



Adventures in the Screen Trade

William Goldman

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No one knows the writer's Hollywood more intimately than William Goldman. Two-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter and the bestselling author of *Marathon Man*, *Tinsel*, *Boys and Girls Together*, and other novels, Goldman now takes you into Hollywood's inner sanctums...on and behind the scenes for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President's Men*, and other films...into the plush offices of Hollywood producers...into the working lives of acting greats such as Redford, Olivier, Newman, and Hoffman...and into his own professional experiences and creative thought processes in the crafting of screenplays. You get a firsthand look at why and how films get made and what elements make a good screenplay. Says columnist Liz Smith, "You'll be fascinated."

Adventures in the Screen Trade Details

Date : Published March 10th 1989 by Grand Central Publishing (first published 1983)

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Author : William Goldman

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Genre : Nonfiction, Culture, Film, Language, Writing, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography, Media Tie In, Movies

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From Reader Review Adventures in the Screen Trade for online ebook

Sean O says

It was an entertaining book, but it didn't know what it wanted to be. A primer on how to hustle as a screenwriter? Amusing anecdotes about the movies he's worked on? A script workshop for tourists and beginners?

Yes all of these. Good, but not great. It could have been split and expanded into two better books, imho.

For fans of Goldman: He's a good writer and an entertaining read.

Joy H. says

Added 7/22/08.

EDIT 4/7/13: VERY interesting and told in an engaging manner. I enjoyed this book.

William Goldman is the Hollywood screenwriter who wrote "The Princess Bride". Screenwriting is not an easy profession because it's filled with all kinds of frustrations and set-backs.

ADDENDUM - 2/27/16:

PS-The title of this book is a PUN on the title: "Adventures in the Skin Trade, a collection of stories by Dylan Thomas.

PPS-More about William Goldman from WIKI:

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"WILLIAM GOLDMAN (born 1931) is an American novelist, playwright, and screenwriter. He came to prominence in the 1950s as a novelist, before turning to writing for film. He has won two Academy Awards for his screenplays, first for the western *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and again for *All the President's Men* (1976), about journalists who broke the Watergate scandal of President Richard Nixon. Both films starred Robert Redford. His other notable works include his thriller novel *Marathon Man* (first published 1974) and comedy-fantasy novel, *The Princess Bride* (first published 1973), both of which Goldman adapted for film."

Goldman also wrote a series of memoirs about his professional life on Broadway and in Hollywood. [The first of these was this book, "ADVENTURES IN THE SCREEN TRADE".]

ABOVE IS FROM WIKI: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Goldman)

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I also read: Goldman's book: "Which Lie Did I Tell?: More Adventures in the Screen Trade.

PPPS-Don't confuse this author, WILLIAM GOLDMAN, with the other author named WILLIAM GOLDING, who wrote: *Lord of the Flies* (1954).

Michael says

This is perhaps the best book about screenwriting and the film business ever written.

Oscar winner William Goldman, who wrote such classic films as *HARPER*, *BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID*, *MARATHON MAN* and *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN* shares his unique, often difficult, experiences working with top directors, producers and stars like Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Dustin Hoffman and Laurence Olivier.

If survival in the Hollywood film industry is possible, then there is no better "survival guide" than this book, because Goldman tells it like it is. He pulls no punches.

According to Goldman, the single most important fact in the movie industry is that "Nobody Knows Anything".

Most of the book's second-half is a primer on how to write a successful screenplay.

What does Goldman feel is the most important lesson to be learned about writing for films?

1. "Screenplays Are Structure"
2. You protect the "spine" of that structure "to the death".

If you want to work (and succeed) in Hollywood, then this is a book that you must carry around with you...like a Bible.

Melissa McShane says

We've been listening to *As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride* and it got me thinking that I hadn't read this book in many years, though I loved it the first time. So I bought a copy and dipped into it over the course of four or five days. Goldman's insider's approach is still compelling, though I wondered how much of what he says about how Hollywood works is still true 36 years later. It's also interesting to note some of what he failed to predict, from his assumption that *E.T. The Extraterrestrial* would win the Academy Award for Best Picture (at the time, *Gandhi* wasn't out) to his casual comments about women in action movies (i.e. that they slow a movie down--he had no concept of women someday starring in action films). However, the inclusion of the screenplay for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* makes the book even more valuable, especially since he also analyzes the screenplay and what works and what doesn't. The only thing that would make this book better, in my opinion, is if he'd written it five years later--so he could discuss *The Princess Bride*.

Nigeyb says

The recent sad news of the death of William Goldman reminded me of an episode (October 2017) of the wonderful Backlisted Podcast about his book *Adventures in the Screen Trade*. What better way to honour the great man's memory than by reading this book?

