

15 Crucial Story Questions Worksheet

SCRIPT: THE WAR, 135 PGS.

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Excellent-4 Good-3 Fair-2 Poor-1

1. Is there a strong high concept that is easily
 communicated in a logline or a pitch? 2
It's a very complicated high concept with too much going on that would be confusing in a logline. Need to focus it down.
2. Is there a clear genre and audience for this film? 1
No, which is a major problem. You have a combination of a brutal, serious Civil War docu-drama with a social issue drama *and* a creature feature thriller! I can't see how it would be marketed in today's commercial marketplace.
3. Is a convincing reality established within the world of the film? 1
It's convincing initially but as the story goes on and you attempt to weave the disparate tones, I don't buy it. I suggest you find your tone and better define the 'rules' of this fantasy world with more clarity, early on, and stick to them as you focus your plot.
4. Is there a controlling theme? 2
You have several themes in here, some which can go entirely, e.g., the injustice of slavery (seen it too many times before). The key is focus. I'd like to hear what you believe is the most important theme to you. Man's monstrous nature that comes out in the time of war? The story pushes to men putting aside their hatreds to fight the true monsters, thus acting more humane...is that close? I'd love to see that story in a genre wrapper if only you can focus on it in the next draft.
5. Is there a fascinating Central Mystery? 2
It's convoluted -- we initially wonder about the origins of the werewolves and chupacabras (first supernatural appearance is on page 3) but the story takes too long to catch up to them, and too long after that to set up a clear fight.
6. Does the protagonist have clearly defined goal/s? 2.5
No. It would really help to stay focused on McConnell's clear goals -- one external and one internal goal. For me the goal of defeating the creatures is the most interesting, and the hook that the Rebs and the Union soldiers have to team up is your Act Three engine. I like how McConnell straddles both sides.
7. Is the protagonist an active hero? 2
Not enough, in that it takes too long for McConnell to fight the creatures. I'd like to see the story focus on him more as the Protagonist. You have many convincing medical details in there which add to his character and his backstory is familiar without being generic. I really like him so would like to see him drive the story moreso.
8. Is there a strong arc of change for the hero in which they undergo an
 "assumption of power?" 3
Yes, I like the aspect that McConnell finds his "new family" by the end with Jane and child.
9. Is character shown through action? 2.5
Mostly, yes, but there's so much fat to trim that as of now the strong actions are being buried in so much dense, repetitive material. You have WAY TOO MANY characters! Need to cut many of them. You also try to weave in too many historical characters, which can be neat but also can slow down what should be a driving, scary horror action thriller.

10. Does the major throughline get started by page 30? 2
No, it's coming too late plus your writing is so dense and your description so concerned with "directing" every detail that the first half of the script really drags.
11. Is the conflict constantly escalating? 2.5
Not in a focused manner -- too much time is spent on the horrors of the Andersonville prison and there are SO many characters that stakes get diluted. I'd like to see a focus on the conflict escalating toward the team-up of Confeds. and Union soldiers against the monsters -- either around pg. 75 or end of Act One around 85-90.
12. Do the act breaks turn the story in new and active directions? 2
Your next draft will need to feature strong act breaks in the proper page range and focus on more clear story engines (I say focus on the fight against the creatures; the threat keeps escalating until the final fight). As of now, you have your turn into Act II on pg. 33 when it should be on 27-28 (but probably better at 20!) and your turn into Act III is on pg. 99 when it should be 87-88 (but probably better on 75!). So work on structure, beginning by trimming the fat surrounding the skeleton of your beat sheet! (see draft notes for more)
13. Is a "Clock" (an urgent time deadline) established? 2.5
The clock can be more clear and more urgent -- I'd love to see it ticking from the Midpoint.
14. Does the Midpoint push the action to the climax? 3
Your intended midpoint was probably around page 63 when McConnell and Jane first begin to develop a relationship. This works nicely, but I wouldn't mind even more focus on them and more of a love affair in the next draft.
15. Does the climax bring together all the plotlines and communicate the theme in a surprising and unique manner? 2
You have the bones of a great final battle but it will no doubt change in the next draft after you trim the fat and focus the story. Honestly, I don't think you even need the chupacabras and I didn't like how they essentially were the ones to finally kill the werewolves in the end, thus making the heroes' triumph not as active.

TOTAL: 32/60