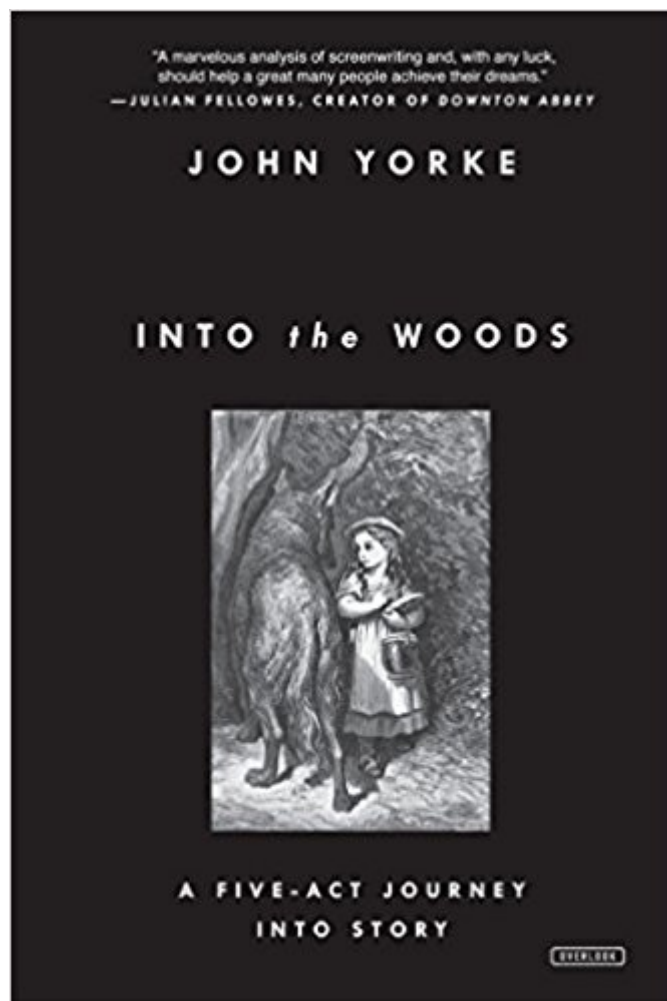


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# Into The Woods: A Five-Act Journey Into Story



## Synopsis

The Revolutionary guide to dramatic writing, whether you're writing the next Chinatown, Breaking Bad, or Glengarry Glen Ross. The idea of *Into the Woods* is not to supplant works by Aristotle, Lajos Egri, Robert McKee, David Mamet, or any other writers of guides for screenwriters and playwrights, but to pick up on their cues and take the reader on a historical, philosophical, scientific, and psychological journey to the heart of all storytelling. In this exciting and wholly original book, John Yorke not only shows that there is truly a unifying shape to narrative—one that echoes the great fairytale journey into the woods, and one, like any great art, that comes from deep within—he explains why, too. With examples ranging from *The Godfather* to *True Detective*, *Mad Men* to *Macbeth*, and fairy tales to *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*), Yorke utilizes Shakespearean five-act structure as a key to analyzing all storytelling in all narrative forms, from film and television to theatre and novel-writing—a big step from the usual three-act approach. *Into the Woods: A Five-Act Journey Into Story* is destined to sit alongside David Mamet's *Three Uses of the Knife*, Robert McKee's *Story*, Syd Field's *Screenplay*, and Lajos Egri's *The Art of Dramatic Writing* as one of the most original, useful, and inspiring books ever on dramatic writing. 20 b&w illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“All script writers will want to read it.” - Caitlin Moran, bestselling author of *How to Be a Woman*  
“*Into the Woods* by John Yorke is brilliant on story structure.” - Ken Follett,

