

## **Christy (2025) – A Screenwriter’s Breakdown for Educators**

**Christy** enters a lineage that includes *Girlfight*, *Million Dollar Baby*, and *The Fighter* -- sports films about grit, discipline, and sacrifice. What distinguishes it is its focus on queer identity and female rage within a traditionally masculine arena.

However, unlike its strongest predecessors, **Christy** struggles to reconcile its empathy for the protagonist with its handling of exploitation. The film documents harm clearly but hesitates to confront it fully, resulting in a narrative that feels emotionally compromised by its own caution.

For educators and students, this makes **Christy** an especially valuable case study -- not as a flawless screenplay, but as one that exposes the fault lines between intention, structure, and moral clarity.

### **Tone Breakdown**

#### **Primary Tone:** Gritty, Grounded Sports Drama

The screenplay is rooted in physicality, discipline, and endurance. Training, pain, and repetition dominate the emotional landscape.

#### **Secondary Tone:** Angry and Constrained

There is a simmering rage beneath Christy’s exterior -- toward family, town, gender expectations, and limitation -- but the script often contains it rather than letting it rupture form.

#### **Tertiary Tone:** Uneasy and Ambivalent

As the story progresses, the tone becomes morally unstable. The script depicts exploitation clearly but hesitates to interrogate it fully, creating discomfort that feels unexamined rather than intentional.

#### **Undercurrent:** Working-Class Fatalism

The story carries an implicit belief that escape requires submission to harsh systems -- boxing, promoters, mentors -- rather than transformation of them.

**In short:**

Gritty, angry, restrained, and increasingly ambivalent, with tension between intention and execution.

**Key Themes for Screenwriters and Educators:****1. Authentic Voice Carries Early Momentum**

Christy's regional specificity, family dynamics, and embodied anger feel real and earned.

**Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Voice can propel a script through its first act almost on its own.
- Specificity creates trust with the audience.

**2. Mentorship Stories Demand Moral Precision**

Jim is written as both savior and abuser, but the screenplay stops short of fully reckoning with his power.

**Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- When a mentor exploits a protagonist, the script must choose a stance.
- Depiction without critique risks endorsement.

**3. Agency Must Grow With Success**

As Christy's career advances, her interior life recedes.

**Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- External victories should expand, not replace, internal agency.
- A protagonist's voice must remain dominant through the final act.

**4. Sports Success Is Not Emotional Resolution**

The Don King arc and professional validation provide momentum but not closure.

### Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Winning is not the same as freedom.
- Endings must resolve emotional questions, not just plot mechanics.

### 5. Restraint Can Become Safety

The script plays its structure cleanly but avoids formal or tonal risk.

### Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Some stories demand stylistic rupture to match emotional stakes.
- Safety can blunt power.

### Classroom Discussion Topics:

- Depiction vs critique in abuse narratives.
- Power dynamics in mentor–athlete relationships.
- Gender and sexuality in sports storytelling.
- Working-class escape myths in American cinema.
- When success stories become survival stories.
- Protagonist agency across three acts.
- Ethical responsibility of narrative framing.

### Legacy:

**Black Bag** fits alongside films like **The Place Beyond the Pines**, **American Animals**, and **Michael Clayton** -- stories about capable men undone not by chaos, but by clarity. It's a distinctly modern American crime story, one where intelligence becomes a liability in a world that rewards conformity and patience.

For students, it's a powerful reminder that strong screenplays don't require escalation -- they require inevitability. Every step Jeffrey takes makes sense. That's what makes it devastating.

## Critical Lens: What This Screenplay Gets Right — and Where It Falls Short

### What Works

#### Authentic voice and setting

- The West Virginia backdrop, working-class texture, and Christy's physical anger feel lived-in and specific, grounding the story in reality rather than cliché.

#### Embodied physical storytelling

- Boxing is used effectively as an expression of rage, control, and self-definition, not just competition.

#### Clear structural momentum

- The screenplay is cleanly paced, accessible, and professionally constructed, making it easy to follow and emotionally legible.

#### Honest depiction of pressure and exploitation

- The script does not shy away from showing how systems extract value from talent, particularly from women and queer athletes.

### Where the Screenplay Struggles

#### Perspective drift in the final act

- As Christy's career advances, her interior life recedes, allowing secondary characters to dominate narrative agency.

#### Insufficient critique of mentorship abuse

- The screenplay depicts coercive and exploitative behavior clearly but stops short of interrogating it with narrative consequence or moral clarity.

#### Success mistaken for resolution

- Professional validation replaces emotional closure, leaving core identity conflicts unresolved.

### Missed formal risk

- Given the intensity of the subject matter, the screenplay's conventional structure feels cautious rather than purposeful.

### **Why This Matters for Students & Emerging Writers:**

**Christy** is an excellent teaching example of how strong craft can still produce compromised storytelling when perspective and ethics are not rigorously maintained. It invites discussion about the difference between depiction and endorsement, and about the responsibility storytellers have when portraying power dynamics.

### **Suggested Exercise:**

Rewrite one late-act scene from Christy's point of view only -- removing Jim's framing entirely -- and examine how agency, tone, and resolution change.

© 2025

8FLiX Institute

545 King St., West

Toronto, ON., Canada M5V 1M1

+1 (647) 317-9057

8flix.com

