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Pen & Pro\$per

KNOW MORE. GROW MORE. FOR WRITERS OF ALL LEVELS & GENRES

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Calling All Writers, Screen and Otherwise



Book Review of Christina Hamlett's Screenwriting for Teens by Noelle Sterne

I'm no screenwriter. My genres are prose and an occasional moody poem. But reading Christina Hamlett's *Screenwriting for Teens* (Michael Wiese Productions), I responded exactly as I do to reading her regular column on screenwriting in *Writers' Journal*: Hamlett is a master of writing and writing instruction and shares a tremendous amount of wisdom.

Her credentials, as well as her books, are impressive. For the last 30 years, she has contributed to *PLAYS*, the Magazine for Young People, and *PLAYS* has published several comedy anthologies of her scripts. In addition, she has written dozens of commercial comedy sketches for Contemporary Drama Service and is a regular contributor of lesson plans to *School Video News*, a website targeted to K-12 video arts educators.

Hamlett brings this expertise to *Screenwriting for Teens*. The book is subtitled "The 100 Principles of Scriptwriting Every Budding Writer Must Know." In addition to much genre-specific information, these principles offer nuggets for every writer, budding, blossomed, and wilted.

The book's structure, with each principle a chapter, make it easy to choose what you need at a given moment of bafflement or block in your writing. In a relaxed, conversational style, Hamlett covers many technical aspects of screenwriting, as one would expect: "Speaking the Language of Screenwriters," "Reel" Time Moves Differently Than 'Real' Time," "Catchy Loglines," "Treatments," "Bulletproofing Your Script." But also with wit and conciseness, Hamlett gives us timeless writing principles. A small sampling of

the numerous excellent points: "A Theme Is the Glue That Holds Your Story Together," "Conflict Grows Out of Character," "Character Grows Out of Conflict," "Character and Conflict Comprise the Hero's Journey," "Every Story Needs a Point of View." I for one need such brushups. Adding to Screenwriting's value, Hamlett includes at the end of each chapter a section of "Brainstormers." These provocative exercises, often rooted in classic to contemporary films, prompt our application of the chapter's content, our knowledge of filmography, our analytic powers, and especially our creativity. So the book is not only a learning tool for writers but also a tool for teachers of screenwriting and theater, directors, and producers.

My only cavil, if it can be called that, is the ambiguity of the title. Or is it purposeful? The book teaches aspiring screenwriting teens how to write, adult screenwriters how to write for teen audiences, and adult screenwriters how to write for any audience. And more, in Screenwriting for Teens, with her compendium of writing knowledge, clear descriptions, and illustrations of the solid principles of writing, Hamlett teaches any writer how to write anything.

--Noelle Sterne Author, Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams
Columnist, Inscripting Industry

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9 comments:

1.



[Karen Lange](#) October 6, 2011 10:39 AM

It sounds like a great book. Thanks for the review!

2.



[Jennifer Brown Banks](#) October 6, 2011 1:15 PM

Thanks for your thoughts, Karen.

3.



[Jennifer Brown Banks](#) October 8, 2011 9:40 AM

TESTING, TESTING, TESTING...



4.

Jennifer Brown Banks October 8, 2011 9:43 AM

My apologies, good people. I have just been informed that there seems to be a glitch in the Blogger system that is preventing comments from being posted. I will check into this and hope to have the problem corrected soon. Thanks for reading, and for your patience.



5.

Jennifer Brown Banks October 8, 2011 10:04 AM

FROM NOELLE STERNE

"Appreciate your comments, Karen and Jennifer. And, for any writer interested in improving screen-related manuscripts, Christina Hamlett delivers thorough, expert, honest, and encouraging critiques. She is among the best."

- Noelle Sterne, URL: www.trustyourlifenow.com



6.

Linda O'Connell October 9, 2011 4:28 AM

Discovered if you sign in first on blogs you can then post. Thanks for this information, Jennifer.



7.

marciewrites October 10, 2011 5:03 PM

I will check this out as I enter schools to teach writing. Thanks for a new resource.



8.

Jennifer Brown Banks October 11, 2011 9:25 AM

Linda,

Thank you as well.



9.

Jennifer Brown Banks October 11, 2011 9:26 AM

Marcie,

How lovely. Thanks for stopping by.