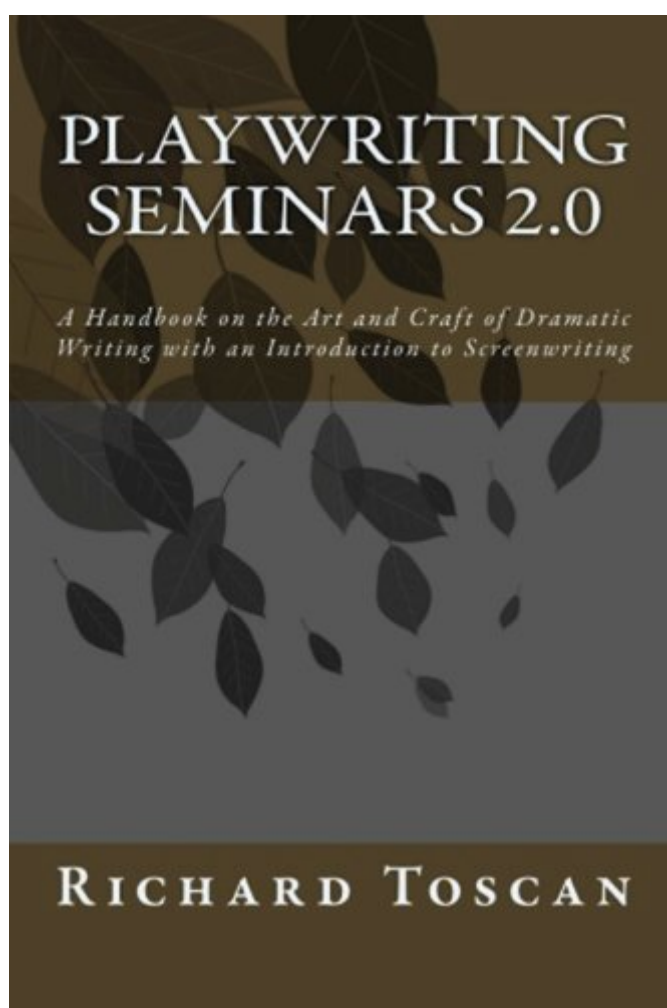


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# Playwriting Seminars 2.0: A Handbook On The Art And Craft Of Dramatic Writing With An Introduction To Screenwriting



## Synopsis

Playwriting Seminars is a treasure-trove of information, philosophy, and inspiration (Theatre Journal), an absolutely essential guide to all aspects of playwriting and a valuable whitewater raft trip down the rapids of Hollywood screenwriting (Magellan), and a terrific learning environment for writers (WebCrawler Select). It was also a recommended resource for playwrights at New Dramatists (NYC). The Handbook's initial concepts came from the author's work with Lucasfilm and the BBC. It was originally developed for playwrights and screenwriters, but has since been used by writers of fiction and nonfiction books. This new edition covers all aspects of writing full-length plays with an expanded treatment of screenwriting for Hollywood and independent film as well as diagrams of key elements of dramatic structure. Playwriting techniques are explained with many examples from classic and contemporary plays performed today by America's regional theatres as well as on Broadway and Off-Broadway. The 392 page Handbook explains the interconnections between characters and plot and the importance of subtext to character development in the contemporary theatre (what characters don't tell us matters as much as what they say in dialogue). Key exercises are included for developing voice as a writer and for creating the essential dual plot structure that supports intriguing characters in today's theatre. Many professionals in theatre and film are quoted on key parts of the art and craft of playwriting and screenwriting to help explain effective techniques. Special sections of the Handbook focus on getting inspiration and avoiding writer's block, editing first drafts, professional script formats for theatre and film (including software), how to launch new scripts, putting together submission packages for theatres and competitions, how to write an effective script synopsis and writer's bio, working with directors, actors and agents, how to survive audience talkbacks following readings and workshop productions, methods to adjust your playwriting skills for screenwriting and television work, and options for making a living at the craft of dramatic writing. Richard Toscan was Dean of the School of Theatre at the University of Southern California where for many years he taught playwriting and play analysis. His professional work as a producer, story editor, playwright, and judge of new play and screenplay competitions informs his approach to what makes new plays work in the contemporary theatre. He has worked in association with Lucasfilm and noted figures in theatre, film, and television. That experience has led him to stress the importance of developing voice as a playwright and the dual plot structures used by nearly all produced playwrights today. His radio dramas have been broadcast throughout the world by the BBC, NPR, CBC, and ABC. Toscan later taught playwriting and screenwriting while Dean of PSU's School of Fine & Performing Arts. More recently he was Dean of VCU's

School of the Arts where he founded the Cinema Program.

