

Lecture 8

How to write a story

How to write a story

- Story ideas derive from any personal experience, relationship, observation, music, films or articles that are intriguing.
- Story idea must be capable of standing on its own as the spine of the story.
- Story idea needs a **hook**.

The treatment and step outline

- Story must be written in a form called **the treatment** (narrative version) or **the step outline** (detailed outline of proposed action sequences for the script).
- Purpose → to work out story problems and to get feedback from people to straighten plot and character development.
- It contains → a beginning, middle and end, character conflicts, act builds, strong twists, comedy moments, high point of crisis and the story's resolution.

- In TV drama → treatments are about 7-10 pages in length.
- → gives accurate picture of setup, characters, conflicts, universe of the story, tone of the show, act breaks, and plenty of laughs if doing comedies.

Plot or storyline

- Plot is the sequence of actions that traces out progression of events.
- The constructed sequence shows us something about the way life works.
- Choices and actions in life are usually less dramatic but the choices of yesterday lead us to where we are today.

Comedy and its device

- Running gags
 - Depends on repetition.
 - The premise of the gag is known to the audience so that new exploitation of the gag gets a rise from the previous one.
 - You keep going back to the same premise to work it from another angle.

- Visual gags
 - It helps comedy in a visual medium.
 - If every joke is spoken, every piece of humour is verbal, the visual potential of the medium is wasted.

- Double takes

- The character takes an extra long time to react to put down or before delivering a reply. It needs the right line or situation with an indication in the script.

- One-liner or lines
- Characters say lines that stand alone and get a laugh track because they are snide, funny, sarcastic, self-evident comments about another character or situation.

Sitcoms

- Laugh lines and one line are typical of sitcom writing.
- The lines rarely depend on the plot or advance the plot.
- They are opportunities that are almost stand alone or added on to the situation.

Spec scripts

- You can invent the premise of the series or sitcom.
- This is also one of the ways to demonstrate writing ability to producers and series editors for newcomer scriptwriters.

Conclusion

- TV is a big marketplace for writers. There is a demand for writers and an opportunity for writers to write established series or comedies.
- Almost all writing in the entertainment industry is freelance work, but TV series hire staff writers.
- There is demand for new writing material that we can never satisfy.