As a successful screenwriter and novelist, William Goldman was perfectly placed to write one of the definitive insider accounts of Hollywood. If you like cinema then this is a fascinating read. Although written in 1983, with many films he cites from this era, I am sure the process is little changed.

Adventures in the Screen Trade is a sparkling memoir and every bit as entertaining as some of the landmark films he helped create (including *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President's Men*, and *Marathon Man*).

A great mix of gossip, advice, and insight, *Adventures in the Screen Trade* remains a complete delight for cineastes - and a valuable trove of advice for anyone hoping to make a career as a screenwriter.

4/5

Julio Genao says

dishy, delicious, and—shockingly—very, very useful.

a couple years back i thought i'd move to hollywood and write movies for a living.

i love movies.

i write good.

what could go wrong?

everything. everything could go wrong.

because being a screenwriter is *exactly* like john august describes—except with a simply staggering amount of asslicking and a dash of despair he's too genteel to mention.

the stories, people... the stories. actors are appalling people—and so are studio execs.

recommended.

Scott says

A glorious tour of the sausage factory with a guy who breeds champion hogs. That's the image that came to mind as I finished this funny, authentic look at the movie business by a celebrated screenwriter (and novelist). Bill Goldman is painfully frank about his struggles, his weaknesses, and the seamy underbelly of the business that has paid his bills for decades. Writing in the wake of the "Heaven's Gate" disaster which shook the confidence of almost everyone in Hollywood (1982), Goldman still manages to end the book on an upbeat and hopeful note. And it turns out he was mostly right about the future.

The last section of the book is a particularly helpful exercise where he takes one of his short stories, wrestles it into a screenplay, and then interviews a cinematographer, a production designer, an editor, a composer and a director about what they would do with his finished product. (The director's critique is withering, and hilarious.) He admits that those interviews were the first time in his career that he had spent more than five minutes alone speaking with any of those film professionals, with the exception of the director.

Writers tend to be a cloistered lot, and blinkered when it comes to the "business" of the movie business. "Adventures in the Screen Trade" is a non-threatening tonic for this ailment.

Scurra says

Nobody Knows Anything.

Goldman could almost have saved us the 400-pages of what is still one of the most insightful books about the movie-industry, and just printed his Law on a single page at the front.

But then we'd have missed a glorious roller-coaster ride through Tinseltown stuffed to the gills with anecdotes of such toe-curling detail that you believe every word.

And even now, 25 years later, it still all rings true. Read it, and you too might understand how lucky we are to get the occasional "great" movie. Because it's quite simple:

Nobody Knows Anything.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting, William Goldman
Adventures in the Screen Trade is a book about Hollywood written in 1983 by American novelist and screenwriter William Goldman. The title is a parody of Dylan Thomas's Adventures in the Skin Trade.

Abstracts: No one knows the writer's Hollywood more intimately than William Goldman. Two-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter and the bestselling author of Marathon Man, Tinsel, Boys and Girls Together, and other novels, Goldman now takes you into Hollywood's inner sanctums...on and behind the scenes for Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, All the President's Men, and other films...into the plush offices of Hollywood producers...into the working lives of acting greats such as Redford, Olivier, Newman, and Hoffman...and into his own professional experiences and creative thought processes in the crafting of screenplays. You get a firsthand look at why and how films get made and what elements make a good screenplay.

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[illegible]

because some of them have recently died. But then he goes on to redact the identities of the *deadies*, while going right ahead and smearing the two performers who still have careers left to ruin.

That strange blend of bitterness and false modesty permeates the rest of this farrago of a -- what is it, a memoir? A handbook? A two-inch thick advance check? Whatever it is, it's macramed into a few dozen short sections seemingly based on the order of the manuscript pages after a passing bus blew them across Goldman's parquet floor. Each of those section manages to take a swipe at individuals, groups, or imagined coteries of robed gnomes William perceives of having wronged him, the targeted loogies flying from behind a shield forged of "Oh well, what do I know? I'm just a regular guy who fell into a wacky business full of crazy Hollywood types [that also made me rich and famous and got me a book deal to write all about it, but trust me I'm just like you]."

Bill's such a regular guy that, when he came to LA for his first movie biz meeting, he couldn't stand the thought of being picked up at the airport by a chauffeur-driven car and insisted on riding up in front with driver, because that's what regular guys like him and me and you do. I assume that Goldman, so proud of his New York City heritage, had never been in a cab before. Nor realized that lots of regular guys dream of being in a position where rich people send expensive cars to drive them around. But Will shares that story and others like it throughout the book to casually note what a humble, normal person he is, despite the fact that humble, normal people avoid constantly pointing out how humble they are in their books published by Time Warner.

