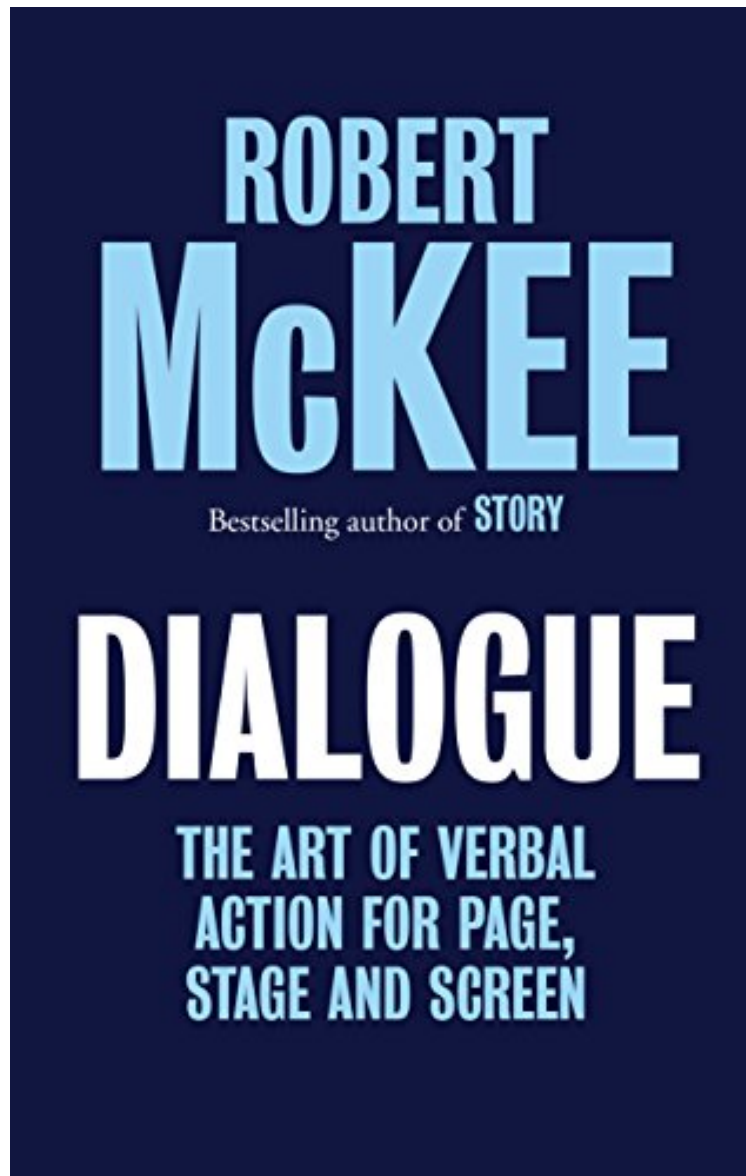


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Dialogue

Robert McKee

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Robert McKee : Dialogue before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dialogue:

60 of 61 people found the following review helpful. It's All Right Here. All of it.By BookwormI shouldn't even be writing this review because doing so only creates my competition. I'm writing it for Robert McKee out of respect and love for him as one of the best instructors I've never met. I have both STORY and now, DIALOGUE in hardcover, on

my Kindle, and the audio version (he narrates his books) in my headphones. I read it, I listen to it and take it with me when I travel. Sometimes I listen and read at the same time. Most nights I listen to the audio version in my sleep. In other words, I eat, sleep and breathe this book. I did the same thing with *Story*, his other book. I may go to my grave never fully comprehending the vast wealth of knowledge contained in these two books. That's OK. What I can tell you is this. With nothing but *STORY* as my guide, my very first screenplay took seven months and thirty-five drafts from start to finish. But. That screenplay became a Hallmark Movies and Mysteries feature film. The producers liked it so much they gave me another assignment. That one took six weeks, and they bought the first draft. I'm now working on my fifth script; this one is in the six-figure category, with five figures upfront just for the Treatment. And I owe it all to everything I've learned from studying Robert McKee, supplemented by what I learned from everyone else. Over the past thirty years, I've studied with forty plus instructors and highlighted hundreds of books and listened to dozens of recorded seminars. All that information is summed up and thoroughly explained in Robert McKee's two books *STORY* and now *DIALOGUE*. I won't live long enough to absorb everything he teaches. And I still study two hours a day as a warm up for my writing. I'd recommend Aaron Sorkin, Warner Hertzog, William Goldman (both Sorkin and McKee say he's the greatest), Blake Snyder, Chris Vogler, Michael Hauge, William Akers, and anybody else you can find who's willing to share their knowledge. Because you never know when a concept you didn't realize you didn't understand or needed is going to show up. Especially when presented from a different perspective. Having said that, if you are serious, and I mean dead serious, about becoming a working screenwriter, or any other kind of fiction writer for that matter, then you have no choice but to study McKee like your literary life depends on it. Buy the hardcover, buy the Kindle version, and buy the audio version of *DIALOGUE* and *STORY*. And supplement these two works with any other material that speaks to you. If you do this, you will become a first class screenwriter or novelist or playwright, because all three genres are only different ways of presenting a Story. If you can't commit to this, unless you're a genius or prodigy, you're wasting valuable time which could be spent following your true life calling. But if your heart's desire is to become a working writer, then sooner or later you'll have to know everything in McKee's two books. So, you might as well bite the bullet and jump in head first. It's all right here in *STORY* and *DIALOGUE*. All of it. Thank you, Mr. McKee. You, sir, changed my life.-- Jimmy Hager

