



The Death and Life of Drama: Reflections on Writing and Human Nature

Lance Lee

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What makes a film "work," so that audiences come away from the viewing experience refreshed and even transformed in the way they understand themselves and the world around them? In *The Death and Life of Drama*, veteran screenwriter and screenwriting teacher Lance Lee tackles this question in a series of personal essays that thoroughly analyze drama's role in our society, as well as the elements that structure all drama, from the plays of ancient Athens to today's most popular movies.

Using examples from well-known classical era and recent films, Lee investigates how writers handle dramatic elements such as time, emotion, morality, and character growth to demonstrate why some films work while others do not. He seeks to define precisely what "action" is and how the writer and the viewer understand dramatic reality. He looks at various kinds of time in drama, explores dramatic context from Athens to the present, and examines the concept of comedy. Lee also proposes a novel "five act" structure for drama that takes account of the characters' past and future outside the "beginning, middle, and end" of the story. Deftly balancing philosophical issues and practical concerns, *The Death and Life of Drama* offers a rich understanding of the principles of successful dramatic writing for screenwriters and indeed everyone who enjoys movies and wants to know why some films have such enduring appeal for so many people.

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