



THE CHRIST IN MEDIA INSTITUTE

Screen Story Competition

The *Christ in Media Institute* at Bethany Lutheran College invites your entry for a "screen story competition" in the spring 2012 semester. The competition challenges you to create story ideas that clearly reflect Christian beliefs, and that could be developed into a short film or a full-length motion picture for showing to the general American public in theatres or on television.

Format. Create your entry in the format of a "treatment," that is, a narrative that is a full exploration of the story. A treatment for a short film would run a page or two (single spaced), for a full-length feature from 3 to 5 pages. A more detailed description of the treatment format accompanies this invitation, including an online reference to where you can examine a sample 5-page treatment.

Eligibility: student division. This competition is open to any student enrolled at Bethany Lutheran College, Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran College, or to any student at a high school, college or university who understands biblical Lutheran theology.

Eligibility: non-student division. A separate competition is open to non-students. Members of college faculties and staffs, and any other adults of our fellowship, are encouraged to enter.

Multiple entries from the same person are acceptable.

Prizes. In the student division, prizes of \$50 are offered for the best entry in each of the six categories listed below, with one \$50 "wild-card" prize for the best second place entry from all the categories. A \$100 grand prize will be awarded to the best overall entry. The grand prize winner will be eligible to consult with Bethany faculty regarding taking the story idea to the next stage, moving it toward possible production. In the non-student division, all of the six categories will be combined, and a single prize of \$100 will be awarded to the best entry, with second and third place winners receiving \$75 and \$50 respectively.

This competition continues the "CMI Lucas Cranach Awards," which are offered in various categories by the Christ in Media Institute. These awards are named after Lucas Cranach (1472-1553), close friend of Martin Luther, an artist who recognized the value of popular media in bringing the saving message of the Reformation to the people. His famous altar painting in the City Church in Wittenberg, showing Luther in the pulpit with one hand on the open Bible and the other pointing to Christ on the cross, exactly captured for a popular audience the essence of Luther's work. Lucas Cranach is an artist who created visual representations of theological concepts, a central focus of the Christ in Media Institute.

Story categories: Entries are invited for stories in the following categories:

- Romantic relationship stories
- Sports stories
- Science/science fiction stories
- History-based stories
- Performing arts (theatre, music) stories
- Other (for stories that don't fit into any of the above categories)

Competition Rules:

1. Entries must be consistent with and clearly reflect biblical Christianity.

To assist with this requirement, writers are invited to read Prof. Mark Harstad's presentation at <http://www.blc.edu/cmi/foundations/harstad.asp>.

2. Stories must envision a general audience of the American public (not just those who are already church members)
3. Entries must be the original work of the author, and will remain the property of the author. The Christ in Media Institute retains the right to keep copies of entries on file, and with author's permission, use them for promotional and instructional purposes.
4. Entries must include a completed Entry Page (model attached below), a cover page, a separate page with story title and logline, and the treatment. The author's name and school must be on the entry page and on the cover page, but no other identifying material should appear in the document.
5. Entries should be 1 - 2 pages long (single spaced) for a short film story, and 3- 5 pages long for a feature film story.
6. Entries should be submitted as MSWord documents attached to an email sent to aschaffer@blc.edu.
7. Deadline is midnight April 15, 2012.
8. In any category, no prize may be offered if there is no worthy entry.

There are no rules about the following matters; writers should make their own decisions in these areas:

1. Length of story – short film? feature length? (please specify on entry page which is intended)
2. Age of intended audience – for children? for adults? for both? (please specify on entry page which is intended)
3. Extent and manner in which Christianity and Christian teachings appear in the story – subtle? assumed? direct? strong? Choices here will be evident in the story. Remember, the story is intended for a general American audience – not just church members.

Entry Form: Screen Story Competition

Please furnish the following information on an "Entry Form" page with each entry

Title of screen story:

Name of author:

(if co-authored, supply the same information for all writers)

- I am a student at Bethany Lutheran College
- I am a student at Martin Luther College
- I am a student at Wisconsin Lutheran College
- I am a student at another college/university (please name it)
- I am a student at a high school (please name it)

I am not currently a student

Home address:

Address during the school year:

Cell phone number (if any):

Email address:

The attached treatment is for a short film feature film

The story is for an audience of children adults both children and adults

It is submitted in the category of (select one)

- romantic/relationship stories
- sports stories
- science/science fiction stories
- history-based stories
- performing arts stories (theatre, music)
- other

Checklist for a complete entry:

- An "Entry Page" containing the information requested above
- A cover page containing title and author(s) name(s)
- A separate page containing only the title and logline
- The treatment

Email the complete entry by April 15, 2012, as an MSWord document attached to an email addressed to
aschaffer@blc.edu

Definitions: "treatment" and associated screen story terms

Adapted from Terry Rossio (*Shrek, Pirates of the Caribbean*)

A **premise** is an idea for a story; the set-up or situation, with little or no story implied. Rarely written down to be presented.

A **logline** is a bit more full. Written in one or two lines, you get the central situation, almost always a main character, a sense of tone, and an idea of where the story leads. The logline is enough to intrigue, with the promise of more, and a sense of completeness. (Beware; a premise passed off as a logline is really just a bad logline.)

Example:

BLY

LOGLINE: The true story of Nellie Bly, a penniless young woman in 1890s New York who claws her way up from obscurity to revolutionize journalism and then becomes her own biggest story when she races around the globe to shatter the record of Jules Verne's legendary hero in *Around the World in 80 Days* – a feat which makes her the most famous woman on earth.

This example is from Scripthollywood.com

A **synopsis** can be one long paragraph, or several paragraphs; probably no more than a page in length, usually focused on plot.

An **outline** or **story outline** is sometimes used interchangeably with synopsis – but in fact they're almost always a bit longer, with more detail, more emphasis on character, tone, and theme, and not solely plot-driven.

And finally, a **treatment** is a full exploration of a story. Covers character, plot, setting, theme; clarifies the intent of the writer. Can contain character descriptions, a synopsis, or statements on theme and tone. May use bits of key dialog. Attempts to convey the filmgoing experience through to the story's end. For a feature film, usually more than three pages, average seven.

[You can download an example of a 5-page treatment which expands the "Bly" logline above. Type "treatment bly" into Google search, and click the scripthollywood link.]

[Another helpful link for learning about how to write an effective treatment is found at <http://www.independentchristianfilms.com/festival/competition/treatment>.

Click the link on that page to "Professional Suggestions: Tips on Writing a Treatment for the SAICFF Treatment Competition" (a PDF download). While this site provides much good advice, the sample treatment it labels "best" seems more designed to SELL the story than to TELL the story. Note, for example, the key line, "In a thrilling climax, these bonds of friendship overpower the unlimited muscle of the tyrant." But there is no description of that climax. It is one thing to PROMISE a "thrilling climax," but much more to DESCRIBE one. The BLY treatment linked above does a much better job of telling the story.]

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