



## Young Screenwriter Competition 2023

### Student Handout

**Aspiring screenwriters! Get your short film made by a professional crew!**

#### **Overview**

PQA run a screenwriting competition for students which offers you the chance to have your short film script made by a professional crew. The winning student will be part of every step of the process, receiving mentorship from a professional screenwriter to complete their script. The script will then go into production with the young screenwriter shadowing the director on set. Additional students from the winner's academy will also get the opportunity to shadow heads of department during filming. PQA will then submit the finished film to film festivals across the world. Students may choose to write their treatment in their own time, or a combination of academy time and at home.

**Watch the first Young Screenwriter winning film, "Monster in the Fridge" here:**

<https://pqatv.com/originals/the-monster-in-the-fridge/>

### **How It Works**

Students need to submit a single A4 page treatment for their short film idea in the format below.

### **Rules & Deadline**

- Treatments should not exceed one page.
- Students may only submit one treatment each.
- Group treatments are not permitted, except for treatments written in pairs (two writers maximum)
- Deadline for submissions: **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2023**
- Treatments must be sent to your principal, who will then submit them to PQA on your behalf.

### **What Is a Script Treatment?**

A Script Treatment is a written document put together by a writer, after they have researched and planned their film 'idea' but before they write the first draft of their screenplay. Treatments read like a short story but are told in the present tense and describe events as they happen.

A film treatment is what your film is about and what happens in your film ..... intention and action & character and plot!

## Here is how to break it down, what to write and in what order:

### Treatments should be titled using the following format:

1 A4 page with the below information at the top of the page:

The title of your short film

Your Full Name and Age

The name of the academy you attend and what colour group you are in

For example:

***The Grand Getaway***

***By Jane Smith, aged 12***

***PQA Watford Blue Group***

### Start with a logline

A logline is one to two sentences that summarize your movie.

You can think of a logline like a formula consisting of four elements: [protagonist] + [inciting accident] + [action] + [conflict]

*(You can find a list of common inciting incidents further down this document)*

Another way to put this is: [who] + [what] + [how] + [why]

Loglines are not necessarily written in this order, but the four elements are essential. Here are two loglines from famous movies:

**Star Wars: Episode IV: A New Hope:** When an optimistic farm boy [protagonist] discovers that he has powers [inciting incident], he teams up with other rebel fighters [action] to liberate the galaxy from the sinister forces of the Empire [conflict].

**Finding Nemo:** When his son is swept out to sea [inciting incident], an anxious clownfish [protagonist] embarks on a perilous journey [action] across a treacherous ocean to bring him back [conflict].

**Followed by:**

A one paragraph (approx. a 1/3 page) overview of the film idea which covers the below 3 points.

**Genre and theme** – for example, *a mistaken identity comedy (the genre) about learning to be yourself (the theme).*

**Main character/s introduction** – name, age, appearance, character traits. For example, *Jack is 14 with dark messy hair. He has bad time keeping and is always late when arranging to meet up with his friends.*

**Setting** – where is the story set, i.e., rural or city, by the coast or inland, indoors, or outdoors, what is your main location? For example, *the film is set in a large city, the main action takes place inside a cinema complex.*

**Finished with:**

A two-paragraph synopsis (approx. 2/3 page) of the plot outline clearly laying out the beginning, middle and end of the film.

Remember, the plot needs to fit into a ten-minute film.

**You should try and cover the following in your synopsis:**

**The main character/s introduction** – how is the audience introduced to the character, what are they doing, how does it relate to the plot that will follow, what does the audience learn about the main character/s.

**The beginning** - What is the “Inciting Incident” – the plot element that kick starts the story and / or changes the course of your character's life – this should happen early on in a short film.

**The middle** – The longest section of a script. How does the inciting incident affect your main character/s and the plot?

For example, in a classic hero quest film the hero would face a series of obstacles to achieve their quest during the middle section. This would lead to a point where it seems like 'All Is Lost' and the hero may not fulfil his quest. In the final showdown the hero faces his biggest challenge yet and succeeds (or not).

**The End** - The final showdown should lead into the end of the film, "the resolution." How is the main character/s able to overcome the inciting incident (if in fact they were able to overcome it), will they be forever changed for good or bad by this, what have they learned (if anything)?

