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Writing a drama script is a great way to showcase your character development skills—and notoriously, practically all Oscar and Nicholl contest winners are drama screenplays. But in order to reach that level, it's super important to read as many drama scripts as you can. With that in mind, here are twenty of the best drama script examples that you can download and read for free. Enjoy! Click to tweet this post. 1. 1917. 1917 was praised not only for its incredible cinematography but for its real-time filmmaking technique. Director Sam Mendes had the ambitious idea to make the film appear as a "one-shot," putting even more pressure on co-writer, Krysty Wilson-Cairns, to create seamless transitioning in the screenplay. While there are technically 61 scenes in the screenplay, almost every heading is listed as CONTINUOUS. When reading, pay attention to how the ending of each moment directly connects to the next, and notice the urgency of the tone as we follow the lead characters every step of the way. 2. Arrival. Arrival may be a science fiction story, but as far as the big five genres go, it's essentially a drama. The screenplay plays against the traditional tropes of an action-packed alien blockbuster, and instead screenwriter Eric Heisserer focused more on character and mood. There is a clear connection between the mysterious creatures and the humans who are studying them, both intellectually and emotionally. When reading the screenplay, observe the arc of each lead character, including the aliens. 3. Before Sunrise. Before Sunrise, with its simple, yet highly effective premise, is one of the best drama script examples you'll find. The entire story takes place over the course of one night, yet this night is so impactful on the characters' lives that it wound up spawning a trilogy. That screenwriter Kim Krizan and writer/director Richard Linklater capture perfectly is the idea of zero expectations. These two strangers do not believe that they will ever see each other again, and as a result, they open up to one another—increasing their vulnerability and feelings of romance. 4. Call Me by Your Name. While the ultimate premise in this drama script is about a 17-year-old Italian boy who falls in love with the older male graduate student living with his family, screenwriter James Ivory doesn't reveal their sexual relationship right away. Rather, Ivory builds up the environment. Notice how the detail of the beautiful Italian landscape, the sensual nature of the dialogue and the romantic background increasingly draws the two men together, from simple admiration to deeper desires. 5. Casablanca. The fifth of our free drama scripts is this inevitable Bogart/Bergman classic from 1942. This script needs no introduction and is a perfect example of how to combine multiple genres—in this case, romance, war and drama. Rick, the protagonist faces a difficult and ironic predicament—to rekindle a romance with a past love or help her and her refugee husband escape. While the dialogue in Casablanca is dazzling, pay particular attention to how the drama is driven by the moral choices these characters are forced to make. 6. Dead Poets Society. Dead Poets Society is a wonderful drama script sample, especially when it comes to how to show the overall transformation of a collective by the influence of a single outsider. While the script is primarily serious, like all great drama scripts there are moments of humor and levity. Observe how the tone of the environment shifts from conventional and callous to whimsical and free as the story progresses. Also, if you're writing a screenplay that quotes literature and are unsure of the correct drama script format, look no further than Dead Poets Society. 7. The Godfather. When The Godfather was first released in 1972, the concept of the "mafia family" wasn't quite as familiar as it is today. Screenwriter Mario Puzo and director Francis Ford Coppola introduced this criminal world to a wider audience by first giving them something to identify with: the plight of immigrant Italian families in America in the 1940s. Study the screenplay and see how the tone shifts over time. You'll note that the core themes of family and honor remain, but the stakes raise as the tone turns darker and darker... 8. Green Book. If you're writing a buddy movie, look no further than this drama script for a modern masterpiece on how to create conflict through contrasting characters' opposing perspectives. In this case, a post, black concert pianist and his white working-class driver. While the film addresses the issues of the 1960s hang heavy in this drama, the screenplay is so much more than a social issues of the 1960s hang heavy in this drama screenplay, the tone is not as serious as you might expect. Probably because Peter Farrelly is one of the co-writers, but also because the heart of the script is the men's "odd couple"-style friendship. 