

ADAPTING STORIES

This class is intended for those of you who have already written a play or a book or a short story and wish to adapt it to screen. I will also cover how you take a screenplay and adapt it to the stage.

In order to adapt stories into screenplays you must understand how to first write a screenplay. If you don't, I invite you to take my free screenwriting class online - josefinalopez.biz - Latino Screenwriting Academy... I taught a 5 Days course and there are many handouts that are downloadable that are samples for you to read and understand how to write a screenplay.

Hollywood likes to take books & successful plays and make them into movies because they already have a following and it is considered a good "Brand." The followers will do the job of promoting it to their friends before it comes out. The larger the following the greater commercial success they hope.

If you have a successful play or book it is considered a "brand" - the more successful the better the brand.

FIND THE THEME OF YOUR STORY- IT'S WHAT PEOPLE GET AS A MESSAGE WHEN THE PLAY/FILM/BOOK IS OVER

You must ask yourself if the message of the story is powerful and universal enough for it to be able to work in many platforms. Platforms are the different mediums and the way they can be exploited commercially. If the theme is not inspiring or powerful, improve upon it.

Choose the best protagonist for your story. - Sometimes it's not the one in the play or the book, but a smaller character with a bigger arc and more at stake.

CHARACTER ARCS

SMALL ARCS - is when someone makes a realization that they need to change or change their POV. Example: an alcoholic realizes they have to stop drinking, a racist changes their POV about people of color., etc.

LONGER ARCS - a young boy witnesses his drunk father beating his mother and he tries to stop him, but he gets beaten. He no longer feels like he could be a real man. He grows up feeling awful about himself and can't keep his relationship and gets close to beating his girlfriend. He realizes he needs to change and goes to AA and gets a sponsor and has to make amends. He has to forgive his father and mother and realize he is the one who said he "wasn't man enough" and must forgive himself and in doing that he realizes that he can ask for help without feeling ashamed. By this action he is

able to stop drinking forever and he gets his 1 year chip. After he gets sober he has the courage to go find his girlfriend, make amends and win her back.

A boy witnesses his father lynching a black man and must keep his father's secret. As an adult he participates in KKK rallies and is under his father's thumb. One of their rallies gets prohibited because the African American community blocks it. He goes to the ACLU and he gets assigned an African-American lawyer to fight for their right to march. He befriends the African-American lawyer in the process of fighting for their first amendment right. Through the legal process he confides in the lawyer and confesses to what he saw as a boy. The African-American man confesses to him that he became Lawyer because his father was lynched and it turns out that was his father. He must ask whether he will testify against his father, which does and they put his father away for life. The KKK turns on him and threatens his life so he decided to leave a start a new life in another city like Atlanta.

ADAPTING STORIES INTO FILM & THEATER

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DETAIL: Make sure what ever you adapt you own the right to it. If not, make sure you acquire the rights to do it or have the legal right to do it. Don't ever attempt to do it without having the rights. Don't even try it thinking you'll get the rights later. Don't waste your time if you don't have the rights.

Understand the different mediums and their limitations. Read and Watch enough plays and see enough films to get familiar with the mediums.

Plays are limited by location - usually told in two acts (but can be told in three with two intermissions). We tell a story in a play.

Screenplays are limited by showing internal emotions in a physical way without relying on dialogue and are usually three acts. We show a story in a film. Movies have to build and climax and the journey tends to make the characters have larger character arcs. The limitations of making films is that you have to be aware how much a screenplay costs, who can star in it, and who could possibly produce the film. You have to take these into consideration much more than with a play.

ADAPTING A PLAY INTO A SCREENPLAY

Take as much of the dialogue and eliminate it. Plays are spoken, screenplays are seen.

Whatever can be communicated with images should not be spoken in dialogue - Only keep the best dialogue, but try to eliminate anything that is not necessary: stuff about the environment, stuff about other characters - any expositions that is normally said to set up a scene, etc.

OPEN IT UP BY ADDING LOCATIONS AND MORE CHARACTERS AND POSSIBLY MORE PLOTS

Plays usually have one major plot and possibly a secondary plot. A play can meander or be about an experience and characters and not a lot can happen - except maybe emotionally.

Movies have to MOVE!! Screenplays tend to have the main plot which is the plot that drives the story and then a plot that shows the character growth and then a plot that carries the theme. So that's like 3 to 4 plots. Screenplays are plotted out first before they are written.

AVOID MONOLOGUES - or if you absolutely need to have your character go on and on have compelling reason and a character who needs to hear or is a confidant.

ADD CHARACTERS THAT ARE NECESSARY TO MAKE STORY BELIEVABLE that are found in this world. If it's a play with only women - you must add men if you open it to the real world - and vice versa.

ADAPTING A SCREENPLAY INTO A PLAY

SIMPLIFY LOCATIONS - ONLY INCLUDE LOCATIONS THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL - 2 to 3 - or you need a movie screen to project locations, but it can't be too many - it will bother audience and theater purists

WHAT CAN'T BE SHOWN MUST BE SPOKEN AS EXPOSITION USED AS AMMUNITION

ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY CHARACTERS that do not move main plot forward.

QUICK TIME CHANGES - need to be cut

CUT EXCESS PLOTS THAT DON'T FOCUS ON MAIN CHARACTER

ADAPTING A PLAY INTO A TV SERIES

You have to think of how the story could run for 4 seasons to make it worth it for a network to do it.

You need to create an ensemble of characters who have conflicts with each other and arcs that can really expand and stretch for many seasons.

CHARACTER ARCS are the most important.

Love Triangles - triangles of conflict.

You need a very strong hook that can carry you for a season that can have a cliff hanger.

You have to create the world of the story and really develop it and know what are the forces that create tension and conflict with the characters and their goals.

ADAPTING A BOOK INTO FILM

Novels are 80,000 words generally - so you have to reduce it to 20,000, so you have to choose the story plot that moves to an external climax.

Choose the protagonist who has the greatest need and desire and stakes and is willing to take action about it.

Choose which is the plot that has the most action. Eliminate all thinking and internal emotions.

Avoid all excessive flowery language and adjectives and over describing characters or environments or situations.