### **Common types of inciting incidents**

- The thing that has defined you and/or supported you (key to your identity, mission, sense of self, well-being, etc.) is suddenly taken away or threatened. e.g., Toy Story, About a Boy, Legally Blonde, Elf, Enchanted.
- A new mission emerges to help someone, which seems like the necessary and right thing to do but will clearly come with some major challenges. e.g., Clueless, The Sound of Music, Star Wars.
- You get an opportunity to do the thing you have always wanted to do – which may seem too good to be true and will be difficult to succeed at. e.g., Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory
- You join, try to join, or are taken in by a coveted group or "institution" Which will offer potentially great rewards but also great costs. E.g., Harry Potter, The Devil Wears Prada
- Your deepest darkest secret is made public, which alters your current way of life, forcing you to face the underlying thing that haunts you. e.g., Frozen

- An enemy emerges – threatening and/or challenging you and those close to you, in some basic and important way. E.g., The Matrix
- An unexplainable magical situation makes living your normal life in its normal way impossible. e.g., Liar Liar, Big, Freaky Friday
- You discover something about your life (or past) that changes your understanding about everything and threatens what you want right now (and may present fresh, life-changing challenges). e.g. The Princess Diaries

### **Tips**

- Short films work best when set in just one or two locations.
- Although films may have many characters, it is useful with short films to have one clearly defined main character rather than a group of main characters.
- Another thing to keep in mind is the budget that the completed script must be achieved on. For example, think carefully about the choice of locations and any special effects your script may need.

### **Script Treatment Example from Cinema – E.T**

The following example does not follow the exact outline as explained above, it is also for a feature length film, so much longer than one for a short film (remember we are only asking for a single page treatment). It does, however, give you an insight into how film scripts begin with a treatment or outline.

**Logline:** An alienated boy bonds with an extraterrestrial child who's been stranded on earth; the boy defies the adults to help the alien contact his mothership so he can go home. (Steven Spielberg, 1982)

## E.T. II NOCTURNAL FEARS

In the night sky there is an emotion churning about. The stars twinkle blankly, expressionless as if to say that something is wrong. There is a slight breeze disturbing the treetops - or is it?

Through gnarled branches we gaze upon a familiar sight. In what seemed like only the blink of an eye, something has penetrated the night sky and nearly avoided our attention. A small noise, followed by streaks of stray light, further acknowledge its presence. A door is being opened on the giant ornamental Mothership now resting in the forest clearing.

A door opens and extends outward to make a ramp. Light pours from within and a figure emerges as a silhouette. The creature moves in a familiar fashion - a waddle.

School has now come to an end for Elliott, Michael, Gertie and their many friends. For most youngsters, summer is something to look forward to. This is not the case for a handful of children this summer! Summer is, unfortunately, a continuation and concentration of feelings and thought the previous months only hinted to. For these few kids, summer promises only one thing... LONLINESS. This is the first of many summers without their little alien friend, nicknamed E.T. Hard as it is, the children cope...

Elliott, Michael, and Gertie are closer to one another since E.T. came into their lives. They have a special sort of relationship now. But as always, time tends to blur memories and Elliott's mother, Mary, is still waiting for that process to begin. So far, however, E.T. is as popular today as he ever was!

The spaceship, nestled in the forest clearing surrounded by massive Redwoods, seems to be showing signs of life. Movement can be detected within the ship.

The aliens onboard are EVIL. They have landed on Earth in response to distress signals designating its present coordinates. These aliens are searching for a stranded extraterrestrial named Zrek, who is sending a call for "Help".

The evil creatures are carnivorous. Their leader, Korel, commands his crew to disperse, into the forest to acquire food. As the squat aliens leave the gangplank, each one emits a hypnotic hum which has a paralyzing effect on the surrounding wildlife. These creatures are an albino fraction

(mutation) of the same civilization E.T. belongs to. The two separate groups have been at war for decades!

Morel approaches the top of the gangplank and raises his frail arms outward as his yellow heart-light summons his crew back to the Mothership. For a moment, the aliens are paralyzed themselves. The tiny creatures eventually look up with their large, expressive red eyes and begin their orderly processional back up into the spaceship.

Inside the craft is a vast assortment of large plants and animal-like beasts in cages of light - obviously, specimens from past voyages.

At Elliott's home we see him climbing onto his roof to check E.T.'s COMMUNICATOR, which has been anchored down and sending messages into space ever since E.T. left Earth.

Elliott's father returned from New Mexico months before and filed for divorce and moved back to New Mexico. But Elliott's family has seen harder times. And the fact that Mary has been dating Dr. Keys, since they met just before E.T. left, has eased the strain considerably.

One thing is certain...everybody under this house- hold's roof has something in common - E.T.! Keys has told his story time and time again about his first meeting with the tiny, confused E.T. It is a story full of emotion, surprise and mystery. Keys never plays down how important that experience was to the direction his life took from then on. Keys admits his life ambitions were channeled toward more positive and rewarding goals. He didn't continue to live in a dream-world of hope that he would one day meet his space friend again, like he fears Elliott and his friends are now. Keys insists he chose to pursue medicine and science because of E.T.