bestselling author of *Pillars of the Earth* – “There is no end of books that instruct us on how to write the perfect screenplay, but few that delve more deeply into the art of storytelling than this erudite volume. – *Financial Times* – “Love storytelling? You need this inspiring book. John Yorke dissects the structure of stories with a joyous enthusiasm allied to precise, encyclopedic knowledge. Guaranteed to send you back to your writing desk with newfound excitement and drive. – *Chris Chibnall, creator/writer, Broadchurch and Gracepoint* – “Outrageously good and by far and away the best book of its kind I’ve ever read. I recognized so much truth in it. But more than that, I learned a great deal. Time and again, Yorke articulates things I’ve always felt but have never been able to describe . . . This is a love story to story – a erudite, witty and full of practical magic. I struggle to think of the writer who wouldn’t benefit from reading it – even if they don’t notice because they’re too busy enjoying every page. – *Neil Cross, creator/writer, Luther and Crossbones* – “Part how-to manual, part why-to celebration, *Into the Woods* is a wide-reaching and infectiously passionate exploration of storytelling in all its guises . . . exciting and thought-provoking. – *Emma Frost, screenwriter, The White Queen and Shameless* – “Of all the books I’ve read about story construction and the art of fiction, this one is the most comprehensive and concise. – *John Colle, Writer of Master and Commander, Happy Feet, Creation, Walking with Dinosaurs* – “Love storytelling? You need this inspiring book. John Yorke dissects the structure of stories with a joyous enthusiasm allied to precise, encyclopedic knowledge. – Guaranteed to send you back to your writing desk with newfound excitement and drive. – *Chris Chibnall, Creator of Broadchurch* – “I absolutely love this book. – It’s incredible and so well written. – I keep trying to find fault but so far no joy – It’s so good – *Matt Charman, writer Bridge of Spies; Black Work* – “Excellent – *Peter Straughan, writer of Tinker Tailor Solider Spy, Wolf Hall, Frank* – “Going to read John Yorke’s *Into The Woods* again because it’s John Yorke’s *Into The Woods* and that’s reason enough – ... – *Graham Linehan, writer, Father Ted; The IT Crowd* – “One of my favourite books of last year was John Yorke’s *Into The Woods: How Stories Work And Why We Tell Them*, a seriously smart distillation of story theory that is as useful to me as a historian as I imagine it is to all the budding screenwriters who have it on their desks – *Dan Jones, author of The Hollow Crown and The Plantagenets* – “Yorke’s book, in telling scores of stories in such a fresh, enlightening and accessible manner, is a gripping read from beginning to end. – *Sunday Times* – “Another book on screenwriting! Oh, how I wanted to hate it! I didn’t. I loved it. Much

of it was fresh to me. And always interesting, always intelligent and, for a writer, always rewarding

– Jimmy McGovern, creator/writer of *Cracker*; *The Street*; *The Accused*

“In an industry full of so called script gurus and snake oil salesmen, at last there’s a book about story that treats writers like grown ups. This isn’t about providing us with an ABC of story or telling us how to write a script by numbers. It’s an intelligent evaluation into the very nature of storytelling and is the best book on the subject I’ve read. Quite brilliant

– Tony Jordan, creator/writer of *Life on Mars*

“This book is intelligent, well written, incisive and, most of all, exciting. It is the most important book about scriptwriting since William Goldman’s *Adventures in the Screen Trade*

– Peter Bowker, screenwriter *Marvellous*, *Occupation*, and *Eric & Ernie*

“Into the Woods is brilliant. One of the best books on script writing out there...I loved the book. Inspiring.

– Dominic Mitchell, creator of *In the Flesh*

“Terrifyingly Clever... Packed with intelligent argument.

– The Scotsman

“Its strength is Yorke’s acute perception of the wellsprings of universal narrative structures relevant to all artistic activities

– The Times (UK)

“A mightily impressive opus, both hugely informative and highly educational. I love the way it’s populated with so many examples - the many combinations of both mass market and the slightly more esoteric – giving a something-for-everyone feeling. A brilliant work

– Peter James, author of the Roy Grace series

“Into The Woods is an amazing achievement. It has a real depth and understanding about story, a fantastically broad frame of reference and it’s interesting and absorbing throughout. Full of incredibly useful insights, every TV writer should read the first chapter alone

– Simon Ashdown, former Lead writer and series consultant of *Eastenders*

“Books on story structure are ten a penny but Yorke’s is the real deal

– Kathryn Flett

“Terrific...It’s a great read, wise and cogent, and a must for all screenwriters

– David Eldrige, writer *Festen*, *In Basildon*

“It’s a great read. It makes me smile and say ‘Yes!’ aloud. Only this and PG Wodehouse do that.

