementioned screenwriting manuals. These include Jed Dannenberg, Carroll Hodge and Doe Mayer’s *Creative Filmmaking from the Inside Out* (2003) and Michael Rabiger’s *Developing Story Ideas: Find the Ideas You Haven’t Had Yet* (2006). The focus of *Creative Filmmaking from the Inside Out* is useful to the teaching of screenwriting as it focuses on journaling as a means of building a creative identity as well as the collaborative practices of filmmaking as they organically shape a finished work. However, Rabiger’s book is specifically about the generation of ideas for films and documentary and does not focus on these in the context of the development of a screenplay per se. While a number of the exercises used in *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* are drawn from Danneberg et al and Rabiger as outlined below, they may also be replaced by the generative ideas canvassed in Waldenback and Batty’s *The Creative Screenwriter Exercises to Expand Your Craft* (2012).

So where does this leave the screenwriting teacher who seeks ideas about how to encourage students to access their creativity while honing their craft? *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* finds a place in the above literature as an example of an intensive screenwriting workshop that offers a scenario for emerging writers to reflect on their creative process as part of the craft of writing a short fiction script.

## The creativity workshop for screenwriting: a case study

As noted above *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* was a two-day workshop. It involved fifteen students and was designed to support the first assessment item, the development of a proposal consisting of a one-liner encapsulating the story theme or premise, a synopsis, character outlines and a look-book of images indicating the style and tone of the proposed script as well as a personal statement of why it was important for the student writer to tell their proposed story. The objectives and format of the creativity workshop had been successfully trailed in the 2015 offering of Script 2 in a half-day intensive workshop by myself and the course lecturer who also had a strong commitment to encouraging students to reflect on their creative process. In this workshop I also worked with Donald Welch, a colleague from Griffith University's Queensland College of Art who had successfully developed and run a core course in creative thinking for over 15 years for students in the design degree. I worked with Donald prior to the workshop to align some of the creative thinking exercises he had used in his design class with the Script Proposal assessment item.

## Conceptualizing creativity: the creative process

A core component of the workshop was a model of the creative process I had used in earlier screenwriting classes. In *Models of the Creative Process: Past, Present and Future* creativity researcher, Todd Lubart outlines four stages of the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification, dating back to Wallas' (1926) model (Lubart, 2001 in McVeigh 2014, 295-308). In the article, *Can Creativity Be Taught?* (2014) I had built on Lubart's findings and the work of American clinical psychologist Anne Paris in *Standing at Water's Edge: Moving Past Fear, Blocks, and Pitfalls to Discover the Power of Creative Immersion* (2008) to propose a six stage creative process for writers as outlined below. (It must be noted that the above stages of the creative process are fluid and may be revisited at any stage throughout the writing of a screenplay).

### The Creative Process

- Fantasy or Envisioning
- Contemplation and Inspiration
- Preparation
- Immersion
- Crafting
- Publication (McVeigh, 2014, 60)

Former students who had used the model in screenwriting classes I had taught had reported how helpful it had been to them in their screenwriting (McVeigh 2014, 61) and in this 2016 workshop students were likewise appreciative of the chance to think about how their process worked. Student C noted "It's good that you recognize that everyone's writing style is different" (2016).

As this workshop was conducted at the beginning of a scriptwriting summer intensive course, the procedures and activities of the workshop outlined below relate specifically to the initial stages of the creative process as noted above—envisioning, contemplation and inspiration and preparation—as linked to the creation of the screenwriting craft element, the proposal, outlining the basic story concept, theme and characters and style and tone.

*The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* was also based on research into the attributes of the creative personality. In his book *Manifesto* (2002) key creativity researcher Paul E. Torrance correlates over forty years of longitudinal studies of creativity and the creative personality. In chapter seven, “Expectations and Playing Your Own Game”, Torrance outlines findings by Shekerjian (1990 in Torrance 2002, 58) based on her investigations into the attributes of forty prestigious US MacArthur Fellows (who received this fellowship as extraordinarily talented and creative individuals) which align with Torrance’s own findings based on his study of the achievement of creative adults. These recommendations for success as a creative personality are outlined below and are regarded by Torrance as the pivotal aspects of success for the creative personality:

- Don’t be afraid to risk. Even failure, which, if seen in its proper light, brings insight and opportunity.
- Find courage by looking to something stronger and better than your puny, vulnerable self.
- No lusting after quick solutions. Relax, stay loose.
- Get to know yourself, understand your needs and the specific conditions you favour.
- Then, finally break free from the seductive pull of book learning and research and the million other preparatory steps that could delay for the entire span of a life and immerse yourself in the doing (Shekerjian 1990 in Torrance 2002, 58).

Based on the above findings from Shekerjian and Torrance, the exercises conducted in *The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* were designed to create an environment where students were encouraged to feel relaxed, to take risks in exercises involving imagination, to be non-judgemental of their thoughts, to let ideas flow without self-editing, to recognise their strengths and processes, and finally to trust in themselves, their collaborators and their process and craft. To this end each session commenced with, or was interwoven with, warm-up or relaxation exercises to enable students to clear their heads of external matters and relax to focus on the task at hand. Student D found that “All these exercises were absolutely invaluable as they forced me to write and find creativity without thinking and over-thinking everything. I just had to be in the moment and it was really helpful” (2016).

