

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

With **Materialists**, Celine Song turns the modern New York romance inside out. Her protagonist -- a young art-world assistant juggling desire, ambition, and financial precarity -- finds herself drawn into a love triangle that doubles as a class collision. One man offers stability without intimacy; the other offers intimacy without stability.

Song’s writing is gentle but cutting, full of seemingly simple conversations that reveal entire philosophies of love, money, and worth. The script never judges its characters -- it simply lets them want things, sometimes beautifully, sometimes disastrously.

For screenwriting students, *Materialists* is a stunning example of romantic realism, where every emotion sits atop a foundation of economic truth and human contradiction.

Key Themes for Screenwriters and Educators:

1. Romance Built on Real-Life Stakes

Song understands that modern love is shaped by external forces -- housing, career, class, timing.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Let romance breathe through circumstance, not contrivance.
- Emotional decisions hit harder when rooted in real pressures.

2. Dialogue That Reveals, Not Explains

Every scene feels like two people trying to understand themselves through each other.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Write conversations that conceal vulnerability until the exact moment it must surface.
- Humor and longing can co-exist -- embrace tonal contrast.

3. Class as a Romantic Obstacle

Money doesn't just sit in the background; it quietly pushes every choice forward.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Explore how class informs desire without defining it.
- Let characters wrestle with what stability costs and what love requires.

4. The Power of Understated Conflict

There are no villains here -- only people trying to live with the consequences of what they want.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Soft conflict can be devastating when grounded in emotional honesty.
- Internal struggle is often more cinematic than external drama.

5. Reinvention as Romance

New York becomes a character -- a place where people try on new versions of themselves, hoping love will validate the one that fits.

Screenwriting Takeaway:

- Use setting as emotional architecture.
- Let characters evolve through the aspirations they project.

Legacy:

With **Materialists**, Celine Song continues her exploration of longing, identity, and the quiet disasters of being human. The film joins **Past Lives** and **Before Sunrise** in the lineage of intimate, contemplative romances that feel lived rather than written.

For students, the screenplay is a powerful example of how to tell love stories shaped by the world we actually live in -- a world full of ambition, insecurity, hope, debt, beauty, and the ever-present need to feel chosen.

© 2025

8FLiX Institute

545 King St., West

Toronto, ON., Canada M5V 1M1

+1 (647) 317-9057

8flix.com

