

## **Eight Point Guide to Writing Short Films**

1. *Introduce main character(s); set the scene.*
2. *Give the character a problem, obstacle, obsession or addiction.*
3. *Let the character work out a plan to overcome the problem.*
4. *Before setting out to solve the problem, there may be a moment of doubt that will require the hero to seek advice from a mentor: teacher, best friend. This is an opportunity to let the audience know more about the problem and weigh it up in their own minds. What would they do?*
5. *With new resolve (and often a magical gift from the mentor: the watches Q gives James Bond; Dorothy's ruby slippers), the hero sets out to overcome the problem, obstacle, obsession or addiction.*
6. *Overcoming the problem or challenge (getting the girl; escaping tyranny; saving the world) will be met by extreme opposition from the rival, who will usually have greater but different strengths and will in some ways bear similarities to the hero: the nemesis is the hero's dark side.*
7. *The hero will appear to fail in his quest. He will give up or glimpse defeat, even death, and will require superhuman effort to overcome this daunting final task. The hero wins the final battle, with an opponent, or enemy, or with himself, and returns to his natural state wiser, or stronger, or cured, but not necessarily happier.*
8. *The journey has made him a different person. He has glimpsed death and can never go back to the simplicity of what he once was.*

## **Ten Tips**

1. *Don't trust in inspiration, unless you want to be a poet. The first idea you get is often borrowed from every movie you've seen and book you've read.*
2. *If you do work on that inspired project: re-write, re-write; re-write. That is the most important three things you will ever learn about scriptwriting, and I repeat: re-write, re-write, re-write.*
3. *See your writing from the other side of the screen, from the audience point of view; if there is no audience, there is no message.*
4. *Do not adjust your writing to the market by attempting to stay abreast, or even ahead of changing trends; such work is a form of cultural static lacking veracity and, often, even relevance.*
5. *Be true to your own vision. Write about what you know about? Absolutely. But then write what you believe in.*
6. *Four steps to writing a short film scenario: find the ending; then the beginning; then the first turning point – the event that gets the story going; then the second turning point, the scene that swings the story around and sets up the ending.*
7. *Enter your story a short time before the crisis that ignites the drama.*
8. *Scenes are like parties: arrive late and leave early.*
9. *Persevere.*
10. *Listen to criticism. But don't always take it.*