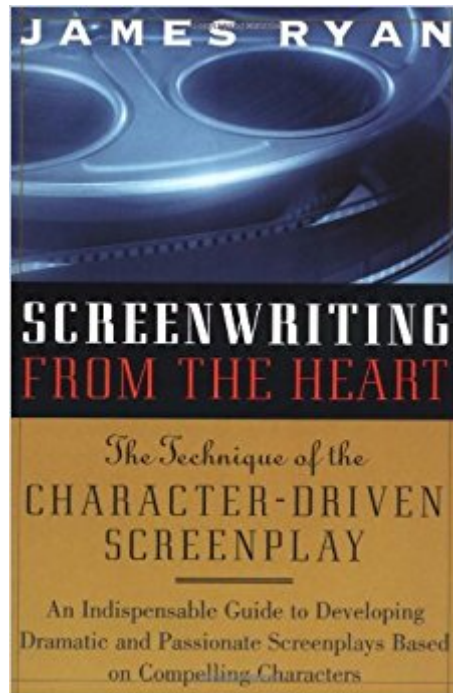


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# Screenwriting From The Heart



## Synopsis

The value of character-driven screenplays is demonstrated in this step-by-step approach to showing aspiring filmmakers and writers how a script is created through the development of compelling characters. Included is a scene-by-scene commentary on an original screenplay.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Billboard Books; Annotated edition edition (January 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0823084191

ISBN-13: 978-0823084197

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.9 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #724,954 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #218 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Reference](#) #558 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > Screenwriting](#) #1313 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Performing Arts > Film & Television](#)

## Customer Reviews

James Ryan is a screenwriter, director, playwright, and teacher. He has written screenplays for Hollywood Pictures, Warner Bros., and Spring Creek Productions. He is the writer and director of the film *the Young Girl and the Monsoon*, wrote for the *Days and Nights of Molly Dodd* on television, and his plays have been produced off-Broadway and in many theaters across the country. He is an adjunct Professor of Playwriting in the Actor's Studio MFA program at the New School for Social Research University in New York.

I came across this book at the NYPL for the Performing Arts. I have read dozens of books on writing and screenwriting in particular and can honestly say that this book would rank as one of the most refreshing and thought-provoking ones. I love how simply and clearly the idea of the need to go back and forth from conscious thinking to subconscious thinking is explained in a step-by-step way from start to finish of the process of writing a screenplay. I longed to read something about writing for TV and unfortunately this book doesn't offer that. I cannot give it less than five stars because of that as its subject is screenwriting and not TV writing. I would have loved to read Mr. Ryan take on the

process when writing a TV pilot. Surely some of the advice here can be implemented while other is irrelevant.

This is a great book, unfortunate title, but great book. It's subtitle regarding compelling characters is on the nose - which in this case is a good thing. This is probably not the first screenwriting book you should read, but definitely one you should read before you try to fill that empty page. Realize that screenplays are highly formatted, and the writer can't stray too far from that structure and expect to have his work read. But, if you have read Ackerman, Field, Hicks, Hunter, Kitchen, Walker, and/or Russin & Downs there is STILL MUCH TOO LEARN in the pages of this book! For a different way of developing your story within that strict screenplay format (maybe THE way for your style of writing or conceptualizing a story) I highly recommend "Screenwriting from the Heart". My only complaint is that it seems Ryan hasn't written any other books since.

James Ryan's idea of writing from the heart reinforces confidence in the hearts of novice writers. As opposed to most of the other approaches which scare the novice showing that the writing process is an alien mechanism which has to be learnt from the seasoned Gurus or some institutions, rather than by intuition. Ryan demystifies the myth behind the writing process as, "there is nothing very abstract or academic about writing; it is an art form, yes, but first and foremost it is a craft." (pp. 5) While reading the first half of the book, this starting assurance has helped me to proceed further with enthusiasm. But, somewhere along the line, I found a question which was bothering me. That is, "How do you judge your own work whether you have achieved a genuine product of your heart or synthetic product of overflowing intellect, based on this approach?" I didn't find the answer to this question yet, but, this question is not meant as a complaint. James Ryan explains how the intangible creative flow from the heart can be triggered consciously by choosing an object. This exercise sounded very interesting and promising. Over all, this is a very useful book for both beginning writers and experienced writers. One small comment I can't resist sharing with the co-readers and the author: On the one hand, Ryan advocates the ORIGINALITY that a writer can discover from his/her work, and on the other hand he tells us how there are already existing/fixed styles and types of films. This comes as a slight contradiction in the book: if every writer starts respecting his/her own originality, he/she can't stop it at the content only..it could eventually extend to inventing a new style or type!! wrap up again summing up that this is a great book which gives a deep insight into the complex writing process without scaring the novice writer.. and to an experienced writer, it serves as a tool to re-examine if he/she is on the right track. This book shows

us how we can control the final product, the screenplay by working on the central controlling element, the heart, just like how we can affect the external beauty of a plant by just feeding its roots. 'the heart.'

At last, a book that makes sense and really gives you incredibly insights into the craft of screenwriting! Written by someone who is a professional screenwriter that teaches rather than a professional teacher. He's a professional playwright, screenwriter, and film director. Ryan's "field" knowledge of how to write a film bleeds through every page in this book. I read many of the books on screenwriting, Syd Fields, Linda Seger, "Alternative Scriptwriting"(couldn't understand a page of it), McKee's book (totally incomprehensible), only Lew Hunter's book has the clarity of Ryan's book, but Lew seems to be old Hollywood, and Ryan is new Indiewood. He shows you how to make films like American Beauty, Magnolia, Topsy Turvy, Fargo, Shine, Rushmore, etc., -- ones that win Academy Awards. Films that break the "rules" of the Hollywood formula -- the three act structure -- taught by everyone, it seems. He shows you that a film can be one, two, three, or ten acts, if you like. It all depends on your purpose and what you are trying to express. Ryan recommends you start with your characters first. Create them, and then let them lead you to a story and a structure. When you write a script this way, you come up with more original, specific, and complex material -- scripts that will last the test of time (god, no book ever talks about that). He shows you how to free up your unconscious imagination in order to create great characters and stories -- ones that have a fresh perspective, that, as he says, "gets past the obvious choice." He gives really clever ways to create magnetic characters and to create a really good scene. And his advice on how to get your script noticed, how to use process, was completely honest and, again, so, so, clear. I plan on visiting New York soon just to take his private workshop. I give this book a ten out of ten!

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