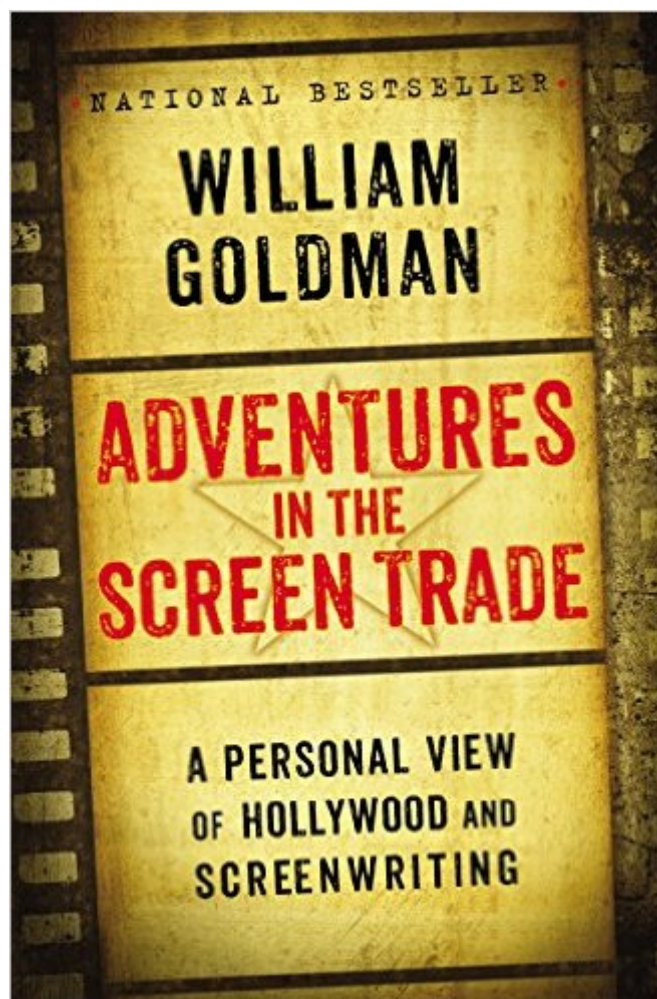


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Adventures In The Screen Trade



Synopsis

Now available as an ebook for the first time! 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."

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Customer Reviews

Writing screenplays can be a thankless task; producers, directors, and actors all have their own agendas and many are quite willing to sack the writer at the earliest opportunity in order to further those agendas. The salary can be nice, for sure, but you have to wonder sometimes why writers put up with it. *Adventures in the Screen Trade* will certainly have you asking that question more than once, but it also helps you get inside a writer's head and understand the rewards. William Goldman

wrote Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Princess Bride (both the book and the screenplay), and a ton of other books and screenplays. There's plenty of humor in Adventures, although not of the absurd type found in Princess Bride; it's more of a light-hearted, can-you-believe-this tone that you'd expect to hear from someone who is supposed to give a lecture but decides he wants to drop the pretense and have an informal conversation with the audience. The book opens with Goldman's analysis of the various elements of the film industry. The heart of the book, though, is probably the middle two sections. Goldman discusses his own adventures in the trade, and devotes at least a chapter to most of the films on which he worked from 1965 to 1979. He talks about the problems he encountered trying to find the "spine" of the stories, the structure that would let him transform an idea into a blueprint for a movie. He discusses the negotiations that tried to navigate through all those agendas - and sometimes succeeded; what connected with an audience and what didn't; and the small thrills that can be a part of the moviemaking process, like Sir Lawrence Olivier asking him if it was OK to rearrange a few words of dialogue in Marathon Man.

Goldman (whose credits include Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Marathon Man, Misery, and the Princess Bride, and who is also a terrific novelist) was the first screenwriter whose name I recognized as having appeared on the credits of several films. He has since become my favorite, so when I found that he had written a book on the workings of the screenwriter in Hollywood--a town for which I have always had great fascination--I knew I had to read it. Unfortunately, it was years before I finally got around to it. To give you an idea how good I think this book is, I had read Stephen King's Needful Things (app. 800 pages) in five days and that was at that point my quickest pace. Well, I read Adventures in the Screen Trade (including the full script of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid--a terrific read in itself, and alone worth the price of the book--a total of 600 pages) in two days. I just couldn't put the thing down, and I find that phrase to be a cliché of the most odious order. I was reading it at breakfast, on my commute in, at lunch, the commute out, all evening, and before bed. Goldman writes such a gripping story of his experiences in Tinseltown, that I was drawn in, always wondering what was going to happen next. Only once did my interest flag, and that was halfway through a screen adaptation of a story presented in the book just beforehand. The story was ten pages, the adaptation forty, so I simply felt at that point that I was reading the story over, it was just longer. However, once I got over that and realized that the point of the exercise was to illustrate the differences in form, I read again with relish. Goldman writes with a nicely conversational style--but not overtly so--that draws you in to his world.

The allusion to the "skin trade" in the title is intentional of course. Goldman is playing the old saw about the screenwriter as very well-paid whore. Be that as it may, this is an excellent book. If you're even thinking of becoming a screenwriter you ought to read it. You may change your mind, and then again you may not. You'll learn some screenwriting tricks and get a vivid glimpse inside the industry, circa 1982. Goldman has a style that is as earnest as all heck, emphatic, breezy, engaging, flippanant, a little high schoolish-but that plays. He thinks very highly of himself, but he is also a modest man. (Reasonable combination.) He trashes some people here, lionizes some others, but bottom line, he's not afraid to reveal himself, foibles and all. His two main rules of Hollywood are: NOBODY KNOWS ANYTHING and SCREENPLAYS ARE STRUCTURE (his caps). He means that nobody knows ahead of time what is going to be a successful movie, and it's a mistake to think that screenplays are mainly dialogue (I used to think that) because what really counts is the structure. Part One is about "Hollywood Realities" and it's the best part of the book: who controls whom and what, the pecking order, etc. Part Two he calls "Adventures" and it's about what it was like making some of the movies he was involved in; and remember Goldman wrote some top drawer films: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969), All the President's Men (1976), to name a couple. This part is also very good. Part Three he calls "Da Vinci" from the title of a short story he wrote as a young man that he turns into a screen play for the edification of his readers. The story is a dog and the screenplay not very readable, but it's good textbook stuff. A highlight is George Roy Hill's acidic comments on the script.

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