

The official
teacher & parent guide
to the

Pens To Lens

Student Screenwriting Competition

Hosted by the Champaign Urbana Film Society

Pens To Lens Welcomes Teachers and Parents

Thank you for participating in the Pens to Lens Screenwriting Competition hosted by the Champaign-Urbana Film Society (CUFS). This competition is open to all students in Champaign County, and we encourage you to share this opportunity with your colleagues.

Pens to Lens is more than just a writing competition. After the screenplay submission deadline, the submissions will be reviewed by writing judges, designers, and filmmakers. The writing judges will choose awards, the designers will make movie posters and character sketches based on chosen screenplays, and the filmmakers will choose screenplays to produce into actual short films. The awards, final produced films, and design art will be presented at a screening gala in May 2013, along with some other surprises related to student submissions that the CUFS has arranged.

If you are interested in having your class participate, we are making the following materials available to you for building a curriculum or ensuring eligibility for your students.

1. The submission guidelines for students participating in the competition.
2. A concise curriculum guide for teaching screenwriting.
3. A series of worksheets which you may find valuable to students in grades 6-12:
 - a. **Worksheet A** - This is a simple guide that will help all students start thinking about how to write a screenplay.
 - b. **Worksheet B** - This guide explains the strict rules of script formatting, and will ensure that your students' submissions are eligible to be chosen by filmmakers.
 - c. **Understand a Screenplay** - This first recommended exercise guides students through analyzing a short film and how the screenwriter might have intended it.
 - d. **Format the Script** - This second recommended exercise gives students the opportunity to write an excerpt of properly formatted script.
 - e. **Write an Adaptation** - This third recommended exercise explains the option available to students of writing an adaptation of previously written work (if it is based upon the student's own original work).
 - f. A sample script - This is an excerpt from the Oscar-winning "Toy Story" film, widely used in teaching screenwriting.
4. A series of worksheets which you may find valuable to students in grades K-5:
 - a. **Worksheet A** - This is a simple guide that will help all students start thinking about how to write a screenplay.
 - b. **Understand a Screenplay** - This first recommended exercise guides students through analyzing a short film. (Note that this is different from the worksheet with the same title for older students.)
 - c. **Thinking Visually** - This second recommended exercise guides students through thinking visually about a film they have seen.
 - d. **Plan Your Story** - This third recommended exercise guides students through

planning out their short story idea through drawings.

- e. A blank storyboard page that students can use to draw out ideas or storyboards to include in their submissions.
- f. A sample K-5 submission - This is a modification of a piece of the script for the Disney/Pixar film "Toy Story". It explains what CUFS expects from K-5 student scripts. Pens to Lens has simplified the format requirements for K-5 submissions; however, they can follow the same formatting as the older students if they choose.

Please be advised that student submissions will be judged based on their grade level, and while strict adherence to script format is imperative for high school students, and important for junior high students, K-5 students will be evaluated generously. Consult the materials provided on this website aimed at your students' age level to understand age-specific expectations, and email info@PensToLens.com with questions.

Pens to Lens Submission Guidelines

Entry

Any K-12 student in any Champaign County school district, private school, or home school is invited to submit one screenplay of his or her own making. Students may also elect to write a single screenplay as a group. Students in Grades K-5 are welcome to submit a storyboard to supplement their screenplay. After the submission deadline, community artists will choose screenplays to produce. Their finished films and other student awards will be presented at a theatrical event at the Art Theater in Champaign.

Format

The screenplay should be 1-5 numbered pages in standard script-writing format. An in-depth look at the screenwriting process, along with a suggested curriculum guide for teachers and storyboard worksheets, can be found at the Pens to Lens website at PensToLens.com. Stories containing inappropriate content will not be considered; adhere to your school's code of conduct.

The cover page(s) of the screenplay or storyboard **MUST** contain the following information. The Pens to Lens board reserves the right to exclude any stories that do not comply with these requirements.