9. Hidden Figures. Screenwriter Allison Schroeder was inspired to adapt the book the same name from her experience growing up near the Kennedy Space Center. In addition, both of her grandparents were NASA engineers. Schroeder's exquisite detail in this drama script comes from her knowledge and familiarity of this world, proving that sometimes it pays to mine your personal experiences for material and "write what you know." 10. It's a Wonderful Life. Like A Christmas Carol, the script to It's a Wonderful Life revolves around a man who's shown his life through other men's eyes during a major holiday. Although the context and characters are completely different, this drama script sample teaches a valuable screenwriting lesson for anyone writing a story based on pre-existing material. Taking an old story and putting a unique and updated modern spin on it can be a very useful screenwriting tool to have in your arsenal. For another example, look no further than the great 2008 movie—Two Lovers, starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Joaquin Phoenix—that was based on a short story by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. 11. Lady Bird. Lady Bird explores the life of a strong-willed high school senior of the same name. However, instead of telling a classic first-love romance, writer/director Greta Gerwig focuses on a different relationship: between a mother and daughter. The screenplay is also one of the best drama script examples to study character. Note how Gerwig makes a rebellious character like Lady Bird more likable by revealing some of her more compelling moments through her untraditional friendships. 12. La La Land. La La Land tells an age-old tale of the Hollywood Dream—the highs of success and the lows of rejection. Study how writer Damien Chazelle takes the premise of a potentially mundane idea and transforms it into a compelling and flashy musical drama. Perhaps the best drama script examples to study are the ones that are so much more than a social issues of the 1960s hang heavy in this drama screenplay, the tone is not as serious as you might expect. Probably because Peter Farrelly is one of the co-writers, but also because the heart of the script is the men's "odd couple"-style friendship. 9. Hidden Figures. Screenwriter Allison Schroeder was inspired to adapt the book the same name from her experience growing up near the Kennedy Space Center. In addition, both of her grandparents were NASA engineers. 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spin. MOIRA: Okay! (They exit) END OF SCENE BUY A PDF OF THE SCENE AT INT. BEDROOM. DAY. 1826. Adult Patsy Jefferson enters bedroom. The bed and furniture is covered and dusty. We hear Young Patsy's voice. PATSY (OFF) "He kept his room for three weeks and I was never a moment from his side. He walked almost incessantly every night and day only lying down occasionally... when at last he left his room he rode out and from that time he was incessantly on horseback rambling about the mountain... in those melancholy rambles I was his constant companion, a solitary witness to many a violent burst of grief." Adult Patsy sits on a bed sadly and looks at an end table next to the bed. She opens the drawer. Inside she finds a piece of paper and a lock of hair. She reads the paper silently and tries not to cry. Then she reads aloud. ADULT PATSY "Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity life follows my pen. The days and hours are flying over our heads like clouds of windy day never to return - " Adult Patsy pauses and struggles to avoid crying. Lights fade to black. INT. BEDROOM. DAY. APRIL 1782 The year is 1782. It is the same room but many years earlier. The bed and furniture are uncovered. Martha Jefferson is at the window watching something. MARTHA Patsy come here. Young Patsy runs to the window. PATSY What is it mother? MARTHA Look at your father showing off. PATSY Look how the deer eat right of his hand. MARTHA If only he could get the House of Delegates in Richmond to do the same. PATSY Is Papa going to Richmond soon? MARTHA I... I don't know... Martha gets up and is very pregnant. She struggles. Patsy helps her to the bed. PATSY Are you not feeling well? MARTHA I'm worried about the baby. PATSY You should rest. Would you like me to bring you some more flowers? MARTHA That would be lovely, Patsy. You are such a good daughter. PATSY The baby will be fine, Mama. Don't worry. Thomas Jefferson enters. Patsy hugs him. PATSY Papa! THOMAS You act like I've been gone forever. MARTHA You've not gone at all. THOMAS I can't, Martha. The baby... PATSY You BOTH need to stop worrying. MARTHA Who was that outside with you? THOMAS That was a messenger from Richmond. MARTHA I thought as much. THOMAS The House of Delegates wishes their Governor to return. MARTHA Perhaps the Governor should do so. THOMAS But the Governor... nor the baby, wish it to be so. PATSY Nor his daughter. MARTHA Nor his wife. THOMAS I believe the House of Delegates is over-ruled. Martha is looking in pain. Thomas strokes her hair. PATSY I will go get the flowers... and some raspberries... you love