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Read it once in about 3 days, going through the highlights again already, this one is an investment, not a purchase. By Matthew I. Excellent supplement to 'Story' - with examples of speech from popular stories that really drive home the content. It shows how to immerse dialogue into your scene(s) to give the words more meaning, and in a tension-raising-cycle, turn and give the scene itself more impact. I enjoy writing dialogue more with this better perspective of what to look for, and what questions to ask before giving my characters words. This is a book that will get multiple re-reads for reference and increase in understanding as I look to improve my craft and skill-set. Thanks Robert and company!

32 of 33 people found the following review helpful. "I Love the Art of Dialogue in All its Variety" By L. M. Keefer

In this companion book to his classic book on story, McKee drills down into dialogue. Fine dialogue "unites two unspoken realms", McKee tells us: "the inner life of a character and audience or reader." McKee compares effective dialogue to radio transmitters: "our subconscious tunes to another", he says. Dialogue gives voice to characters. McKee says it's the subtext of dialogue which is powerful. "The wellspring of character action flows invisibly from the subtext," McKee says. "All talk responds to a need, engages a purpose and performs an action." Each exchange of dialogue should "create an action/reaction which progress the scene", he teaches. This book is a primer in writing dialogue. Topics covered include figurative language, para-language, line design, flaws and fixes of dialogue, text and subtext, three functions of dialogue, types of sentences, dialogue vs. conversation, turning points, the spine of action, desire and much more. Using diverse examples from Shakespeare, Elmore Leonard, Tennessee Williams, *The Corrections*, *The Sopranos*, *30 Rock*, *Breaking Bad* and *Lost in Translation*, McKee highlights effective dialogue. A positive feature of this book is that McKee queries the reader, gives exercises, and then tells you what he thinks. On the topic of using figurative language, McKee asks the reader: is "sings lousy" or "sings sour" better? How about she "walks like a model" or she "moves like slow, hot wind". McKee thinks the latter of both examples is better. "The more sensory the trope, the deeper and more meaningful its effect," he says. Here is a sampler of some of the principles behind writing dialogue which McKee teaches:

- * "All talk responds to a need, engages a purpose, and performs an action. Therefore, beneath every line of character talk, the writer must create a desire, intent and action. That action then becomes the verbal tactic we call dialogue."
- * Prose has the power to invade a character's mind and project inner conflict across the landscape of thought.
- * "Virtually anything expressed in images or explained in narration can be implied in dialogue."
- * First function of dialogue - pass exposition to audience.
- * "Before writing a line, ask these questions: what does my character want out of this situation? At this precise moment, what action would he take in an effort to reach that desire? What exact words would he use to carry out that action?"
- * In the subtext of my character's verbal activity, what action is he in fact taking?"

If a character is eating ice cream, is he rewarding himself, consoling himself or rebelling?

- * "Ask yourself: 'If I were my character in this situation, what would I say?' Then listen with your most truth-sensitive ear for the honest, credible answer."
- * Prefer the concrete to the abstract, the familiar to the exotic and short words to long words. (There are exceptions.)
- * "When a scene fails, the fault is rarely in the words. Dialogue problems are story problems."