Building on these practical and professional aspects of screenwriting, students were then encouraged to think about what made them unique as writers, to value themselves and their experiences, viewing passions and observations as part of their storytelling potential. A discussion of Julia Cameron’s work in *The Artist’s Way*—for example the importance of daily journaling which Cameron calls “Morning Pages”—provided a valuable resource in suggesting to students how their lives and observations were pivotal for their inspiration (1992, 9-18).

A common screenwriting adage is “write what you know”. Indeed, acclaimed Japanese screenwriter Kinto Shindo states:

*Who does a writer write about? He writes about himself... I do not know what my closest friend is thinking. I do not know anyone else’s mind, but I do know who I am (Shindo in McGrath and MacDermott 2003, 92-93).*

Students were encouraged to reflect on what they “know to be true” and also on what Rabiger calls their “artistic identity”. Artistic identity is the source of creativity that you carry within. Shaped by temperament and biographical circumstances, it is the inner force powering your search for answers to the unfinished business in your life” (Rabiger 2006, 23). Following Rabiger, students were asked to survey themselves and their authorial goals particularly in exploring how they would like to act on an audience by journaling and presenting (if they wished) around the following questions:



1. Peculiarities of my life that have made me see with special eyes are ...
2. Conflicts formative in my life are ...
3. Themes I would like to work on are ...
4. Types of characters I empathize with are ...
5. Story topics I'd like to explore are ...
6. Ways I'd like to act on my audience are ... (Rabiger 2006, 27).

## How do I know what I want to write about? Inspiration and ideas

During the workshop students were asked to continue to journal and collect ideas from life and art. Images. Music. Slogans. Snippets of conversation. Characters in the street. Mythic stories. The list was continual and endless. In a to-camera interview Student E noted: "After the workshop each evening the ideas would not stop coming. There were just so many" (2016). Creativity author William Gompertz writes of the process of the juxtaposition of random and opposite thoughts, of the creative process involving the making of new connections in the brain via a process of disruption (Gompertz 2015, 80). Gompertz cites American psychiatrist, Albert Rothenberg's work in the study of creativity in humans and his idea of "homospacial thinking" which Rothenberg describes as "actively conceiving two or more discrete identities occupying the same space, a conception leading to the articulation of new identities" (Rothenberg in Gompertz 2015, 80).

But the problem is sorting through the ideas to focus on what is inspiring for the project at hand is difficult. In the maelstrom of ideas one has to make a decision about "which" idea to develop. As avant-garde filmmaker and creativity writer, David Lynch notes in his treatise about creativity, *Catching the Big Fish*, the notion of "getting" the idea a writer wishes to develop may be termed the "lightbulb" or "eureka" moment and once the writer commits to this idea it takes the work of craft to develop this into a screenplay.

*An idea is a thought. It's a thought that holds more than you think it does when you receive it. But in that first moment there is a spark. In a comic strip, if someone gets an idea, a lightbulb goes on. It happens in an instant just as in life... It would be great if the entire film came all at once. But it comes for me, in fragments (Lynch 2007, 23).*

The work of writers and filmmakers like David Lynch was discussed as a means of showcasing one person's approach to inspiration and creativity. Quotes from Lynch's *Catching the Big Fish* provided discussion starters and activities around the idea of dreams and surrealism and Jung and archetypes and the unconscious. For example, students who wished to explore the place of dreams and meditation as part of their process were encouraged to do so. In illustration of Lynch's use of the random phrase "Dick Laurent is dead" as the inspiration for the film *Lost Highway* (Lynch 1997) the opening scene of *Lost Highway* was screened and students worked in groups taking a random sentence and generating characters and story ideas in the spirit of surrealism "based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dreams, in the disinterested play of thought" (Breton 1924).



Ideas were also generated by brainstorming, concept mapping, and Rabiger's CLOSAT ideas-generating activity where the CLOSAT items listed below are written on cards and picked at random to combine unique and unusual situations.

C = description of Characters who could be used in a story

L = interesting and visual Location

O = curious or evocative Object

S = loaded or revealing Situation

A = unusual or revealing Act

T = any Theme that intrigues you or that you see embodied in life

(Rabiger 2006, 29-38).

For the workshop, I used a version of Rabiger's CLOSAT game to show students how to generate ideas collaboratively and quickly in a safe and playful environment. I provided them with pictures of people and places from newspapers or magazines as well as random real objects I collected from the environment. Students chose their own situation, theme and either a loaded or revealing situation, or an unusual or revealing act from the CLOSAT list. Students were given a 15-minute timeframe to create a title, name and describe the characters, come up with a catalyst situation, devise a theme and write a pitch. Students invariably devised unique and interesting stories in this collaborative group situation.

