

So let's talk loglines.

What makes a great logline?

How about this one?

When a Roman general is betrayed and his family is murdered by an insane and corrupt prince, he comes to Rome as a gladiator to seek revenge.

Any guesses?

I hope you all screamed Gladiator at once.

But what makes it good? Simple. It has, in one sentence, all the details you need to excite you about that idea. We know who the main character is (a Roman general), we know he was betrayed, we know what happened to him (his family was murdered), we know who the bad guy is (a corrupt prince), we know the world and the period (gladiator time in Rome) and we know his motivation (he wants revenge).

It's the spine of the entire story. 'Nuff said. I want to see that movie.

Let's try another...

In a future where criminals are arrested before the crime occurs, a cop struggles on the lam to prove his innocence for a murder he has not yet committed.

Again, what do we get out of this? We know it's in the future. We know the main character is a cop and he's on the lam. We know he has to prove his innocence. Why would I NOT want to see that kind of a movie (taking into consideration that we don't know the struggling cop is going to be Tom Cruise) Regardless, say what you will about Minority Report, it's still a fun ride and doesn't disappoint in the excitement and the thrills.

Let's fry up another one...

A young man and woman from different social classes fall in love, must outwit her abusive fiancé, and find a way to survive aboard an ill-fated voyage at sea.

Right off the bat we're introduced to the characters. We know the man and woman come from different social classes. Translation...one's poor and one's rich. Good. Got that. Just knowing that little tid-bit, we can already infer the tension and drama that their relationship is going to occur. It's a classic tale. SOMEONE is going to have a problem with their relationship and it's going to explode as it always does. So boom...we're golden. We know they fall in love. Uh oh. We meet the bad guy and we know he's abusive. Hmm, think he's going to have a problem with their relationship? Yeah. I think so. Most importantly, the ship is going down and they have to survive. So we know, not only does their love have to survive the class problem but it also has to physically survive the boat sinking. Sure, it's a little long in length (that's what she said) but the core story of these two young lovers is what made Titanic one of the highest grossing films of all time.

Let's take another swing at the dead horse...

A 17th Century tale of adventure on the Caribbean Sea where the roguish yet charming Captain Jack Sparrow joins forces with a young blacksmith in a gallant attempt to rescue the Governor of England's daughter and reclaim his ship.

At this point, if we were in a class room I would totally turn it over to you to analyze this VERY easy logline, but because we're not, I'll take it from here.

When are we?

17th century.

Where are we?

The Caribbean.

Who's our hero?

A roguish and charming Captain.

What's the mission?

Save the girl and get his ship back.

What is implied?

She was kidnapped and his ship was stolen.

Doesn't that sound like fun? I'd lay down 12 bucks to see that. Oh wait, I already did.

One more, just because it's one of the greatest movies of all time as well as one of the greatest scripts of all time...

An archeologist is hired by the U.S. government to find the Ark of the Covenant before the Nazis.

Short. Sweet. To the point.

He's a professor. He's looking for an ancient relic. He has to beat the Nazi's.

Just by telling us who the bad guys are, we know the time frame. World War II. It's the 40's.

These are all examples that you need to strive for when you write yours. You only need a sentence to tell us the heart of your idea. Give us the who, what, where, when and motivation.

So on to business...the part most of you really care about. The contest.

First things first...thank you to all of you that submitted loglines. There were a LOT and that's just awesome. So how did I narrow it down to 5 entries?

To keep it fair, I cut and pasted all of the loglines into one document. I did not include names or titles. JUST the loglines. I printed that list out and gave it to several friends, telling them to star their favorite 5 loglines. From there I looked at which loglines were picked the most often. I then took the list and made my own picks. It was tough folks. My first round I had 8 picks (as did several of my friends) but I

narrowed it down to 5 choices that I just had to go with, 3 of which, were just the most popular picks amongst my peers.

So here is how this is going to work. I'm going to post the 5 loglines below and you're going to vote. I will save any critique of these loglines or save why I chose them for next week's column. I don't want to skew or sour the votes. Because of how I did this, I honestly don't know who any of these loglines belong to. For all I know, 2 of these loglines could belong to one person.

When you vote, you're allowed to vote for your top 3. Next week, I'll announce the 3 finalists and send them an email asking for their pitch and then we'll go from there.

So without further ado, in no particular order of importance, here are your top 5:

(drum roll please)

1. *Two struggling screenwriters, a seasoned pro and a first timer, find themselves literally living their craft.*
2. *A troubled war-vet turned private detective is hired to clear a wealthy man of his wife's murder, but finds that the complex and dangerous case and his growing platonic relationship with the couple's 13-year-old daughter may cost him his livelihood and even his life.*
3. *My dog bit me so I may bark a little and drag my ass on the carpet today. So goes the lifelong logic of six, non-conforming, irreverent women. Dysfunctional friendships are heightened when one accidentally dies to save another.*
4. *A workaholic reluctantly takes his family to a private island for a vacation after his son wins a video game contest but they soon realize they are being hunted and used to create a realistic interactive game.*
5. *A discredited archeologist and a cynical reporter race an evil general to uncover the Lost City of Atlantis, Earth's only hop of salvation from a comet on course to destroy the world.*

So that's it folks. Send me your top 3 and we'll see who moves on. You can obviously vote for your own idea, but I'm forcing you to vote for two others to keep it fair. Try to leave commenting on the loglines out of your vote, it's totally not necessary and really, it's not wanted. More importantly, stay anonymous. Don't send me crap like "Hey, thanks for picking mine!" I don't want to hear it. Let's keep it a clean fight. Fair?

Send your votes and any OTHER comments or questions to weekendread@gmail.com.

One last thing...for those of you keeping track (and I know some of you are) I just want to point out that this was a curse-free column. You're welcome ;)

Till next week...