raspberries. MARTHA I do crave them yes. Thank you, Patsy. Patsy goes to the exit and pauses to look. Martha shows even more pain and Thomas holds her. MARTHA (CONT.) It hurts so badly, Thomas. Worse than all the other children. THOMAS Shhh... rest now, Martha. I will stay here with you. Lights fade to black as Patsy slowly turns to go. INT. BEDROOM. DAY. MAY 1782 In darkness, a baby crying is heard. AUNT CARR (VOICE) It's a girl. Lights come up on Martha in bed with Thomas at her side. Martha is very ill and Thomas looks like he hasn't slept or bathed. Aunt Carr is near. AUNT CARR Thomas. You need to rest. I can watch Martha and the baby. THOMAS Go tend to the baby. I will stay with Martha. Patsy enters with her little sister Polly. POLLY Why can't mama play?! PATSY She's sick, Polly. Quiet. POLLY I wanna play now! PATSY Go to your room! Polly runs off crying. Aunt Carr goes to Patsy. AUNT CARR I'll talk to her. Aunt Carr exits. PATSY Papa? THOMAS Shhh... she is asleep. PATSY I can sit with her papa. THOMAS I can't... I can't leave her... He buries his face in his hands. Patsy hugs him. INT. BEDROOM. DAY. JULY 1782. Martha is awake but still in bed. Thomas is giving her liquid. Patsy enters with a booklet. PATSY Good morning, Papa. Good morning, Mama. Happy 4th of July. Aunt Carr enters with baby and Polly. THOMAS Is it the 4th? PATSY Yes. Shall we read the Declaration of Independence over morning tea? THOMAS I don't know... PATSY But we always do, Papa. I can recite it I think... "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary..." THOMAS Not this year, Patsy. MARTHA Psalms instead? THOMAS Yes... Patsy is much more subdued. PATSY I will get the Bible. She gets the Bible for Thomas. He opens it and pages through until he finds the right Psalm (15). THOMAS "...who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart..." Polly is at the window. POLLY Someone is here. Aunt Carr and Patsy go to the window. AUNT CARR It's the messenger from Richmond. Thomas closes the Bible in frustration and goes. Patsy goes to Martha. PATSY What do they want mama? MARTHA I don't know. THOMAS (OFF) No! No, you may not enter. Messenger bursts in to the room. He stops when the family is startled. Martha has a coughing fit. Baby starts crying. THOMAS (CONT.) Leave at once. MESSENGER I'm sorry, Governor, but I was told to find proof of the story of your wife's illness... or arrest you. THOMAS What? MESSENGER Richmond is in chaos without you, Governor Jefferson. The delegates are divided on everything. Even your loyal followers are doubting you. They are calling for your arrest. They want to force you to serve. In a quiet rage, Thomas grabs the messenger. THOMAS I will not leave my wife's side while she is so ill. Messenger looks at Martha and softens. MESSENGER Yes, Governor. I know. Thomas lets go but his fists clench ready for a fight. Messenger leaves. Martha coughs. Thomas rushes to her. THOMAS Her medicine... hurry. Patsy rushes from the room as the lights fade to black. INT. BEDROOM. DAY. AUGUST 1782 Martha weakly copies on to a piece of paper while Thomas holds a book. Patsy enters but stops and watches. MARTHA "Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity life follows my pen. The days and hours are flying over our heads like clouds of windy day never to return - more everything presses on -" Martha drops the pen and coughs. Thomas gets her medicine. She drinks some water and calms. MARTHA (CONT.) Finish for me. Thomas takes the paper and book and copies. THOMAS "...and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make." MARTHA I want you to keep that, Thomas. With a lock of my hair... to remember me. THOMAS I will never forget, Martha. Martha's eyes close. THOMAS (CONT.) I promise you, I will never forget... and I will never marry again. Thomas starts to cry. He falls to his knees at the bedside and falls in to a ball Patsy goes to him and holds him. Adult Patsy enters watching as lights slowly fade to black during the following. ADULT PATSY "He kept his room for three weeks and I was never a moment from his side... I was his constant companion, a solitary witness to many a violent burst of grief." END SOURCES: "Patsy Jefferson's Diary" by Miriam Anne Bourne "Founding Mothers" by Cokie Roberts "Thomas Jefferson" PBS HOME VIDEO "Liberty! The American Revolution" PBS DVD VIDEO Free Stage Play Scripts at Freedrama.net Freedrama offers free stage play scripts, monologues and theatre games at no cost to actors, directors, teachers and students for the classroom or acting performances. Find tons of resources for teaching and learning acting, speech and communication skills. Important Copyright Notice These scripts may be used for FREE but PLEASE do NOT repost the TEXT of any script online in any way. Students, actors, teachers and student may use the scripts for acting or classroom activities and even videos, but do NOT repost them on the internet. Please link to the scripts on the website. We love that! 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