

Friendship (2025) – A Screenwriter’s Breakdown for Educators

Andrew DeYoung’s **Friendship** is a modern cringe-comedy tragedy built around a painfully relatable premise: a lonely, approval-hungry suburban dad desperately wants to be liked. Craig Waterman becomes obsessed with befriending his charismatic new neighbor, Austin -- a simple desire that spirals into humiliation, marital tension, and a full-blown identity crisis.

What begins as light comedy becomes a piercing character study about masculinity, social anxiety, and the absurd performance of adulthood. DeYoung balances awkward humor with emotional insight, crafting a story that makes you laugh and wince in equal measure.

For screenwriters, the script is a class in writing embarrassment with empathy, weaponizing awkwardness to reveal something deeply human.

Key Themes for Screenwriters and Educators:

1. Cringe as Character Development

Rather than using awkwardness for cheap laughs, DeYoung uses it to deepen character. Craig’s social fumbles aren’t gags -- they’re symptoms of longing and self-doubt.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Cringe must reveal inner need, not just discomfort.
- Humiliation works best when grounded in emotional truth.

2. The Desperation for Connection

Craig’s journey exposes how men often express vulnerability sideways -- through competition, overeagerness, or delusion.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Identify what a character needs but cannot say out loud.
- Use social dynamics to expose emotional blind spots.

3. Comedy Through Specificity

The script leans into micro-details: a too-long handshake, a forced joke, a clumsy attempt at being “cool.” These small moments build the world and its humor.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Hyper-specific behavior elevates comedic realism.
- Avoid generic gags; let personality create comedy.

4. Suburban Satire with Heart

HOA meetings, driveway conversations, group hangs -- DeYoung uses suburban mundanity as a character itself, highlighting loneliness inside normalcy.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Small worlds create big emotional stakes.
- Use setting to amplify thematic tension.

5. The Fragility of Masculinity

The film digs into what men fear most: irrelevance, aging, and being uninteresting. The comedy stems from self-protection masquerading as confidence.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Write masculinity as contradiction, not archetype.
- Vulnerability is more compelling than bravado.

Legacy:

Friendship stands beside films like **Sideways**, **The Cable Guy**, and **Eighth Grade** as an uncomfortable, revealing portrait of how people try -- and fail -- to belong. DeYoung’s writing elevates cringe from surface-level comedy to emotional excavation. For students, it’s a sharp reminder that the funniest stories often come from the wounds we hide behind polite smiles.

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