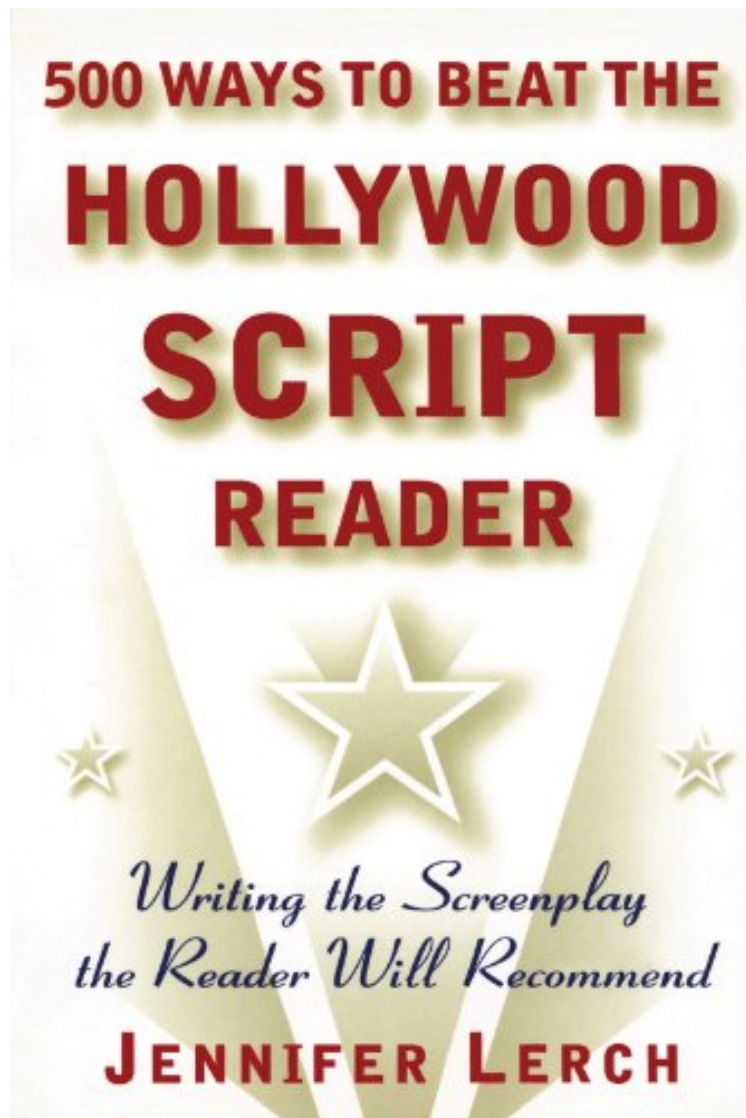


[Free download] 500 Ways to Beat the Hollywood Script Reader: Writing the Screenplay the Reader Will Recommend

500 Ways to Beat the Hollywood Script Reader: Writing the Screenplay the Reader Will Recommend

Jennifer Lerch

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Jennifer Lerch : 500 Ways to Beat the Hollywood Script Reader: Writing the Screenplay the Reader Will Recommend before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 500 Ways to Beat the Hollywood Script Reader: Writing the Screenplay the Reader Will Recommend:

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A useful resource
By Darcy Pennell
As much as I enjoyed this book, I have to take a couple points off. It's a good read and I highly recommend it. It has some real flaws. One, it assumes you are using the three act paradigm. If you are using it, this is bound to really help you bring your story out. If you are not using it, it can still be helpful, but not nearly as much so. Two, it repeats itself too much. It's more like 200 ways restated several times. Three, this book is written for people who are trying to sell. It should give more credit to its readers. It should assume that they know how to format and have the basics of story structure. But, it doesn't. There are enough books written already that deal with the basics of screenwriting. This book would have been better if it focused on the more minute details that a writer is likely to overlook. It's really an elementary screenwriting book masked as a how-to sell book. All these things aside, there are things to be learned here. It's written from the perspective of actual readers. It's good to know what you are dealing with when you are sending your material out. It's a bit frightening when you realize that this book written by a reader based on input from other readers is so strongly pushing the three-act/hero's journey formulas.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well-studied writers may want to look elsewhere
By Nick Sab
As an aspiring screenwriter, I've been poring over many books, web sites, and other resources. This book seemed like a good one to augment my learning. I was especially hoping for the "inside word" on tricks to make my scripts stand out to a reader. But I have to say, I personally did not learn a whole lot new from this book, and was let down. While there are a few nuggets of new wisdom, by and large the tips were things I've read many times before. There is also quite a bit of overlap and redundancy. If you are new to screenwriting, this is probably not a bad second book to get, after reading one of the comprehensive books (Syd Field, Blake Snyder, McKee, etc.). The book is not intended for someone with no background on the craft. On the plus side, it is well organized and a quick read, and is low-cost.
4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fast and easy...
By Natasha Romanoff
As I surfed .com looking for good books to improve my craft, I came across this book and each time I saw it, I decided NOT to purchase it. For some reason...it just seemed cheesy. Perhaps it's the cover or the title. Well, now that I am finished my screenplay, I decided to come back to this book. And I must say...it isn't as what I thought it would be. Each one of the ways she listed it good information of what to look for within your screenplay to see if you've minimized any mistakes that would stand out to a Hollywood Reader. The book is written in simplistic terms. It's fast and easy to read. Yet it packs a lot of good insider information that will assist even a novice of how to get their script read instead of flipped through. I recommend this book as a secondary resource.

