

Mickey 17 (2025) – Screenwriter’s Breakdown for Educators

Screenplay By: Bong Joon Ho

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY based on the Edward Ashton novel “Mickey7”

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Adventure / Comedy / Fantasy

LESSON PLAN

MENTOR: Nick Runyard | 8FLiX Institute (for Emerging Screenwriters)

PROFICIENCY: NOVICE | **ADVANCED BEGINNER** | COMPETENT | PROFICIENT | EXPERT

REQUIRED READING: Mickey 17 (2025) Screenplay (8FLiX.com [free account required for downloads]).

OPTIONAL READING: Moon (2009 - Nathan Parker), Brazil (1985 - Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown), Never Let Me Go (2010 - Alex Garland).

Logline

During a human expedition to colonize space, Mickey 17, a so-called "expendable" employee, is sent to explore an ice planet.

What This Screenplay Teaches

Mickey 17 is a story about what happens when mortality becomes a feature instead of a flaw.

The central premise, that a worker can be endlessly reprinted after death, allows the screenplay to interrogate how systems treat people as replaceable units rather than as individuals. The horror isn’t the cloning. It’s the normalization of it.

This script teaches how speculative fiction can function as moral laboratory. It uses absurdity to ask deeply serious questions about identity, labor, memory, consciousness, and what gives a life meaning when it can be rebooted.

For writers, it’s a case study in how to embed philosophy inside comedy without becoming preachy.

Discussion Topics

- What makes someone “the same person”?
- Is continuity of memory enough?
- Labor as disposability
- When comedy becomes cruel
- Cloning as metaphor, not tech
- Bureaucracy as violence
- Sci-fi as moral sandbox
- Identity without uniqueness

Tone Breakdown

Primary Tone: Existential Absurdism

Life is funny. Death is inconvenient.

Secondary Tone: Satirical Dread

Humor sharpens the horror.

Tertiary Tone: Corporate Farce

Bureaucracy becomes villain.

Undercurrent: Ontological Loneliness

If you're replaceable, are you still unique?

In short:

Funny, bleak, tender, and quietly terrifying.

Screenwriting Takeaways

- **High-concept can carry philosophy**
The premise itself generates meaning.
- **Comedy can deepen existential stakes**
Laughter becomes dissonance.
- **Systems can be antagonists**
No villain required.
- **Identity can be structural**
Not just thematic.
- **Tone discipline matters**
Humor and horror must cohabitate.
- **World logic shapes character psychology**
Behavior emerges from rules.

Legacy & Context

Mickey 17 belongs to a lineage of sci-fi that uses speculative mechanics to explore human identity: *Moon*, *Blade Runner*, *Never Let Me Go*, *Brazil*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide*, *The Lobster*.

Bong Joon-ho's signature style -- social critique through genre -- places this firmly alongside *Snowpiercer*, *Okja*, and *Parasite*. It's comedy that doesn't comfort. It destabilizes.

This screenplay reflects modern anxieties about replaceability, gig labor, algorithmic life, and the erosion of individuality.

Critical Lens: What Works vs Where It Challenges Students

What Works

Concept as critique

- The premise is the argument.

Tonally brave

- Doesn't protect the audience.

Absurdity as moral lens

- Humor sharpens insight.

Character grounded in logic

- Psychology flows from world rules.

Philosophy without speeches

- Questions arise naturally.

Where it Challenges Students

High-concept density

- Some viewers may disengage.

Emotional distancing

- Absurdity can mute empathy.

Intellectualized grief

- Pain is filtered through comedy.

Not comfort cinema

- It doesn't reassure.

Why This Screenplay Matters in Film Studies

Mickey 17 demonstrates that genre is not a cage. It's a toolset.

It shows how comedy can be philosophical, sci-fi can be intimate, and high-concept can be human.

It's a blueprint for writing ideas that don't feel like lectures.

Writing Exercise

Write a one-page scene where:

- The character knows they will be replaced
- Everyone else treats this as normal
- The tone must be comedic

Then discuss how humor changes meaning.

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