What is the most inept kind of dialogue? McKee

calls it "writing on the nose". Writing on the nose is putting a character's fullest thoughts and deepest emotions directly and fully into what she says, McKee says. There is no intrigue. There are three levels of text: text, subtext and subconscious subtext. "When you experience a quality story, don't you have the constant impression that you are reading minds, reading emotions?" McKee asks. The character's true desire is found in the subtext - oops, there's a passive sentence which should be rewritten. Find desire in the subtext. One interesting concept: some stories use the "third thing" such as *Waiting for Godot*. You have two tramps and Godot. McKee shows other examples of third thing writing. I enjoyed Part 3 of this book the best on *Creating Dialogue*. Here is a sampler of what I found most useful: * Creative writing calls on two sources of creativity: story talent and literary talent. * "...the more complex the psychology of a character, the more distinctive his dialogue must become." * "Panache may impress us, but a true voice affects us. The former calls attention to itself, the latter calls us to life." * "A writer's style or so-called voice cannot be found or created self-consciously. Voice is not a choice; it's a result." * "First draw on your sensory and visual power to imagine content (what your character sees and feels on the inscape - the unsaid and unsayable) ..." * "In essence you must transform the images in your character's inner life into the verbiage of his outer talk." * A character's personality tends to be expressed in the modifiers that color his nouns and verbs. * "Even if a character is in fact a bore, his dialogue must express his lifeless soul with vivid dreariness." Case studies illustrating principles are used. I particularly enjoyed his example of Cassius convincing Brutus to assassinate Caesar from Shakespeare's play. McKee explains how Shakespeare used the dialogue to portray his characters, the setting and their motivations. Fascinating. How can you improve your dialogue writing skills? McKee suggests a novel idea: rewrite bad dialogue which you find in books or plays. If your dialogue is lifeless or tinny, McKee offers helpful questions to ask to enliven your dialogue. If you care about quality dialogue as a writer or reader, this book illuminates the topic. Reading this book is like taking a course from McKee which you may want to do after reading the book. I found myself wanting to read more of Shakespeare's plays, and ordered "*Murder in the Cathedral*" by T.S. Eliot to study as McKee recommends it as an example of fine dialogue.

DIALOGUE is the follow-up title to Robert McKee's hugely successful *STORY*. Divided into four sections (*The Art of Dialogue*, *Flaws Fixes*, *Creating Dialogue* *Dialogue Design*) *Dialogue* teaches how to craft effective speeches for characters. McKee uses scenes from classic films and television programmes such as *Sideways*, *Casablanca*, *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and *Frasier* to demonstrate how dialogue is constructed and develops and covers the range of dialogue used on page, stage and screen. Readers and students are shown how to ensure dialogue holds the reader's or audience's attention, how to 'time' dialogue and how to retain motivation and to provide productive information within dialogue. The skills outlined allow writers in all spheres to create effective and functional speech. McKee dispels a few myths and shows writers how to eradicate bad habits, use emotion correctly and to avoid 'empty' dialogue which leads a character and a story into the equivalent of a writing 'cul-de-sac'. An insightful work from an author whose guidance can enhance a writer's style and achievements.

"Writing dialogue is a challenging art. McKee's book *DIALOGUE* is a great tool for writers." John Lasseter, Chief Creative Officer, Pixar Walt Disney Animation Studios * "McKee's *DIALOGUE* is a mother lode of insight and inspiration for any writer. His teachings have changed my career and changed my life. Robert McKee is in a category of one." Steven Pressfield, bestselling author of *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, *The War of Art*, and *Gates of Fire* * "McKee teaches what is not yet taught. He shines his unwavering analytical light on the structure and invisible substructure of dialogue. He takes a craft that is often considered instinctual or magical and reveals its chemical secrets." Terry Johnson, writer/director, winner of the Tony Award, Olivier Award, Critics' Circle Theatre Award, and Writers' Guild Award * "*DIALOGUE* is a masterwork. There's nothing harder to teach. Now this book exists. McKee has written an essential book akin to *The Elements of Style* for all writers." Margaret Nagle, writer/producer of Golden Globe-winning TV Series *Boardwalk Empire*, winner of the Writers Guild Award, Emmy, NAACP, Golden Globe, and PEN * "A rich and useful companion for practicing writers." Kirkus s * "I used to think great dialogue couldn't be taught. You either had an ear for it or you didn't. That was before I read McKee's *DIALOGUE*. He's a wizard at explaining the unexplainable." Sarah Treem, writer/producer, co-creator and showrunner of Golden Globe-winning TV Series *The Affair*, winner of the Writers Guild of America Award and Emmy Award nominee" About the Author Robert McKee, a Fulbright Scholar, is the world's most sought-after lecturer in the art of story. Over the last 30 years, he has mentored screenwriters, novelists, playwrights, poets, documentary makers, producers, and directors. McKee alumni include over 60 Academy Award winners, 200 Academy Award nominees, 200 Emmy Award winners, 1000 Emmy Award nominees, 100 Writers Guild of America Award winners, and 50 Directors Guild of America Award winners.