

Schools of Screenwriting

Speaking of different screenwriting schools does not necessarily mean schools as places or buildings but rather as style preferences. Nowadays, each country has its own screenwriting schools to satisfy the need of a home-produced film industry. As follows, it is a hopeless task to compare all of these; there are just too many. However, one can crystallize axes of screenplay traits that are more or less prominent in each particular school.

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The first axe can be found with regard to the audience orientation. Some writers prefer to write for the audience that is also targeted by the film. Others use a more technical style to communicate with the film crew in first place. Whereas the formers are more 'readable' and therefore sellable to others than the film industry, the second is full of terms that are foreign to the average person.

Another axe is the distinction of experience and action. Experience orientated writers allow themselves to include more inner dialogues, dreams, or flashbacks, whereas action oriented authors tend to create a storyline that can get along without such items, since action as well codifies the characters. These do not have to think aloud but get their voice from the actions.

Close to this axe, one can separate sentimentalists from non-sentimentalists. The first include descriptions like 'she walked away sadly', using words that refer to states of mind. Conversely, the non-sentimentalist tries everything to avoid such references. He loses himself in face and posture descriptions instead of relying on the crew's capacity to know what is meant by a 'sad' expression.

The forth axe centres around naturalism and narration. While the naturalist focuses on the detailed description of each scene, the narrator writes about the course of action and does not care too much about details.

Writers from the heart are separated from commercial writers on the fifth axe. Some schools actually make their students believe that writing can only come from the heart and that one has to follow that way to write an authentic script with 'cathartic' effect. Others introduce their students into market requirements in first place and present writing as a question of demand and offer.

And, finally, the sixth axe consists in writers who write 'prose', using full sentences, on the one hand. On the other one finds writers who stick to a fragmental style like 'any questions?', letting out essential parts of a proper sentence.

In order to get to know what is good for oneself, one can categorize himself and also the considered schools into each of these axes. A glance on the teaching agenda suffices to find out about most points. This way, future desperation can be avoided.