- (1) writer's name
- (2) title of submission
- (3) grade level
- (4) teacher's name
- (5) school name (or "home school")
- (6) an email address to reach the teacher or student
- (7) a phone number to reach the teacher or student
- (8) genre of the screenplay
- (9) a list of character names and 2-3 word descriptions for each of them
- (10) a one-sentence summary of the story

Screenplay submissions should be emailed as attachments to submissions@PensToLens.com. The text of the email should include the same information as the title page(s) as listed above.

Judging Criteria

Entries will be chosen from each of three age categories: grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Entries will be judged based on two sets of criteria:

- (1) Community filmmakers and artists will choose screenplays and storyboards that they would like to bring to life. The chosen screenplays will understand the practical limitations of filmmaking.
- (2) Awards will be given based on writing ability and originality of the screenplay.

All entries must be original and the sole work of the author(s). Submissions that re-use characters or stories that the student has seen before will not be considered. Students give filmmakers and Pens To Lens the right to produce their script. Filmmakers will not own student scripts, nor will they make money from the project. Assistance from teachers and parents is expected, but the student is responsible for the ideas in the story and the way those ideas are expressed. We encourage proofreading of the stories prior to submission.

Deadline

All stories must be received electronically by 11:59 PM of February 28, 2013. Please email submissions to: submissions@PensToLens.com. If you have concerns with submissions, ask your teacher for help or contact info@PensToLens.com.

Recognition

A community event will be held at the Art Theater in May 2013. The event will feature the films made from student screenplays, as well as awards for outstanding writers, and other special surprises (for example, a community theater group might act out an unproduced screenplay live at the event). Watch the Pens to Lens website for details.

Pens To Lens Curriculum Guide

This curriculum guide should help you explain the basics of screenwriting to your students. Online resources are listed at the bottom of this section.

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the difference between writing a screenplay and writing a story
- Students will understand that film is a visual medium, and screenplays should reflect that
- Students will understand that there is an industry-standard screenwriting format and attempt to create a script that follows as closely as possible.
- Students will understand the difference between a short film and feature-length film

What is a screenplay?

A screenplay is the written template that describes how to make films or television shows. Screenplays describe only what is seen in a finished movie. This includes primarily what the characters say (***dialogue***), as well as short descriptions of who the characters are, what the characters are doing (***action***), and where the characters are (***setting***).

How is a screenplay different from a book or short story?

Books and short stories have narration that tells the reader what is happening, or what a character is thinking, often told through poetic description. In movies, the poetry is in the visuals and dialogue. The viewer is rarely TOLD that a character is taking an action; rather the action is performed on-screen. Similarly, characters do not announce their feelings; rather, an actor interprets the dialogue written by the screenwriter to convey the emotion.

Screenplays focus on the dialogue and matter-of-fact description. As action happens, it is written in present tense. See “How do you format a screenplay?”

How is a screenplay different from a play?

Screenplay structure is comparable to stage play structure and can be taught similarly. The main difference is that films can use real locations and cameras see things differently than a stage play’s audience. Cameras can see expansive landscapes and subtle facial expressions, and screenwriters must constantly aware of where the camera can go to bring the strongest impact to the viewer.

How is a short film screenplay different from a feature length film screenplay?

Short films are recognized for their ability to quickly and powerfully convey a single idea. While feature films create complex worlds through the use of sub-plots and large casts of characters, short films focus on a single narrative and only a small cast of characters. Sometimes a short film will only have one character struggling with the world around them.

Because a short film (at around ten minutes) has less material than a feature (at around 2 hours), it’s generally more focused. Short film audiences expect every part of the short film screenplay to serve the point of the film. Dialogue in a short film is extremely refined so that

unnecessary words don't confuse the main point. In fact, frequently there is little to no dialogue at all. Some of the best short films convey all of their story visually and with sound effects.

There is a rhythm to the storytelling in a short film that you can recognize after watching a few. See *online resource 1* and *online resource 2* to find some examples.

How do you approach writing a screenplay?