– Lucy Gannon, writer/creator *Soldier Soldier*, *Peak Practice*, *Frankie*, *The Best Of Men*

“A mind-blower ... an incredibly dense but very readable tome about the art of storytelling ... Really worth a read

– The Independent

“Highly recommended reading

– Huffington Post

“Yorke is aware that the world is not suffering for lack of prescriptive screenwriting manuals. Instead, with *Into the Woods*, he takes a scalpel to narrative structure – dissecting protagonist, antagonist, inciting incident, crisis and so on – before asking how and why this underlying shape still holds audiences spellbound like a fairytale witch. “A story is like a magnet dragged through randomness,” Yorke writes, but while he elegantly untangles the deepest roots of storytelling, he also honours the human need for truth and sense

with some more superficial questions: why do series tend to "jump the shark" round about season three, for example, or why is clunky exposition – particularly in medical dramas – so appallingly comical? Sit comfortably, then begin.

– The Guardian  
 "This is the ancient template for storytelling, and this, the best book on the subject...Yorke's analysis is superb.

– London Evening Standard  
 "I've just read a book about professional writing which has genuinely helped me. It's for those who are serious about avoiding bad – How To – books and want to raise their game, and it's more intelligent than most of the others. John Yorke's Into The Woods: How Stories Work And Why We Tell Them is a genuine game-changer and has helped me put past bad habits to rest.

– Christopher Fowler  
 "One of the most interesting books on screenwriting does not emerge from another Los Angeles screenwriting guru but rather from a London film director, not from another Los Angeles publisher of screenwriting books but a New York publisher called The Overlook Press... Yorke brings forth a tremendous amount of supporting evidence in one of the more erudite books ever written on screenwriting.

– Script Magazine  
 "A profound and unconventional look at the art of storytelling | Yorke is smart. This isn't a how-to book | It's kind of liberating: we can delve into why good stories are so compelling without feeling we need to suddenly start obeying rules numbered one through ten. Whatever aspect of story he confronts, he does so with humor and flexibility.

– Psychology Today  
 "A fine book

– Mark Lawson, The Tablet  
 "A comprehensive breakdown of the mysteries and function of drama, and a must-read

– Alec Worley, Author of 2000 AD  
 "Probably, in the hackneyed phrase, – "the last book on screenwriting you'll ever need.

– He is very good at debunking the claims of some screenwriting gurus, all of whom are busy trying to sell you their own particular brand of snake oil. It's truly excellent.

– The Daily Telegraph

John Yorke is Managing Director of Angel Station where he works as a drama producer, consultant and lecturer on all forms of storytelling. A former MD of Company Pictures where he Exec Produced Wolf Hall, he's worked as both Head of Channel Four Drama and Controller of BBC Drama Production. As a commissioning Editor/Executive Producer, he championed Life On Mars, The Street, Shameless and Bodies and in 2005 he created the BBC Writers Academy, a year-long in-depth training scheme which has produced a generation of successful television writers. John is Visiting Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and lives and works in London.

This book is a great introduction/refresher to the foundations of storytelling. I didn't many things that were vastly different than what I've read in other craft books, but the way in which the book is organized, as well as its explanations of concepts, are thorough, clear, and provide many examples, particularly from film. I'd say my favorite part was the dissection of the three-act structure, which is a simplified version of the five-act structure. I've always been baffled at the large chunk of the second act, and wondered why it couldn't be broken up into more pieces because surely SOMETHING has to happen with more detail, right? It does, and I feel that Yorke explains it well here. This book is great as a primer on story structure for newcomers, and a great refresher for those looking to keep their craft sharp.

I've read a bunch of storytelling and scriptwriting books and this one is easily the best. Instead of giving a formula, it actually tries to explain the underlying structure of storytelling and why it is such.

It helped me a great deal to learn and understand not only film structure, but all forms of narrative structure to develop plots, characters, structure, and so on, in a 5 act construction. I had read Syd Field's books and attended some of his seminars, but reading Yorke's book enhanced my scope of film construction and deepened my understanding in how great characters should be created.

Referencing a lot of the "how-to" books that most writers have read, the author, John Yorke, explores the basic structure of a good story well told. Using plenty of contemporary examples, he's able to clearly make his point(s). Terrific instructions for anyone just starting out in the writing business and a wonderful refresher for those who already earning a living at it.

Wonderful perspective into story structure. I'd caution anyone though, that this is a very dense read, it warrants being studied, rather than simply being read. The points made are powerful, but it does, at times, get very conceptual. I read it with pen and dictionary in hand. As a side note, it offers a plethora of recommended reads and films to see for those interested in conquering structure.

Funny book, a little dry at times but still a classic.

This is brilliant on so many levels. Really worth reading.

Accessible clear and not dogmatic. An empirical view of structure that relates to familiar approaches but is ultimately more empowering to writers

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