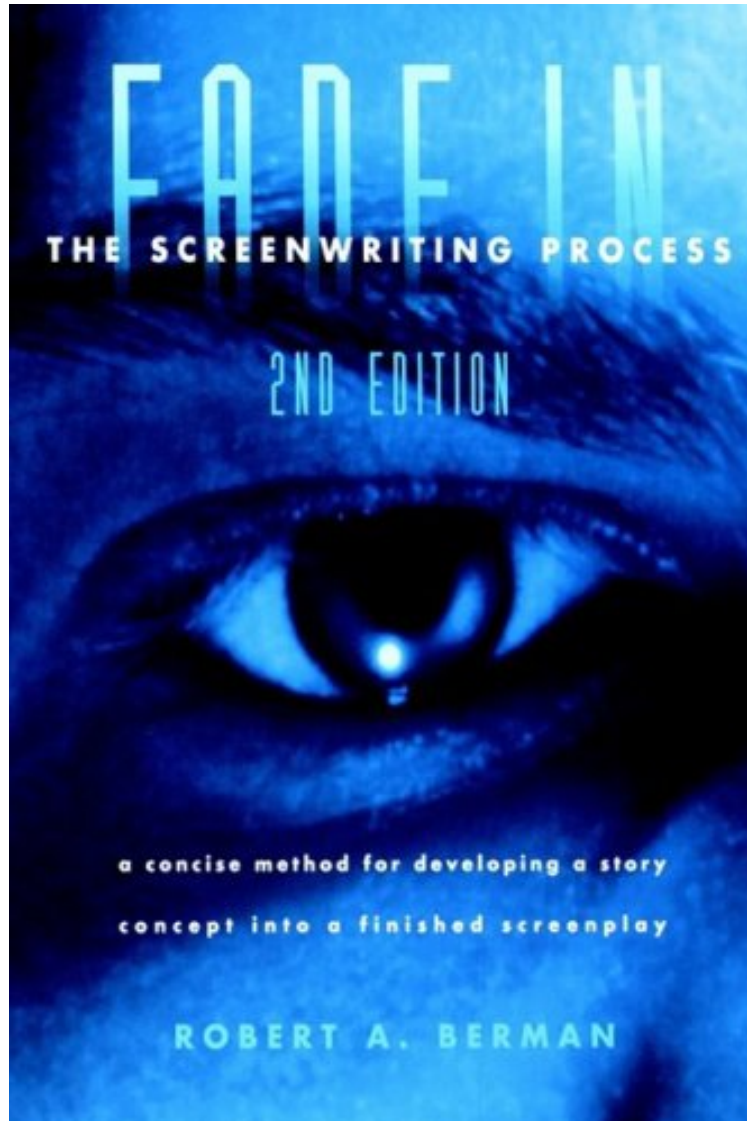


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## Fade In: The Screenwriting Process, Second Edition

*Robert A Berman, Bob Berman*

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**Robert A Berman, Bob Berman : Fade In: The Screenwriting Process, Second Edition** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fade In: The Screenwriting Process, Second Edition:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Fade In: a.k.a. Why Won't Hollywood Listen To Me? By D.I wholeheartedly second the prior reviewer's thoughts. I, too, bought this book at a bookstore on the strength of its packaging, premise, etc., etc. It wasn't until I began reading it that I learned that the author wrote the first edition of this book after only about a year or two of trying to write and sell screenplays. That was my first indication of a