The first step in writing a screenplay, like writing any story, is to think about what your screenplay will be about. All of the same principles of storywriting apply; plan out protagonists/antagonists, conflict, description, time and location, etc. Think about who your characters are, what the plot might be (what is the conflict and what is causing it), what actions your characters will make, and how your characters speak. There are four major building blocks to a script: Character, Location, Action, and Dialogue. (See **Worksheet A**.)

Many screenwriters like to start with an outline of the story, or use notecards to organize their thoughts on the story. Some even write out "treatments," which are like prose versions of the story they want to tell. Like any story, it is important to map out the plot and characters ahead of time.

To assemble these story elements into an actual story, screenwriters build a three-act structure. In the first act, the story introduces characters and setting. The second act, usually the longest, establishes and grows the conflict, and the third act has the climax and the conflict resolution. After arranging all the pieces, screenwriters can flesh out the screenplay in proper form.

Online resource 3 is a useful guide to teaching the approach to writing plays, which is very similar to the approach to writing screenplays.

How do you format a screenplay?

Worksheet B has formatting rules. For Pens To Lens, we have simplified the Hollywood-standard format to include the basics. Notably, we have omitted information on how to write transitions, shot directions, titles, and sound effects. Some of these omissions are described in *online resource 4*. Disney/Pixar's "Toy Story" screenplay is a fantastic example of good form, and can be found at *online resource 5*. A small excerpt from "Toy Story" is also provided in the contest documentation as a "sample script".

In standard formatting, each page of a screenplay translates to about 1 minute of screen time. This is why the submission length for Pens To Lens is 1-5 pages. Allowing for some embellishment by the filmmakers, student screenplays should translate into films that are less than 10 minutes.

Looking at a sample script is perhaps the easiest way of understanding how scripts are set up. Generally, action, location, and character description statements are on the left, and dialogue is in the middle of the script. Dialogue is always preceded by the speaking character's name on the line above, in all caps.

All screenplays have cover pages as well. Although they typically include few details, like the title, author's name, and contact information, for this competition, we ask that you consult the Submission Guidelines for what we expect on the cover page.

Online resource 6 is a piece of software students may use and teachers may choose to use as a teaching aid. Celtx is free, it automatically formats scripts, and it provides free download of sample scripts. Because it formats scripts automatically, the screenwriter is free to focus on creative writing instead of technical details. Pens to Lens is happy to accept Celtx-formatted submissions.

Extra advice in writing screenplays:

- Write a cover page. The title belongs there, not on the first page of the script.
- Proofread your script. Making your hand into a “fish” will look very different from a “fist” on screen.
- Get someone else to proofread your script. We always miss our own mistakes.

What practical limitations should students consider if they hope to get their screenplay produced by local filmmakers?

The Champaign Movie Makers (CMM) community is large and has a lot of different talents and tools. CMM members have created, to name a few things, a 9-foot-tall robot puppet, a stop-motion spider, a full-scale unicorn body, a time-traveling portal, an 8-car wreck, a volcano, and a 100-person musical number.

However, in order to create many student screenplays, CMM can't throw all of these resources into every screenplay. Thanks to modern technology, there is very little that we cannot do. The limitations are on how much we can do, and how well. Common limitations include:

- Crowd scenes. It is difficult to gather upwards of 15 people at a time, especially if the crowd is supposed to look like something precise.
- Animation/computer effects. CMM has several animators, but animations can take a lot of time to make well, especially for a whole creature or character.
- Children and animals. Young kids and animals are hard to keep focused, especially during a potentially long day of filming. There are also sometimes legal concerns with filming children.
- Exotic locations. While it is possible to make a film set in the rolling hills of Scotland or on the runway of an airport with green screens and digital backgrounds, this is time-consuming and limiting to what the camera can look at. It is always easier to film in a real location.

Students should always consider what the filmmakers will need to do to make a scene a reality.

