

## **Small Things Like These (2024) - A Screenwriter's Breakdown for Educators**

Adapted by Enda Walsh from Claire Keegan's novella, "Small Things Like These" (2024) tells a quiet yet powerful story of moral courage set against the backdrop of 1980s Ireland. This screenplay highlights the tension between personal conscience and societal complicity, offering a nuanced portrait of empathy, silence, and resistance.

### **Key Themes for Screenwriters and Educators:**

#### **1. Atmosphere of Place as Character:**

The setting reflects Ireland's silent complicity in systemic abuses. New Ross becomes a character -- somber, suffocating, yet quietly beautiful.

#### **Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Let setting amplify theme.
- Use place to evoke unspoken tensions.

#### **2. Quiet Protagonist, Loud Impact:**

Bill Furlong's soft-spoken nature anchors the story. His restraint enhances the emotional resonance of his decisions.

#### **Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Character depth comes from actions and reactions.
- Understatement often speaks loudest.

#### **3. Moral Complexity Without Judgment:**

Furlong's choices invite empathy without moralizing. The screenplay challenges readers to reflect on complicity and courage.

#### **Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Avoid moral absolutes.
- Let characters embody internal conflict.

#### **4. Intertwining Personal and Societal Histories:**

Furlong's backstory informs his present-day decisions. Personal trauma echoes broader societal failings.

##### **Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Weave character history into plot stakes.
- Blend personal arcs with social commentary.

#### **5. Small Gestures, Big Stakes:**

Minor acts of defiance carry massive emotional weight. The script elevates micro-decisions into acts of bravery.

##### **Screenwriting Takeaway:**

- Use intimate moments for societal reflection.
- Spotlight character through everyday choices.

##### **Legacy Potential:**

"Small Things Like These" stands as a testament to the power of quiet storytelling. Its screenplay offers screenwriters a profound lesson in restraint, character study, and how personal courage can ripple into social change.

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