Recently, Elliott has been sensing something he cannot explain. His umbrella COMMUNICATOR is reacting strangely now. He thinks it could be receiving a message from space!



In his room, Elliott is searching for something. On his wall is the Polaroid snapshot of himself with Michael and E.T. on Halloween night. Above his bed we see E.T.'s clay planets suspended by wire from the ceiling. Elliott emerges from the closet with a pot. His face becomes sad. The Geranium is still dead. He puts the pot on his dresser and sits on his bed, thinking.

Later, Elliot jumps up happy and races through his house. He finds Michael and Gertie and makes them promise their "most excellent promise" that they will tell nobody what they are about to do. Having finished that, Elliott calls his D&D buddies Steve, Tyler and Greg and tells them to ride their bicycles to the forest clearing because E.T. could be coming back!

There have been numerous reports of unexplained cattle mutilations in the surrounding countryside.

At the clearing we sense danger. We see shadows and undefined forms lurking in the nearby forest. Night is falling and, in the distance, we hear a commotion. Elliot and his friends are converging on the clearing unaware of any trouble. They arrive and dismount, their bicycles.

In awe, everyone gazes upon the dark contours of the massive space machine. Suddenly the figure of Korel appears in an illuminated porthole. Telepathically Korel speaks to the children asking the whereabouts of the fugitive alien, Zrek. The children reply honestly that... "He's gone home!". Korel becomes angry, believing, that they are lying.

When the children regain their senses, they are surrounded by the evil alien creatures who were hiding in the forest. The creatures are carrying some kind of dagger. Elliott advances in a friendly gesture but barely escapes being bitten, or even killed, by the alien's razor-sharp teeth! Several of the aliens bare their fangs from time to time to show they mean business. Korel orders that the children be brought aboard. Reluctantly Elliott and his friends follow.

In the hours that follow, Elliott and his companions are questioned extensively. But the aliens will not accept the truth in their responses. While one child is interrelated, another is being examined. Gertie is crying and calling Mary and E.T. for help. The others endure (as their war-ginning experiences have taught them).

At Elliott's home, Mary is arriving from an extended date with Dr. Keys. They enter the empty house and proceed to investigate further why nobody is home. It is past 11:00p.m.

It is now time for Elliott to be questioned. The aliens show no mercy when he replies with the truth. The questioning process intensifies when they learn from his memory that he has dealt directly with Zrek. The pain is tremendous for Elliott, and he breaks down and begins screaming for E.T.'s help. Elliott blacks out - but the echoes of his last cry can be heard from a distance. At this point we follow, upward, the echoing cry for E.T. into the cosmos where the painful cry seems to die.

In the meantime, Keys and Mary decide not to call the police yet. They hear a strange noise coming from - somewhere. They finally realize that the sound is coming from the roof.

Mary leads the way to Elliott's room where there is a trap door leading to the attic. From there, Keys climbs out a window and up to the rooftop.

He witnesses a bizarre sight...the COMMUNICATOR is vibrating crazily and rotating to a new position. The keyboard read-out is repeating the same entry: "E.T. HELP ELLIOTT SOON".

Keys calls Mary to the roof. When she arrives to read the message, they embrace and go back through the attic, into Elliott's room. Mary turns around and sees the Geranium blooming to life. She lets out a feeble yelp and begins to cry. Keys and Mary are now aware of what has been happening. They go to their car and head for the forest clearing.

Elliott is mentally and physically drained now. Because he is no longer on use to the aliens, they carry his limp body to a light cage where Michael and Gertie are already resting.

Suddenly we hear a strange resonating hum throughout the ship, yet it is not coming from within the ship.

All the evil alien's freeze. A hatch opens to reveal E.T. with his glowing finger raised and his heart-light pulsating.

Elliott awakes immediately. E.T. advances toward the captives and deactivates the light cages. He and Elliott embrace with tears in their eyes.

Elliott, Michael, Gertie, Steve, Tyler and Greg leave the EVIL Mothership and wait for E.T. to come out after re-programming the alien's navigation controls. E.T. exits the ship and rejoins his faithful friends.

Soon after, Mary and Keys arrive and are reunited again with the magical little alien named E.T. After saying their tearful goodbyes, E.T.'s own Mothership descends from the Heavens to take the place of the evil ship that is now enroute to a remote corner of the galaxy.

There is HOPE in everyone's eyes as they all again, behold the picturesque departure of their favorite alien. Dreams can come true!

-THE END-