Don't consider these limitations to be absolute - part of the fun of filmmaking is problem-solving, making the impossible real. But a screenplay with only a couple of limitations is more likely to get chosen than one with all of them.

Suggested activities for Grades 6-12:

(Note: You may suggest your students use extra paper to answer the questions on the provided worksheets.)

- Watch a short film and analyze it. See **Worksheet C**.
- Write a page of script in the right format. See **Worksheet D**.
- Adapt a screenplay from a short story or something the student has written. See **Worksheet E**.

Suggested activities for Grades K-5:

- Watch a short film and analyze it. See **Exercise 1**.
- Storyboard an existing short film. See **Exercise 2**.
- Storyboard the student's own story. See **Exercise 3**.

Online Resources:

Disclaimer: These external sites are not guaranteed to have kid-friendly advertisements. However, we do consider the website content valuable.

- 1 - <http://www.shortoftheweek.com/>
Online collection of short films. Be sure to pre-screen any short film for appropriateness for your students.
- 2 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pixar_Short_Films_Collection_Volume_1
Pixar short films DVD, available at many online retailers.
- 3 - http://www.ehow.com/how_4442787_teach-children-write-script.html
A teaching guide to approaching play writing.
- 4 - <http://www.screenwriting.info>
Instructions on screenwriting format.
- 5 - <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Toy-Story.html>
Full-length "Toy Story" screenplay.
- 6 - <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>
Celtx is a free piece of software that automatically formats scripts, provides free download of sample scripts, provides a community of amateur screenwriters, allows online collaboration on scripts, and their website includes many resources and how-to videos on screenwriting.
- 7 - <http://ywp.scriptfrenzy.org/educators>
Script Frenzy is another screenwriting competition for students of different ages. Their teaching materials are much more thorough than ours. If you would like to teach an in-depth unit, consider using their materials.



Materials for
Grades 6-12

WORKSHEET A:

Building Blocks of a Script

This worksheet will guide you through the steps of starting to think about a story in a visual way. Each of the steps below are things professional screenwriters have to consider in their work.

(1) Start with a story.

Example:

Jim and Sally are talking to each other on the hill. Jim said something Sally didn't like. Sally ran away.

In film terms, this would be describing the **plot**.

(2) Analyze the parts of the story:

All visual stories have Characters, Setting, Dialogue, and Action.

Characters and locations are described at the beginning of the scene. Dialogue and Actions are presented in the order they happen. Reassemble the story thinking in these pieces.

a. Characters

Who will be in the movie? What do they look like? How old are they? Are they happy, sad, mean, or something else? How do they know the other characters?

Example of Characters:

Jim is a 9 year old boy who loves school, he is happy and has dark hair.
Sally is a 9 year old girl and Jim's best friend. She does not like spiders.

b. Setting

Where does the story take place? If it happens in multiple places, make sure to let the reader know about the other places. What time of day is it?

Example of Setting:

Jim and Sally are on a large green hill. It is morning. There are flowers and trees.

c. Dialogue

What do the characters say? Who do they say it to?

Example of Dialogue:

Jim: (to Sally)

I have a present for you.

Sally:

What is your present?

Jim:

It is a big spider.

d. Action

What do the characters do? Are there any props?

Example of Action:

Jim hands Sally a big spider.

Sally screams and runs down the hill.

(3) Assemble your script:

EXT. HILL - MORNING

Jim is a 9 year old boy who loves school, he is happy and has dark hair. He is sitting with Sally. Sally is a 9 year old girl and Jim's best friend. She does not like spiders. Jim and Sally are on a large green hill. It is morning. There are flowers and trees.

JIM (to SALLY)

I have a present for you.

SALLY

What is your present?

JIM

It is a big spider

Jim hands Sally a big spider.

Sally screams and runs down the hill.

THE END

WORKSHEET B: Formatting a Script

There are four important written elements to a screenplay. They are the **slugline**, **action text**, **character name**, and **dialogue**. They help to separate scenes (parts of a story that happen in one setting), shots (divisions of a scene that are seen from one camera angle), and lines (pieces of dialogue spoken by a single character.)