problem. The second came when I learned that since then, and as of the 2nd edition, ten years have passed and the author has still not had a script seriously reviewed, much less optioned or produced, by Hollywood agents and producers. And this man is trying to tell us that he can reveal the secrets of writing well and selling your work? Buyer Beware!!! Now, I have no problem with the "those who can't do, teach," philosophy. Many of my best instructors were people who were able to successfully convey information and develop talent, but were unable to do the same for themselves. However, this book breaks down into three main messages, each taking fully one-third of the book, and the first two worthy of a good, private journal, not a textbook: Message One: The Story of My Life. Talk about vanity projects. The author gives us his life history, tells us about how good he is, how much confidence he has in his own ability, yada, yada, yada. Enough already. Save it for the psychiatrist's couch or group therapy. A book purporting to teach screenwriting and screen-selling is not the place for self-affirmations. Believe me, sales to suckers like me do not constitute success. (In fact, this is the first, and only time, I've publicly admitted to purchasing this book. P.T. Barnum, I love you.) Real World Lesson #1: No one cares if you host jazz improv in your house if you can't even write a screenplay that would make a dog howl. Part Two: Nobody Understands Me. Under the guise of telling us the "truth" about the Evil Hollywood Conglomerate, we are treated to page after page of diatribe. Mr. Berman is right, everyone else is wrong, and if only he could find that one person who believes in him as much as he believes in himself, we'd all realize how mistreated he was and come crying to his door, begging to be allowed a second chance to produce his work. He acknowledges, but doesn't seem to understand, that Hollywood is a business. Until you have any sort of power, artistic or financial, in that world, don't expect to be able to make a change in how it operates or to get your work read - especially if it isn't very good. Real World Lesson #2: If you're going to tilt at windmills, make sure you have a good product behind you. Mr. Berman's self-included full-length screenplay is an embarrassingly poor knockoff of a noir thriller. I can't believe he had the huevos to include it in his book as a sample of anything other than what to avoid. I guess I'll grant him guts, in addition to a certain lack of sense. Part Three: Nuts and Bolts. Believe it or not, there are a few gems in this book, but mostly resource lists and information about screenplay formatting, all of which can be obtained elsewhere (books, software, etc.) that also provide solid information on technique. Real World Lesson #3: Look further than the first and last few pages of a book before buying it. My sympathies to the author's wife. He consistently refers to her patience in the face of his apparent lack of monetary or artistic success over the last ten years. I hope she can hold out. I hope Mr. Berman can start listening, and stop talking, long enough to improve his work. I don't wish him ill, I just want to let other potential readers know that there are hundreds of other resources that will provide much better, more solid information without having to wade through all the self-indulgent whining. 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. "Don't be so sure..." By D. The prior reviewer wrote: "Okay, so the guy hasn't sold a script. I'll bet these other negative reviewers of this book haven't either." "Don't be so sure. Why am I bothering to even respond to such a comment, when normally I would just grimace and move on? Several reasons: First, I'm not sure any of the other reviewers (including myself) are basing their opinion of the book itself on whether or not the author has actually sold a screenplay (although the reasons for this lack of a sale become quickly apparent). Nor should such a standard be used to determine whether or not these reviewers have the right to comment upon whether or not the book was helpful to them. The author has every right to write the book, regardless of so-called qualifications; we have every right to comment upon it. Second, the prior reviewer himself admits that the book is only helpful because it offers so many examples of what NOT to do. Faint praise, and hardly enough to justify giving the book a misleading four-star rating. Third, for some reason the author himself has decided to post a commentary on this page, indicating that the reviewers' criticism is "harsh...irrelevant, and even malicious..." thus continuing to beat the drum that he is somehow misunderstood, both inside and outside of Hollywood. Unfortunately, other than claiming courage and humor in the face of such indignities, he still has yet to make a convincing case that he can either do -- or teach -- any of the things of which he or his book assert he is capable. He wrote the thing, placed it in the public arena, and is now asking the public to pay good money to read it; he should thus be willing to let that same money-paying public comment on whether or not they found his product to be useful. (Hollywood can pass judgment on his scripts.) I agree that our opinions are "harsh." Unfortunately, they are well-deserved and honest; the book is, frankly, a stinker and not very useful. Are they "irrelevant?" Absolutely not; they rightfully question the price tag attached to the advice being offered. Is the book worth purchasing? For many, the answer is apparently, "No." Are they "malicious?" I highly doubt it. Yes, I personally felt that I had been sold a bill of goods, but I blame myself for that error as much as I blame the author and his publishers. I should know better than to read the book jacket, only, before making a purchase. The author may indeed be a very nice gentleman -- I have never met him and likely never will -- however, this is not reason enough to pretend that his book is good or his lessons valuable. Again I say: he put himself into this arena, for money, and should thus be prepared for the slings, arrows and praise that follow. Why am I so hung up on this? First of all, while most writers (including myself) dislike negative reviews of our work and secretly linger over positive reviews, we usually have the manners and the personal security to keep our mouths closed about both. Secondly, if one is going to defend one's work, one must do it on the merits of the work itself, not on whether or not one had honest intent in producing it. And finally, a wise writer understands that all reviews are valuable, especially the negative ones. Whether or not we agree with (or follow) their advice, we treat them as opportunities to learn, rather than occasions for

defensiveness. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The blind leading the blind (to the movies!) By A Customer I purchased this book on the strength of a quick flip-through. It promised a strong mix of resources for the tyro screenwriter: technical tips, industry advice, a variety of resource listings, and a complete 100-page formatted script bound into the back of the volume. I was not prepared, therefore, to discover that the author (and, implicitly, scripting expert) is a former "sales manager" who, at the age of 42, decided to quit his job and re-invent himself as a Hollywood screenwriter. This in itself is not a bad thing. There are plenty of wonderful poets, novelists, playwrights, and screenwriters who tumbled to their particular gift or passion late in life. Mr. Berman seems to have neither. Nor has he had any success in his chosen field. In the ten years since he switched careers he has not sold a single script. This fact is reflected in the writing: it appears that, for Mr. Berman at least, the Holy Grail of screenwriting is simply getting someone to read your script. A possible reason for this lack of success may be that Mr. Berman has never been, by his own repeated admission, "a big reader." This is made embarrassingly clear in an anecdote about an attempted interview with William Goldman (Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid; Marathon Man; All the President's Men). Goldman asks Berman to name a few of his favorite authors. He can't. Not a single one. Caveat lector on this alleged book. If there is ever a move toward consumer protection in non-fiction publishing, I will send a copy to every member of Congress. If there's any justice, there will be plenty of remaindered copies to pick over in the near future.

Fade In is a concise, step-by-step method for developing a "story concept" into a finished screenplay. Used by professionals and universities around the world, this book covers the basics of dramatic writing; creating characters; screenplay structure, techniques and terminology.

About the Author Bob Berman is author of "Strange Universe" and "Secrets of the Night Sky," He has a weekly radio show and a monthly hour-long call-in show on NPR Northeast. He also writes a column for "The Old Farmer's Almanac" and is a monthly columnist for "Discover" and "Astronomy" magazines. He lives in upstate New York.