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## **Customer Reviews**

Do not order any other book: This is the book you want if you know nothing about play writing, especially how to format the written page for submission to producers. Expertly written with clear, concise explanation, discussion, opinion, and "nuts and bolts" the mechanics of starting and completing a play are all laid out in an easily read format. I wish I had bought this book first and not wasted my money on two other books I \*thought\* were going to be helpful and instructional. Granted, it's hyperbole, but this Kindle book is practically the instructor-delivered portion of a top-tier MFA course in play writing.

At this stage of my life as a part-time playwright, this book was just what I needed to challenge me to improve my playwriting skills and at the same time validate the things I am doing right. It is written in a no-nonsense manner with no mumbo-jumbo playwriting platitudes. If the concepts are not understood by a playwright at ANY level, then one needs to think seriously about seeking another

career. It also gives a very informative and balanced perspective on the basics of writing screenplays and the pros and cons of seeking it as a career (as it does with seeking playwriting as a career - as well as juggling between the two and what that requires of the soul). Like any such career in theatre and film it requires a combination of talent, persistence, hard work and just plain luck for success (depending on one's definition of success). This book is not written through rose-colored glasses and tells it like it is. The last portion of the book features quotes from noted authors, playwrights and screenwriters which provide a virtual banquet of food for thought. Highly recommended. It is now my playwriting \*bible. \* Please note that I am not a fundamentalist in any aspect of my life.

How To textbooks can be didactic and narrow, but when dealing with a creative topic like writing for the theatre, what you want is something motivational and expansive. You need to know where the barriers are, but you also want to be encouraged to leap over them and do something - well - creative. That's what Richard Toscan has delivered with his newly revised text, "Playwriting Seminars 2.0". Drawing on a long career as both a theatre professional and an academic, Dr. Toscan presents playwrights with an A to Z guidebook, an invaluable tool for those seeking to enter this competitive and challenging profession. I first met Rick Toscan when he and John Houseman were running the Drama School at the University of Southern California in the late 1970s. Over the thirty plus years since, Dr. Toscan has accumulated a vast network of industry contacts and experiences, both as a playwright himself, and as a producer, professor, and university administrator. Along the way, he has taught countless talented writers the fundamentals of play structure, good storytelling, and the hard realities of the "business". Now that collection of insights and experiences are available to anyone anxious to learn what it takes to succeed as a playwright. As a bonus, "Playwriting Seminars 2.0" includes chapters on writing for the movie and television industries as well. There's a lot of information crammed into the book's seventy-six chapters. You'll explore play topics and titles, copyright issues, finding your voice as a writer, character development, story structure, editing, using stage directions, script formats, submitting your work to regional theatres and competitions, finding an agent, working with a director, and much, much more. Despite its scope, the book is very readable. Toscan keeps the tone conversational and real. His "rules that must not be broken" are often followed by examples of when you might decide to go ahead and break those rules. Chapters begin with relevant quotes from theatre legends that are often funny and always provide thoughtful context. His advice is practical and supportive. Whether you're a student starting out, a career changer fulfilling a creative dream,

an established writer looking for fresh perspectives, or just curious, this is a text you'll enjoy reading the first time through, and that you'll find yourself returning to over and over. Like a good play, it's well worth the price of admission.

This book is an incredible tool to use if you're a beginning playwright or an advanced student in playwrighting. It's filled with a lot of valuable information and is chock-full of examples to illustrate the topic of each section. This book will lay the foundation for your working script, and will inspire you to seek out to view or read the plays they present as examples. The writing style is so accessible that you can easily grasp the concepts. I highly recommend this book!

I have been using this resource for at least a decade on-line. I am so happy to know that I have a printed copy on my computer at all times and will purchase the paper copy as well. I refer all my writer friends to the Playwriting Seminars because there is something for everyone no matter what level you are at. It is good for reaffirming what you know, reading other writers' quotes, learning foundational rules for playwrighting and learning several approaches to whatever structure you need for your play. It's easy to follow and makes for good in-between-writing reading. Extremely helpful for the business side of playwrighting.

Richard Toscan's website and book are the best around if you want to try dramatic writing. He's one of the best teachers in the business. I followed his guidance in writing my play, HIGH THIN CIRRUS - it sold out at the Westbeth Theatre in New York. - Michael Downend  
Playwriting Seminars 2.0: A Handbook on the Art and Craft of Dramatic Writing with an Introduction to Screenwriting

This is the best book I've found on play writing. Succinct and easy to understand, it highlights all of the essentials needed to write a great play.

I used the Playwriting Seminars for years and was delighted to find it is now a book. Many playwrighting texts are so theoretical that they become indecipherable. In contrast, Richard Toscan is clear and to the point. I love the way he embellishes his points with quotes from various playwrights. This is my go-to text for when I want to brush up on something quickly.

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