(1) Slugline

The slugline is also known as the “scene heading” and appears at the beginning of every scene. It describes what the camera is looking at when the scene begins. A slugline indicates a new scene, or a return to a previous scene.

A slugline answers three questions, and is written in **Bold ALL CAPS**:

- Is the scene an interior “INT.” or exterior “EXT.”?
- What location is the scene taking place?
- At what time is the scene taking place?

Example of a slugline:

EXT: BOAT - LATE NIGHT

(2) Action Text

The action text concisely describes what is happening at the beginning of each camera shot in the screenplay. It also fits in between blocks of dialogue to indicate something in the shot has changed. It should include any action that the camera sees or hears.

Action text is different from creative writing. It is short and to-the-point. Descriptive words should only be used if they help the film’s director to know what should be seen on screen.

Example of action text at the beginning of a shot:

Jeb is an expert fisherman. Kitty is his daughter. Jeb is trying to teach Kitty to fish, but she seems distracted.

Example of action text to indicate a change in the shot:

Jeb stands up. The boat rocks and he falls out of it. Fireflies scatter everywhere.

(3) Character Name

This tells the film's director who is talking. It can be the character's name, or if they don't have a name, it can be their occupation or just a description. Sometimes it will be generic enough that it needs to be numbered, like MAN #1 and MAN #2. Character name is always ALL CAPS followed by a colon.

The character name line may also include who the character is talking to if it is unclear in the action text. This "to" element only appears in the first character name line of a conversation.

Example of a character name line:

JEB (to KITTY)

If a character is not in the camera shot, they are considered "off screen", and their character name line should include "O.S." Likewise, if they are not in the scene, but simply narrating it, that is called a "voice over", and should be labeled "V.O."

Example of a character name line for voice over:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(4) Dialogue

This is a line of text that the character whose name is on the previous line is speaking. These are the exact words that the character will say in the final film. Unlike creative writing, the dialogue does not have quotation marks around it, because it is separated by character name lines.

Example of dialogue:

What are you lookin' at?

Sometimes, screenwriters will include a parenthetical. This is a word included to help convey the emotion with which the character is speaking. It comes between the the character name line and the dialogue.

Example of parenthetical:

(hypnotically)

There's a light on the water.

(5) Indentation and Spacing

Perhaps the most unique part of writing a screenplay is the strict set of rules about indentation. These are the rules:

- The left margin of the page should be 1.5 inches. The right margin should be 1 inch.
- The top and bottom margins of the page should both be 1 inch.
- The slugline should be on the left margin.
- The action text should be on the left margin.
- The character name should be indented 2.5 inches from the left margin. Press the “tab” button five times.
- The dialogue should be indented 1.5 inches from the left margin. Press the “tab” button 3 times.

There should also be a blank line between each new script element, except between character names and their dialogue. At the end of every slugline, action text block, and line of dialogue, press “Enter” two times.

With all of these elements, we can create a properly formatted script:

EXT. BOAT - LATE NIGHT

Jeb is an expert fisherman. Kitty is his daughter. Jeb is trying to teach Kitty to fish, but she seems distracted.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The day had gone swimmingly. But Jeb knew something fishy would happen that night.

JEB (to KITTY)

What are you lookin' at?

KITTY

(hypnotically)

There's a light - on the water.

JEB

Tarnation! Someone's trying to steal our fishing spot!

Jeb stands up. The boat rocks and he falls out of it. Fireflies scatter everywhere.

THE END

UNDERSTAND A SCREENPLAY

Every good film starts with a good screenplay. Unlike a novel, where the action unfolds in the words of the narrator, film is a visual medium. The viewer must be able to see the action unfold. The process begins when the writer develops a “treatment” of the story. A treatment is a brief synopsis that includes the plot, characters, setting, and action in the story. It is an excellent tool to allow the writer to see where story points work, and where they do not. Next, the screenwriter begins to work on the screenplay itself. In doing so, he or she uses a very specific three-act structure: In the opening act the writer sets up the story and establishes the relationships between the characters. Then, there is a second act, when the main character must face a series of crises or overcome obstacles that keep him from achieving his goal. Finally, there is a third act where the crises or conflicts are resolved. One page of screenplay is equal to about one minute of time in the film. That means a film will be as many minutes long as its screenplay has pages.