If Your Screenplay Can't Get Past the Hollywood Reader, It Can't Get to Hollywood This ultimate insider's guide to screenwriting is designed to get you past the fiercest gatekeepers in Hollywood: the Hollywood script readers. This small army of freelancers will be among the first to read and evaluate your script and then to recommend it -- or not -- to the studios, directors, and stars. Designed for quick and easy access, these 500 points are a step-by-step recipe. They cannot guarantee success, but failure to follow them can almost certainly guarantee failure. Tips include: * Get your foot in the door: 23 ways to make a good first impression on the Hollywood Reader * Screen talk: why it is essential to write dialogue that looks good on the page * Your goals in each act: how to make your story unputdownable from beginning to end * Specific genre issues: writing a romance? a mystery? a thriller? Learn their special requirements and pitfalls * The final scenes: how to go out with a bang that will wow the Hollywood Reader * Still didn't get positive coverage? Inside info on what to do and how to do it
Written by an industry insider who has recommended scripts that have sold for as much as one million dollars, this is the only book to show you what the Hollywood Reader wants to see. Clear, smart, and completely authoritative, 500 Ways to Beat the Hollywood Script Reader is by far the simplest, most practical book ever to hit the entertainment shelf.

.com So you want to write a movie! You could consult Robert McKee's influential *Story*, Syd Field's rather schematic *Screenplay*, which extrapolates lessons from famous films, or novelist-turned-screenwriter Meg Wolitzer's *Literate Fitzgerald Did It*, inspired by her own experience. But the script you pour your soul into won't be read by a single soul you've ever heard of. If a star or mogul reads anything about your story, it will be in the form of "coverage," a brief report reducing your screenplay to a one-sentence summary, with a very few pages of synopsis and ratings of your characters, dialogue, and plot. That report is written by a Hollywood reader, who is likely to be a smart woman desperate to find something she can recommend to her boss--someone like Jennifer Lerch. If her eyes glaze over, you're dead. Your eyes won't glaze over reading Lerch's 500 brisk mini-lessons. How many pages can you turn in? Not over 120. How crucial are the first 30 pages? Utterly. How many big, climactic moments do you need in those 30 pages? Two. How many scenes do you need in the dramatic opening sequence? Three to five. How many parenthetical comments directly addressed to the reader can you include? One or two per script. How about your favorite passages, where you plumb your characters' inner depths? Throw them away: "If the character doesn't say it, wear it, or do it, delete it." How do pros write? "Staccato. Economical." That's how Lerch writes. And if you want to get anywhere in Hollywood, you'll have to please someone just like her. Know your enemy--and make her your best friend. --Tim Appelo
About the Author
Jennifer Lerch has been a Hollywood Reader for more than a decade, including eight years at the William Morris Agency. She lives in Los Angeles. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights

reserved. Introduction Have you ever gone to a movie and thought, I could write something better than that? Let's say you do write a screenplay. When you send it to a talent agency, production company, or movie studio, it will land on the desk of a Hollywood Reader. This Hollywood Reader is often the first and only person to make a decision about whether or not your screenplay is something the company should consider. Why do Hollywood Readers get to make these big decisions? Hollywood movie studios and production companies receive tens of thousands of screenplays each year, and executives cannot read them all. So the film industry uses Hollywood Readers to sift through the screenplays in search of those that measure up to their standards and offer the elements they're looking for. Meet the Hollywood Reader The average Hollywood Reader is college educated, culturally savvy and often has excellent writing skills of her own. Most important, the Hollywood Reader has a proven track record of knowing what screenplay concepts, stories, and characters click with executives, what elite acting talent would give their eye teeth to be in on, and what hits a nerve with audiences. The Hollywood Reader also knows how to communicate all the essential points about the screenplay to the executive in a brief, insightful document that the Industry calls coverage. Coverage Think cheat sheet when you think coverage. It's the unofficial Cliffs Notes version of your screenplay. And more people in Hollywood read the cheat sheet than read the original document (your screenplay). That's a scary thought for any screenwriter. But it can be less frightening if you know what the Hollywood Reader looks for when evaluating your screenplay -- because then you can make those areas as strong as possible so the reader gives positive comments in the coverage. Unclear about what coverage looks like? Let's explore it. The Anatomy of Coverage The Hollywood Reader's coverage report usually has four parts: a concept line(s), a synopsis, a comments page, and a graph. * The concept sums up your story in a sentence or two. * The synopsis details your screenplay's story line in several paragraphs or pages. * The comments page analyzes the screenplay's strengths and weaknesses, compares it to existing films, and offers a bottom-line opinion about whether the company should consider buying, producing, or casting clients in your project. * The graph shows the executive at a glance where your characters, story, dialogue, and structure rate. If the Coverage Is Positive. If the coverage intrigues the executive because of the comments or story idea, she may begin reading your screenplay. If the screenplay delivers on the Hollywood Reader's promises, that executive may decide to option or buy your screenplay or (in the case of a talent agency) represent it or recommend it to a client. A Trade Secret A not-so-well-kept secret among Hollywood insiders is that an executive may buy your screenplay without even reading it. Her thoughts about your screenplay will be based solely on the Hollywood Reader's coverage. In fact, Hollywood executives daily discuss screenplays over the phone by reading from coverage. Both parties know what's going on. The person who "wins" in the conversation is the executive who has the better coverage: That's the importance of getting good coverage. This Book Can Help You Get Better Coverage No other book demystifies the work of the Hollywood Reader by exposing the nitty-gritty elements the pros look for when evaluating your work. Each page offers the inside information you need in order to write a screenplay that can make it to the executive's desk with glowing coverage. Tips on everything from concept to story to structure, characters, dialogue, pacing, and more are arranged in an easy-to-use format that covers the essentials of writing a screenplay, cover-to-cover. These tips apply to most stories and address the flaws that most often undercut a writer's work. To prevent the complication of cross-referencing, some tips are repeated with the intention of making the book as easy as possible to use. Bottom line: The information contained in these pages is as universal and fail-safe as you're going to find. If it's not included in this book, chances are you probably don't need to do it! What the Hollywood Reader Wants to Do with Your Script Every script reader in today's Hollywood wants to be the one to bring her boss the next Academy Award winner, the project that will draw top talent, the screen story that will define a generation -- the best script around. And any reader worth her salt knows that searching for great scripts is like mining diamonds: You've got to know how to spot potential and grab it when you see it because most scripts don't have an immediate sparkle. Some do. But most do not. That's not a slam on screenwriters, some of whom are incredibly gifted. It's reality. And that reality benefits you. How? A Script Doesn't Need to Be Perfect A script does not need to be perfect in order to sell in today's Hollywood. Each script has its own reasons for selling -- sometimes it features an original character or a unique, catchy concept that grabs a studio executive who has visions of a snappy one-sheet (a movie poster). A script might have the breezy dialogue that gets beneath the skin of its characters. Or the story line may hit a timely note. It could be that a script happens to fit the genre a studio is trying to fill on its production slate. The script could catch the fancy of a gifted talent agent who has the ability to sell anything, and who often does sell anything on any given day in Hollywood. The point: A script doesn't need to be anywhere near perfect to sell in Hollywood's marketplace. Some scripts are AMAZING. Most are not. And that's great news if you're a screenwriter. All you've got to do is write a script that can get you great coverage from the Hollywood Reader. What a Reader Looks For This book shows you what a script reader looks for when evaluating a screenplay. It alerts you to common flaws in screenplays and provides ways in which you can correct some of these flaws and strengthen just about any project. Not every tip applies to every script. But many of the tips can be applied to most scripts. The Readers Who Contributed to This Book Each tip has been reviewed by working Hollywood Readers who don't have an ax to grind. Do these readers know anything about screenwriting? Well, during the process of writing this book, two of the contributors became working screenwriters. One reader became a staff writer on a popular network television show, and another received a

screenwriting contract worth more than \$1 million and is scripting comedy features for premier directors in addition to his contract. Another reader has since become an employed producer. Yet another reader is a respected story executive. These people know what they're talking about. And these readers typify the person who will read your script: people who are interested in building careers in entertainment. People like you. So Relax This book attempts to put your mind at ease about the Hollywood Reader by walking you through the process of what a reader may look for when evaluating a project. The scripts written by the top writers do almost all of the things covered in this book. That's what you want to shoot for: doing as much as you can to craft a screenplay that is beyond reproach. This book exists ultimately for one purpose: to help you move into the ranks of working screenwriters. The information comes from the point of view of someone involved in the sales process. That someone may be a reader, but that reader is a person. An audience. An audience of one to which your screen story must play as if it's unfolding on a movie screen. And this audience isn't looking for anything more than the audience down at the neighborhood multiplex looks for. She wants to be entertained, to experience life through someone else's eyes, to grow through a dramatic experience. Play to this audience of one. Write with passion, humor, honesty, and always with imagination. Chances are, the Hollywood Reader wants to recommend some project this week. Make that project be yours. Copyright 1999 by Jennifer Lerch