



Learning from the Masters

AN INTERVIEW WITH SCREENWRITER DAVID GOYER

QUIZ & SUGGESTED EXERCISES

(RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE STUDENTS)

“I’m interested in characters that are conflicted. I’m interested in characters that have to go to a dark place, and people that are alienated. I’m sure there’s a little of my own experience as a kid in there.”

David Goyer

EXCERPTS FROM DAVID GOYER'S INTERVIEW:

MIKE DE LUCA: *Does it require a special skill set to make a comic book believable on screen?*

DAVID GOYER: I think it does. If it's a well-known character, there's a canon, a known lore. You have to be very careful about what you choose to change. I'd like to think that because of my background reading comics and also writing comic books, that in the case of Batman, I had a pretty good handle on what was sacred and what could be modified. I would maintain that some of the comic book movies that have been made, that aren't successful, have been the ones that veered too far away from the source material.

DE LUCA: *Was [honoring the original Batman comics] a big consideration in the drafting of the story?*

GOYER: We had to walk a thin line between delivering something for the fans and something for the broader mass audience. The problem was that the core fans were used to a dark depiction of Batman. But the mass audience wasn't used to it.... We had to make sure we didn't shock them. It was definitely a juggling act.

DE LUCA: *Are there certain themes that you like to explore in your work?*

GOYER: I like to tell stories about either reluctant heroes or heroes who [are alienated]. In the case of Blade, he's acting heroically, but the rest of the world thinks he's a vigilante. As is the case with Batman. In "Dark City," again, it's a hero acting alone, who's isolated. I don't think I'd be good to write Superman, because it's the opposite of that.

DE LUCA: *He's angst-free.*

GOYER: Yeah. I wouldn't know the angle. I'm so angst-ridden. I wouldn't know what to do with a character like that.

QUIZ:

As you watch the interview, see if you can answer the following questions.

1. Where does the nickname “Prince of Darkness” come from?
2. Does Goyer like to work from an outline?
3. Why does he refuse to show an outline to studio executives?
4. What does he say was his first step in working on the Batman and Flash projects?
5. What was his ambition before pursuing screenwriting?
6. When does he feel everything “clicked” for him in his development as a screenwriter?
7. Does he recommend going to film school?
8. Who is Cynthia Verlane?
9. Why does Goyer say it’s valuable to have the writer on-set during shooting?
10. What does he consider to be his best produced script? Unproduced script?
11. Why does he prefer to develop a script in collaboration with a director?
12. Does he consider discipline and a rigid work schedule important to his process?
13. Why does Goyer think studio executives choose to employ multiple writers on projects?
14. What does he say is the most important attribute for a screenwriter?
15. Why does he think comic book characters like Superman and Batman have endured for generations?

Bonus question:

16. What word is tattooed on Goyer’s bicep – but misspelled?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES:

1. David Goyer says that young filmmakers today don’t view comic books the way their predecessors did. What is different in their attitudes towards this material? How is that reflected in their film adaptations? Name an “old style” adaptation and compare it to one in the “new style.”
2. Goyer says there are two kinds of writers: character writers and plot writers. What does he mean? Do you agree that writers can be divided this way? What might be the strengths and weaknesses of each type of writer? Which type more naturally describes you?
3. Goyer says the overall style of a film affects how he describes characters and action in his screenplay. What kind of film does he say calls for a spare style? What kind calls for a florid style? As an experiment, write an initial description of a lead character in a spare style. Now describe the same character using a heightened, more dramatic style.
4. Looking at an antique children’s toy – a clown riding a scooter – Goyer sees a macabre souvenir from a murder scene. Using the same object, can you come up with your own story? Who owned the toy? What is its significance?

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