Pick a short film that you would like to analyze. As you watch, keep the following questions in mind. When you finish, share your answers in the blanks provided.

Title of Film:

Question 1:

What is the plot? Describe the 3-act structure.

Question 2:

Who are the characters? How would you describe them? Who or what is the protagonist and the antagonist?

Question 3:

What is the setting? Where does the film take place, and when?

Question 4:

Describe your favorite piece of dialogue. Why was it effective?

Question 5:

Describe your favorite piece of action. Why was it effective?

Question 6:

How did the filmmakers show something visually instead of describing it with words?

WRITE AN ADAPTATION

An **adaptation** is a type of screenplay that is based on a story that has already been written. Adaptations are original works in themselves, but they begin with the previously published material as their source. Screenplays can be adapted from books, or from stage plays, or even from other screenplays.

Adapting a work can be a challenge because the writer must not only create a story that is compelling in its own right, but he or she also must remain true to the original story. Adapting a written story to a screenplay requires the screenwriter to adjust the length of the story, because a book may be too long for a typical movie length. Also, the screenwriter has to consider pacing, because while the reader of a story may take many breaks throughout the story, a film audience has to digest the whole story at once.

To start writing an adaptation, a screenwriter pulls out the most important points of plot, character, setting, dialogue, and action from the source story. The writer also analyzes **subplots**, which are smaller plots that revolve around added conflicts, and considers whether they should be changed or removed from the film.

In this exercise, choose a short story, either something you wrote or work written by another author, and adapt it to a screenplay for a short film of 1-5 minutes. Type the screenplay using proper script formatting as demonstrated on Worksheet B. Remember, a page of a screenplay is a minute of film, so your screenplay should be 1-5 pages long. It is recommended that you use the front and back of this page to analyze the original work before you begin writing your adaptation.

You are welcome to use a screenwriting program called Celtx to write this exercise. With your parents' permission, you can access the program at www.celtx.com.

Excerpt from “Toy Story” by Disney/Pixar.

You may find it valuable to compare these written words to the final scene in the “Toy Story” film. You can find the scene in the “Toy Story” DVD or online.

INT. CRANE GAME - CONTINUOUS

Woody clambers up the side of the deposit slot.

BUZZ (O.S.)

This is an intergalactic emergency!
I need to commandeer your vessel to
Sector 12!

Woody peeks over the partition to witness Buzz surround by the cute alien toys.

BUZZ

(continued; to the aliens)
Who's in charge here?

All the aliens point upward.

ALIENS

The cla-a-a-a-a-a-a-w!!

Woody and Buzz look up.

ANGLE: CRANE GAME CLAW

It dangles directly above the toys.

ALIEN #1

The claw is our master.

ALIEN #2

The claw chooses who will go and
who will stay.

WOODY

(to himself)
This is ludicrous.

SID (O.S.)

(laughter)

Woody GASPS at the recognition of Sid's voice. He turns to see Sid heading straight for the crane game.

WOODY

Oh, no! Sid!!!

Woody leaps off the partition and tackles Buzz, pushing the two of them deep into the pile of aliens.

WOODY

Get down!!

Sid approaches the crane game and fishes quarters out of his pants pocket.

BUZZ

(loud whisper)

What's gotten into you, Sheriff? I was --

WOODY

(loud whisper)

YOU are the one that decided to climb into this --

ALIEN #4

(loud whisper)

Sh-h-h-h-h-h. The claw. It moves.

ANGLE: CLAW

It moves into position and hovers directly above the area where Woody and Buzz are hiding.

