



Character and Conflict: The Cornerstones of Screenwriting

By Mark Axelrod

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Character without conflict makes Jack Nicholson a dull boy. These two screenwriting essentials are inextricably linked, and in *Character & Conflict*, Mark Axelrod reveals how to integrate them in a new and refreshing way.

Starting with general principles, *Character & Conflict* takes you step by step through every aspect of generating compelling characters and gripping conflicts. Alluding to the work of Joseph Campbell and others, Axelrod offers extensive insight into:

- how a character's arc must progress
- how conflict shapes and is shaped by character
- how archetypes facilitate character creation and growth
- how rites of passage and other plot devices help conflict arise.

Unlike in other screenwriting texts, whose authors tend to offer brief examples to support their assertions, Axelrod bores deeply into the scripts of such feature films as *Amelie*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Driven*, revealing how to craft—and how not to craft—rounded characters as well as the crises that bring them together or set them at odds.

With exercises that sharpen the skills of both beginning and advanced writers, examples that pull back the curtains on the writing process, plus Axelrod's theories and experience-honed advice, reading *Character & Conflict* is like taking an advanced seminar in screenwriting, without ever having to leave your writing desk.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Mark Axelrod is Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Chapman University in Orange, California. He is also a practicing screenwriter whose work has been honored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Sundance Institute, and the Writers Guild, East. He has both conducted screenwriting workshops and taught screenwriting throughout the U.S., Europe, and Latin America. He is the author of two other books with Heinemann on screenwriting, *Character and Conflict* (2004) and *Aspects of the Screenplay* (2001).

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