Steps in Adapting a Story

Information Sheet

Note: You may find it helpful to refer to Outline Development of “Pandora’s Box” as you do these steps.

1. Select the story to adapt (see Selecting a Story to Adapt information sheet).

2. Read and study the source. Pay particular attention to the plot. Identify the story’s CONFLICT, CLIMAX, and RESOLUTION. Identify the narrative sections that will need to be rewritten as dialog scenes. Consider the possibilities for sound effects.

3. Summarize the story.

a. Use no pronouns. Pronouns can cause confusion about which character they refer to. Without pronouns, the language will sound redundant, but, in the planning stages redundancy is not a problem. Later, when you are writing the exact words to be spoken by the characters, you should use pronouns. Even then, however, make sure the pronoun reference is clear to the listener.

b. Make the summary a list of events written in complete sentences. The next step will be easier, if your summary is a list.

c. Make sure the summary lists the events in sequence.

d. Study your list of events to make certain that the CONFLICT is revealed near the beginning of the list, that the CLIMAX is near the end of the list, and that the RESOLUTION immediately follows the climax. Identify these three elements.

4. Divide the summary into scenes.

a. Reword the events in your list using present tense, adding any missing important details as needed.

b. Each scene may contain more than one item from your list.

c. Each scene should have a purpose that moves the story toward its resolution.

d. Identify the CONFLICT, the CLIMAX, and RESOLUTION.

5. Analyze each scene. This will help you begin to see the script as a whole. Visualizing the final product is important, but don't misunderstand, writing a script is a creative process that is never set in stone until the final tape is recorded. Use one Scene Analysis Worksheet for each scene.

a. Describe the setting. Where is it? If the date and time are important, specify them.

b. Who are the characters? You may realize later that you need to add more characters or that you need to eliminate characters. This analysis is only to give you a place to begin.

c. What does the scene tell the audience? These are the items you listed under each scene in number 2, above. New details may occur to you at this time. When these new ideas occur to you, insert them. The details should move the toward resolution.

d. List the sound effects. It is not important that all your sound effects be included at this time.

Add more as you become aware of the need.

6. Write the dialog for each scene. Narrator speeches are considered dialogue.

a. You may find that inserting more of the sound effects at this time is automatic. Don't worry about getting all sounds at this time or even getting them into the right format; that can be done later. If a sound or an idea for music comes to you while you are writing the dialog scenes, just make a note and put brackets around it. You can come back later and make adjustments.

b. Refer to your Scene Analysis Worksheet and make sure you have communicated all information listed.

5. Insert directions for sound effects, music, and transition details.

6. Plan how your SFX and music will be handled.

a. Consider the Production Style that you will be using (see section on Production Style).

b. Make a list of the technicians you will have available for SFX and Music. (MANUAL SFX, SOUND ONE, SOUND TWO, MUSIC ONE, MUSIC TWO, etc.)

c. Insert appropriate labels for each of the SFX or music entries you have planned. Refer to any of the sample scripts for examples of these labels and to see how they look in the script. (Notice that these labels are different in different scripts: SOUND “A” in Pandora's Box is SOUND ONE in “Planet RT-1.”)

d. CAUTION: Assign SFX/music so that technician duties do not overlap.

7. Compile all dialog scenes into a rough draft.

8. Read through the script. Search for problems (illogical transitions, overlapping technical duties, contradictions, mechanics, etc.), fixing them as you go.

9. Make a final draft.