The crane drops and grabs hold of the alien toy that is right on top of Buzz.

ALIEN #3

(whispering excitedly)

I have been chosen!!

Positioned with his back to Sid, the alien is lifted up by the claw.

ALIEN #3

(continued)

Farewell, my friends! I go on to a better place.



Materials for
Grades K-5

WORKSHEET A:

Building Blocks of a Script

This worksheet will guide you through the steps of starting to think about a story in a visual way. Each of the steps below are things professional screenwriters have to consider in their work.

(1) Start with a story.

Example:

Jim and Sally are talking to each other on the hill. Jim said something Sally didn't like. Sally ran away.

In film terms, this would be describing the **plot**.

(2) Analyze the parts of the story:

All visual stories have Characters, Setting, Dialogue, and Action.

Characters and locations are described at the beginning of the scene. Dialogue and Actions are presented in the order they happen. Reassemble the story thinking in these pieces.

a. Characters

Who will be in the movie? What do they look like? How old are they? Are they happy, sad, mean, or something else? How do they know the other characters?

Example of Characters:

Jim is a 9 year old boy who loves school, he is happy and has dark hair.
Sally is a 9 year old girl and Jim's best friend. She does not like spiders.

b. Setting

Where does the story take place? If it happens in multiple places, make sure to let the reader know about the other places. What time of day is it?

Example of Setting:

Jim and Sally are on a large green hill. It is morning. There are flowers and trees.

c. Dialogue

What do the characters say? Who do they say it to?

Example of Dialogue:

Jim: (to Sally)

I have a present for you.

Sally:

What is your present?

Jim:

It is a big spider.

d. Action

What do the characters do? Are there any props?

Example of Action:

Jim hands Sally a big spider.

Sally screams and runs down the hill.

(3) Assemble your script:

EXT. HILL - MORNING

Jim is a 9 year old boy who loves school, he is happy and has dark hair. He is sitting with Sally. Sally is a 9 year old girl and Jim's best friend. She does not like spiders. Jim and Sally are on a large green hill. It is morning. There are flowers and trees.

JIM (to SALLY)

I have a present for you.

SALLY

What is your present?

JIM

It is a big spider

Jim hands Sally a big spider.

Sally screams and runs down the hill.

THE END

UNDERSTAND A SCREENPLAY

Often, short films have some of the best-written screenplays or “scripts”. Pick a short film to see, and as you watch, answer the questions below.

Title of Short Film:

Question 1:

Describe the story or “plot” in one sentence.

Question 2:

List the main characters. Describe them.

Question 3:

What is the setting? Where does the film take place, and when?

Question 4:

What was your favorite spoken line from the film? This is called “dialogue”.

Question 5:

Describe your favorite action in the film that had no spoken words.

Question 6:

What is something that you would do to make this film better?



THINKING VISUALLY

Drawings are a great way to plan out your film. In the boxes below, draw the beginning, middle, and end of a film you have seen. Be sure to include descriptions below your drawings.

Title of Film:

Act 1: What is the setting?

Act 1: Who are the characters?

Act 2: What is the crisis?

Act 2: How does it get worse?

Act 3: What is the climax?

Act 3: What is the resolution?

PLAN YOUR STORY

Take a rough story idea you have, maybe written on an index card, and translate it into drawings below. This is similar to storyboarding, where you plan out frames for the film.

Title of Film:

Act 1: What is the setting?

Act 1: Who are the characters?

Act 2: What is the crisis?

Act 2: How does it get worse?

Act 3: What is the climax?

