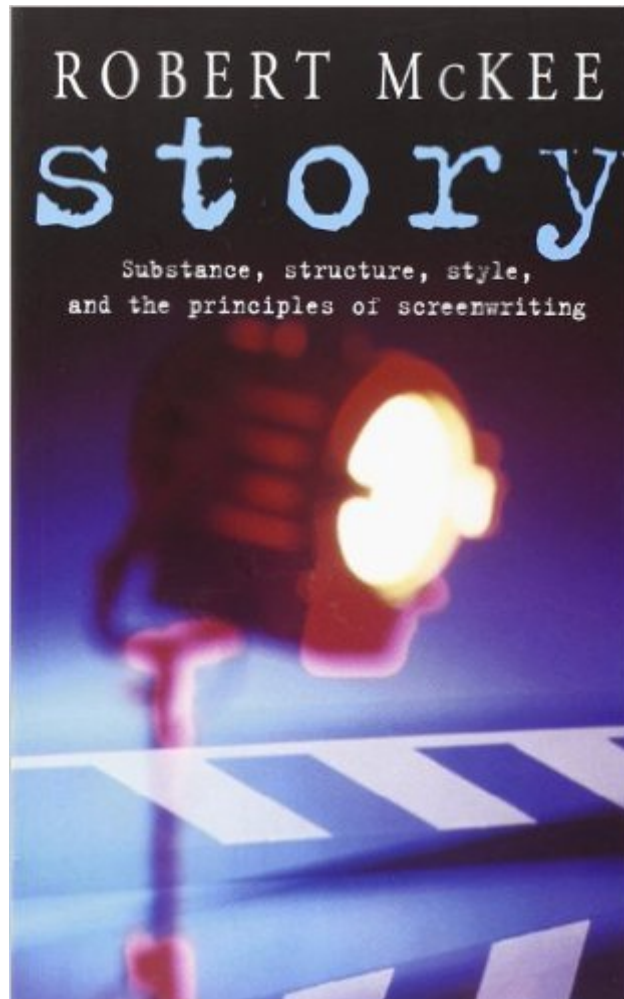


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# Story: Substance, Structure, Style And The Principles Of Screenwriting (Methuen Film)



## Synopsis

Structure is Character. Characters are what they do. Story events impact the characters and the characters impact events. Actions and reactions create revelation and insight, opening the door to a meaningful emotional experience for the audience. Story is what elevates a film, a novel, a play, or teleplay, transforming a good work into a great one. Movie-making in particular is a collaborative endeavour - requiring great skill and talent by the entire cast, crew and creative team - but the screenwriter is the only original artist on a film. Everyone else - the actors, directors, cameramen, production designers, editors, special effects wizards and so on - are interpretive artists, trying to bring alive the world, the events and the characters that the writer has invented and created. Robert McKee's *STORY* is a comprehensive and superbly organized exploration of all elements, from the basics to advanced concepts. It is a practical course, presenting new perspectives on the craft of storytelling, not just for the screenwriter but for the novelist, playwright, journalist and non-fiction writers of all types.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For me *\_Story\_* by Robert McKee is an incredibly useful book in terms of analyzing stories after the fact. If you read a popular, well-crafted book or view a movie or TV show with those qualities and want to understand how it works, what makes it tick, you would be hard pressed to find a better book, and you should just order this book now -- you're in for a treat. If you're an aspiring writer, *\_Story\_* may be extremely helpful for you (as evidenced by the many glowing reviews here), but it

might also be problematic in ways you don't expect. It's from this perspective that I'm writing this review. Writing fiction is an incredibly personal experience, so to be clear I'm not saying that people who love this book as a writing how-to are wrong. I think if you have a certain mindset or approach to writing, this book will be extremely helpful to you. But if you don't, you may want to approach *Story* with some caution (which I'll explain in a minute). Some fiction writers employ a very methodical, intellectual approach, putting stories together like watchmakers carefully constructing a complex timepiece, creating detailed outlines first and using them as blueprints to build their stories. This is a completely valid way to work -- in fact, I'm envious of such writers and wish it worked for me. If you already know that you are this sort of writer, you should just order *Story* right now, because you almost certainly are gonna love it and find it incredibly useful. Some writers employ a more organic, intuitive approach, where creating a story is an unstructured process of discovery (the so-called "pantsers", because they work from "the seat of their pants"). In my view this is also a perfectly valid way to work, not inherently better or worse than being a dedicated outliner.

I've read many books on screenwriting, and *Story* is certainly one of the best. It's conservative, to be sure, espousing all the tenets of Classical Hollywood Narrative: Three act structure, strong active protagonists, inciting incidents, causal chain, action not words - y'know the drill. McKee, however, is not a member of the Syd Field school. Field gives writers rules; McKee offers principles. This is a critical difference. McKee believes in the craft and art of screenwriting above all else. Consequently, *Story* has a different tone to Field's *Screenplay*. If you look beneath the surface of *Story*, you'll find that McKee's principles and views are far more flexible than anything Vogler or Field has offered the screenwriter. While primarily focusing on what he calls Arch-Plot (Classical Hollywood Narrative) he also accepts the existence of other, alternative, forms. He also hails the greatness of those alternative narrative films throughout the book. These alternative narratives are not, however, the focus in *Story*. McKee believes that an aspiring writer needs to master the classical story form before adventuring elsewhere. His goal in the sheer bulk of *Story* is to educate, not indoctrinate, the reader about all aspects of Classical Narrative. For many readers this will come across as a conventional approach to screenwriting. That it is. Unlike many other (traditional) screenwriting books, though, this is underpinned by McKee's belief in the craft above all else. He doesn't want you to just absorb, but rather think about what he is saying. If you don't understand how a traditional story works, and how to tell one well, what chance in hell do you have of telling your multi-passive-protogonist, anti-plot, 2-act, time-jumping magnum work?

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