

CONFLICT AND ANTAGONISM



GEORGIAFILM
ACADEMY®

DRAMATIC WRITING FOR FILM, TELEVISION, AND THEATRE I

CONFLICT AND ANTAGONISM

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THE PRINCIPLE OF ANTAGONISM

WHAT causes your **PROTAGONIST** to become a **FULLY** realized, multidimensional, and **DEEPLY EMPATHETIC CHARACTER**?

WHAT brings a **DEAD** screenplay to **LIFE**?

THE PRINCIPLE OF ANTAGONISM

A **PROTAGONIST** and his story can only be as intellectually **FASCINATING** and emotionally **COMPELLING** as the **FORCES** of **ANTAGONISM** make them.

The more **POWERFUL** and **COMPLEX** the **FORCES** of antagonism **OPPOSING** the character, the more completely realized character and story **MUST** become.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ANTAGONSIM

“**FORCES OF ANTAGONSIM**” does
NOT just mean the **BAD** guys.

Think **SUPERMAN**.

What are the **FORCES OF ANTAGONSIM** besides Lex Luther?

Nuclear rockets

CA vs. NJ

Human Destiny vs. Love

From Underdog to Virtual God



Superman © 1978

THE PRINCIPLE OF ANTAGONISM

OTHER EXAMPLES:

Jerry Maguire –
“...You had me at
hello.” speech.

PLAY

*click for youtube video.

Jerry Maguire © 1996



CONFLICT

Most simply defined as the meeting of a character's **GOAL** and the **OBSTACLE** that gets in their way.

And this notion is **ENHANCED** by throwing as many **OBSTACLES** into that equation. The more **OBSTACLES**, the more the **CONFLICT**. The more we **SEE** those obstacles, the better the cinematic **CONFLICT** within your scripts.

© How to Create Cinematic Conflict in Your Screenplays
By Ken Miyamoto from ScreenCraft

CONFLICT

Your **CONFLICT** has to be something that can be **VISUALLY** expressed. We have to be able to **RECORD** it on film. That leaves out some **MAN vs HIMSELF**, because they are all about what people **THINK** - and we can't **SEE** that. By creating a situation where **PHYSICAL ACTIONS** show decisions we can explore some **INTERNAL CONFLICTS**.

© MY MOTHER THE ANTAGONIST
by William C. Martell

CONFLICT

In the Weitz brother's **AMERICAN PIE** the main conflict is **MAN vs HIMSELF**. The protagonist can't get a girl because he's a geek. We can **SEE** him not getting the girl. If you can't find a way to **SHOW** the **INTERNAL CONFLICT**, the audience has no way of knowing it exists.

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American Pie © 1999

CONFLICT AND ANTAGONISTS

One thing to consider about the **CONFLICT**
your **ANTAGONIST** creates:
Is the conflict **BIG** enough to fill the screen?

BIG can work **TWO** ways:
PHYSICALLY powerful or **EMOTIONALLY**
powerful.

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CONFLICT AND ANTAGONISTS

Alvin Sargent's **ORDINARY PEOPLE** is about a family who is destroyed by the death of the protagonist's brother. The **ANTAGONIST** is the mother, who loved the brother more and blames our hero for his brother's death. That's a pretty **BIG CONFLICT!**

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by William C. Martell

PLAY

*click for youtube video.

Ordinary People © 1980

CONFLICT

You need **MORAL
CONFLICT** to create
**COMPELLING
CHARACTERS.**

Robert McKee

PLAY

*click for youtube video.



A top-down view of a desk with various items: a notebook with a polka-dot cover, a clear container with paper clips, a pair of glasses, a pen, and a smartwatch.

ASSIGNMENT

**Write 4-5 PAGES of your
screenplay focusing on aspects
of CONFLICT and ANTAGONISM.**