Anyway, Goldman goes on to cheerfully disparage studio execs, actors, directors, actors, audiences, and also actors. He finds page space to belittle the auteur theory and anyone who subscribes to it, insisting that all movies are a team effort, while still blaming his failed movies on everybody else that worked on them. Billy also loves to explain other people's decisions and character traits he dislikes by ascribing thought processes to them, while managing to ignore the fact that he's making shit up out of boogers and ego. Dustin Hoffman refused a scene in *Marathon Man* that required his character to keep a flashlight in his nightstand, Goldman insists, because Dustin thought it would make him look weak on screen, and every male movie star, deep down, will never allow himself to look weak on screen. I'm curious as to what Goldman thought of Hoffman's Oscar-winning performance six years later as an almost helpless savant in *Rain Man*.

Between all the self-aggrandizing and payback that Willy skillfully disguises as friendly banter, he throws in some screenwriting advice. As a screenwriter myself, I can say that some of it's quite good, while some is just objectively crappy. He devotes a section to subtext but doesn't seem to have a clear idea of the difference between subtext and basic cinematic storytelling techniques. He writes a lousy four-page movie opening to demonstrate how to write a lousy movie opening and then, of all the scene's lousy features, pinpoints as lousy the only reasonably acceptable one.

Luckily I doubt many writers ever end up taking much advice from *Adventures in the Screen Trade*, because the book isn't written for them. Actually, I have no idea who it's written for. I can't imagine that the same readers who want mouthfuls of dirt about starlets having affairs with directors or a prison guard's testimony that his wife would crawl on her knees just for a chance to fuck Robert Redford also want to read a glossary of screenplay slug lines or the entire script for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. But if you're interested in the movie industry and are willing to weed through 600 pages (and twice as many ellipses), it's sometimes fun to watch the spray of Goldman's vindictive bloodletting. Too bad he leaves you to clean up the mess.

E. Nicholas says

A wonderfully humorous, oftentimes sad and elegiac account of show business through the eyes of one of its most renowned screenwriters. From "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" to "The Princess Bride," Goldman has had a career most writers could only dream of, with the scars to prove it. Anyone who has ambition to pursue a career in the movie industry (especially writers) should do themselves a favor and pick up this book. If your passion and enthusiasm are unfazed after wading through Goldman's horror stories and cautionary tales, it might just be for you. What impressed me most while reading, beyond Goldman's frank and brutally honest discussion of Hollywood, was how relevant so much of it seems to the business today. Written almost forty years ago, so many of the trials and tribulations Goldman describes, as well as his larger concerns about the where the business is heading, feel like they could have been written yesterday. The business is constricting, studios are making fewer movies, and all anyone cares about anymore is IP and blockbusters. It was true 40 years ago. It's true today. And somehow, realizing that gives me a modicum of hope. "Nobody knows anything," Goldman writes. Damn right. I wish I'd read this book sooner. Highly recommend.

Stephen McQuiggan says

One thing is clear from the beginning - Bill loves the movies. You would have to, I mean really really really have to, just to put yourself through the torture of writing for them, because that's the message that comes out of this again and again - prepare to be shat on. This is a gentle book; world weary, with a big heart. After detailing the vast amount of work it takes to bring a script all the way to the big screen, it's no wonder Goldman gets so angry at the Auteur theory. My only gripe about an otherwise insightful book is that the author is very hard on schlock horror B movies - a staple of my life for as long as I care to remember.

Molly says

This is a true insider's look at the screenwriting business (from the writer of *All the President's Men*, *Marathon Man* and – interestingly, the novel of *Princess Bride*) and interesting for anyone who writes or likes movies because - yes, there are fun gossipy asides about Hollywood (Robert Redford had ego!), but it's focus is on what makes a good story and how to write one that sells as a screenplay. They're not always the same thing.

Two big bonuses of this book: Goldman provides his entire screenplay of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and then analyzes what worked and what didn't. He also provides a short story of his that was not optioned by Hollywood. He translates it into a screenplay for this book and explains the choices he has to make along the way: what characters to keep, what scenes to focus on etc...

He then solicits feedback from a suite of movie insiders: a director, editor, cinematographer, etc ... about the resulting work. They give fascinating and practical insights into what they think of this screenplay and what makes a movie work in general, sometimes contradicting one another. Whether you agree with them is another matter.

The only detractor is that the book was written in 1983 and the references to stars include: Robert Redford, Burt Reynolds, etc.. and feel dated, even though the insights into writing are not.

Linda Robinson says

William Goldman is incredible. Prolifically incredible. In several genres. I read this book on 3-18-97 straight through. I know I did because I wrote this quotation:

"Nobody knows anything.

Again, for emphasis...

Nobody knows anything."