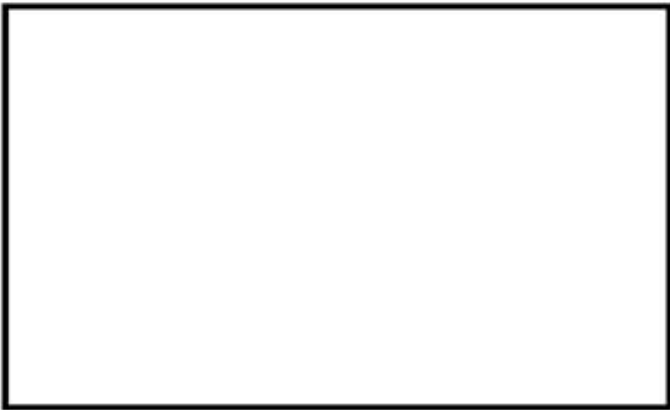
Act 3: What is the resolution?

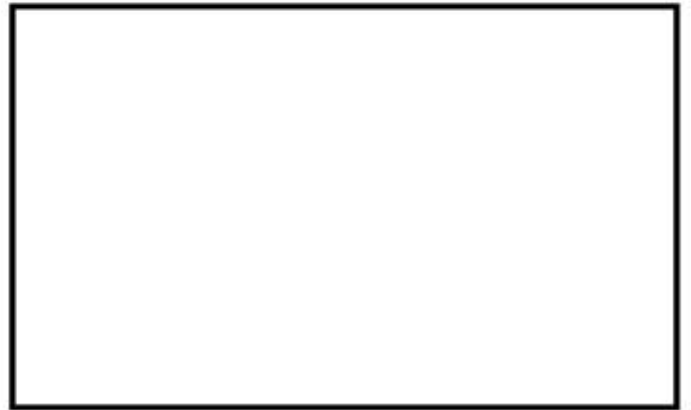
Title:

Page:














Excerpt from “Toy Story” by Disney/Pixar.

Below is a sample submission for students in grades K-5. The formatting is simplified from a Hollywood-standard screenplay format. Pens to Lens will accept all readable submissions from students in grades K-5. When formatting your script, please try to follow these simple rules to ensure that your script is readable.

1. When you change setting, include a line that says what your new setting is. The setting can include place and time.
 - a. Example: **Setting: Crane Game**
2. Write all character names in CAPITAL letters. If your character has no name, call them by their job, or what they look like. If you use the same description twice, give them numbers.
 - a. Example: **ALIEN #1**
3. Put a blank line before and after any character has a line of dialogue.
4. Remember, film is a visual art. Only write enough so that the Director knows what action to show on screen. Your goal is to be as clear and short as possible.

You may find it valuable to compare these written words to the final scene in the “Toy Story” film. You can find the scene in the “Toy Story” DVD or online.

Setting: Crane Game

Woody clambers up the side of the deposit slot.

BUZZ (off screen): This is an intergalactic emergency! I need to commandeer your vessel to Sector 12!

Woody peeks over the partition to witness Buzz surround by the cute alien toys.

BUZZ (continued; to the aliens): Who's in charge here?

All the aliens point upward.

ALIENS: The cla-a-a-a-a-a-a-w!!

Woody and Buzz look up. The crane dangles directly above the toys.

ALIEN #1: The claw is our master.

ALIEN #2: The claw chooses who will go and who will stay.

WOODY (to himself): This is ludicrous.

SID (off screen): (laughter)

Woody GASPS at the recognition of Sid's voice. He turns to see Sid heading straight for the crane game.

WOODY: Oh, no! Sid!!!

Woody leaps off the partition and tackles Buzz, pushing the two of them deep into the pile of aliens.

WOODY: Get down!!

Sid approaches the crane game and fishes quarters out of his pants pocket.

BUZZ (loud whisper): What's gotten into you, Sheriff? I was --

WOODY (loud whisper): YOU are the one that decided to climb into this --

ALIEN #4 (loud whisper): Sh-h-h-h-h-h. The claw. It moves.

The claw moves into position and hovers directly above the area where Woody and Buzz are hiding.

The crane drops and grabs hold of the alien toy that is right on top of Buzz.

ALIEN #3 (whispering excitedly): I have been chosen!!

Positioned with his back to Sid, the alien is lifted up by the claw.

ALIEN #3 (continued): Farewell, my friends! I go on to a better place.