## Finding the story: the dramatic centre

Given the many ideas generated by the processes of creativity, how do beginning writers know which idea is the one they want to work on? In the workshop Dona Cooper's visceral notion of the dramatic centre is proposed as being a helpful indicator. "Once of the ways I know I've found the real dramatic centre of my idea is that I feel a visceral click, a compelling mix of relief, clarity, certainty, and excitement" (Cooper 1997, 41). Cooper notes the power of the dramatic centre as pivotal for inspiration:

*Clarity on my dramatic centre also helped me understand exactly what questions I wanted the audience to be thinking about as they watched ... Once I knew the epicentre of the idea, I had both the inspiration and the clarity to make exciting and unified choices (Cooper 1997, 41).*

Following discussion of this quote from Cooper, students discussed feelings, sensations and inspirational quotes from working screenwriters as important precepts for helping them "find the lightbulb moment". For example, Steven Zaillian's (*Schindler's List*, 1993) quote: "The first thing I get hooked on is a feeling or a tone, sometimes an idea" (Zaillian in McGrath and MacDermott 2003, 40) was discussed in terms of the students' own experiences in distilling their concept. Student F noted of this and other Workshop activities:

*Using an object so close to me emotionally helped me imagine and understand better - the degree of emotional attachment my character could feel towards a treasured item of his. Automatic writing, gathering ideas and the co-ordination between the right brain/left brain are some of the extremely important tools that I was never aware of. Applying these and witnessing the creative possibilities - equally exciting (2016).*

## Conclusion

In the *Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting*, I aimed to open the doors of inspiration for students in a focused manner so that they could understand and harness their own creative process as part of the crafting of a screenplay. The workshop is still a work in progress. In the next iteration, in summer 2017, I intend to work with Donald Welch and the Script 2 course lecturer to develop student awareness of the work at the “preparation, immersion and crafting” stages of the creative process, not considered in this workshop. I aim to incorporate exercises and ideas from the screenwriting manuals that propose creative exercises as part of the screenwriting process including Kallas (2010) and Waldeback and Batty (2008, 2012) to expand students’ meta-awareness of the processes of creativity during the next steps of craft, the creation of structure, dialogue and subtext.

As for the outcomes of this iteration of the workshop, Students were asked to anonymously evaluate the course. Feedback was positive. Student G advised: “Go into it [*The Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting*] with an open mind and a notebook. I got inspired during or after classes. They tailor the workshops to most learners (visual, auditory etc.) so each individual can come out with ideas and inspiration” (2016). It was apparent that students welcomed the opportunity to reflect upon and value their own unique creative process and be aware that at times their brain may be working in left brain or right brain mode. Probably most of all they found validation in Paris’s assertion that one must recognize and give time to all aspects of the creative process including “completing tasks extraneous to the project” (2008, 148), like spring-cleaning, listening to music, taking the dog for a walk – anything but writing!

To confirm the value that students found in reflecting on their creative processes as an integral part of learning the craft of screenwriting, one screenwriting student wrote a letter to future *Creativity Workshop for Screenwriting* students as their evaluation of the workshop:

*Dear Scriptwriting Student*

*Pay attention in every moment. Come to every class and absorb everything – don’t simply listen. Leave your preconceptions of yourself at the door and open yourself to opportunities of exploration. Not only are you learning you are nurturing and nourishing your creative self. Soak it all in.*

*Love, Current Student xx (Student H, 2016)*

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To write for the unique medium of the screen, you need to be as engaged with the theory and practice of film as you are with words. Screenwriting is Filmmaking provides a wealth of insights for new and experienced writers alike on the historical, theoretical and practical essentials of screenwriting. With clear analyses drawn from a wide range of classical and contemporary films, alongside case studies and practical exercises, this book encourages the development of craft skills and a personal voice through the writing of short and feature screenplays. ...more.

Best screenwriting books #1: *Your Screenplay Sucks!* by William M. Akers. Akers is a lifetime member of the Writers' Guild of America and writer of three produced screenplays. This book is great for helping writers really get to grips with the essentials of the craft. The subtitle to the book is *100 Ways To Make It Great* and it does just that. The chapters on editing sentences are particularly helpful. Why is it one of the best screenwriting books to read this year? Its no-nonsense approach that will make you see your writing style in a whole new light.

Best screenwriting books #2. *The Coffee Break Screenwriter* by Pilar Alessandra. Pilar is the host of one of the best screenwriting podcasts out there, and now she's written one of the best screenwriting books out there. Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press, 2015; McVeigh, *Finding the Lightbulb Moment: Creativity and Inspiration in the Teaching of the Craft of Screenwriting*. In ASPERA (The Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association) 2016: *Screen Production Research: The Big Questions*. Canberra. <http://aspera.org.au/research/>. November, 2016) and staying true to the initial creative spark that inspired the work writer's work, the dramatic centre (Cooper, *Writing Great Screenplays for Film and TV*. New York: Macmillan, 1997), as a way of maintaining focus and momentum during the writing of a scree