

Sentimental Value (2025) – Screenwriter's Breakdown for Educators

Screenplay By: Eskil Vogt & Joachim Trier

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

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Drama / Dry Humour / Melancholy

LESSON PLAN

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

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

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

OPTIONAL READING: The Worst Person in the World (2021 - Eskil Vogt & Joachim Trier), Autumn Sonata (1978 - Ingmar Bergman), Scenes from a Marriage (1974 - Ingmar Bergman), A Separation (2011 – Asghar Farhadi).

Logline

Two sisters reconnect with their estranged father, a filmmaker set on crafting his career opus. After his eldest daughter turns down the lead role, he casts a Hollywood star in her place which sparks old wounds, compelling them to face their fragile family ties and the bonds that unite them.

What This Screenplay Teaches

Sentimental Value is a masterclass in writing emotional history without nostalgia or melodrama. The screenplay explores how family, memory, and artistic ambition coexist uneasily inside shared spaces -- particularly the family home, which becomes a repository of unresolved feeling rather than comfort.

Rather than dramatizing conflict through confrontation, the script allows meaning to accumulate through silence, repetition, and restraint. This is storytelling that trusts the audience to feel what isn't said -- and rewards patience with emotional precision.

For screenwriters, it's a lesson in how structure, memory, and environment can do as much narrative work as plot.

Discussion Topics

- Writing family conflict without exposition
- Using setting as emotional architecture
- Memory vs nostalgia in storytelling
- Artistic ambition and ethical cost
- Parent–child relationships in adult narratives
- When silence is more revealing than dialogue
- Multi-perspective storytelling
- Why restraint often hits harder than spectacle

Tone Breakdown

Primary Tone: Intimate Family Melancholy

Quietly aching, emotionally observant, never indulgent.

Secondary Tone: Wry, Observational Humor

Dry, human humor surfaces naturally from character behavior.

Tertiary Tone: Artistic Self-Examination

The screenplay interrogates the cost of turning lived experience into art.

Undercurrent: Inheritance as Emotional Burden

What's passed down isn't wealth -- it's unresolved feeling.

In short:

Subtle, piercing, restrained -- a film that lets emotion surface on its own terms.

Screenwriting Takeaways

- **Memory can be structural**

The screenplay uses time shifts and recollection to shape meaning rather than explain it.

- **Spaces carry emotional history**

The house functions as a character -- absorbing tension, absence, and memory.

- **Conflict doesn't require confrontation**

Emotional distance replaces argument, creating quieter but deeper tension.

- **Restraint sharpens payoff**

By refusing melodrama, the script allows small moments to land with force.

- **Art as both escape and wound**

Creative ambition becomes a source of connection and estrangement.

- **Perspective creates empathy**

Shifting focus among characters reframes blame without absolution.

Critical Lens: What Works vs Where It Challenges Students

What Works

Emotional precision over dramatization

- The screenplay captures feeling without inflating it into melodrama.

Structural elegance

- Time and memory are woven seamlessly into character progression.

Environment as narrative force

- The house becomes a silent witness and participant.

Balanced empathy

- No character is villainized or absolved -- everyone carries weight.

Tone discipline

- Humor and melancholy coexist without canceling each other out.

Where it Challenges Students

Deliberate pacing demands patience

- Viewers expecting conventional plot momentum may disengage.

Minimal external stakes

- The drama remains internal and relational rather than event-driven.

Subtlety risks opacity

- Some emotional beats rely heavily on inference.

Limited catharsis

- Resolution is emotional rather than narrative.

Why This Screenplay Matters for Students & Emerging Writers

This screenplay demonstrates that emotional intelligence is a craft skill, not an instinct. Its limitations stem from intentional choices, making it ideal for teaching how tone, structure, and restraint shape audience engagement.

It asks writers to consider:

- How memory replaces plot.
- When subtlety deepens meaning.
- How personal history informs character without exposition.

Writing Exercise (high impact):

Write a two-page scene set in a childhood location where:

- 1) No backstory is spoken aloud.
- 2) Emotional history must emerge through behavior and space.

Discuss how environment communicates what dialogue avoids.

Legacy & Context

Sentimental Value belongs to a lineage of intimate European dramas such as *The Worst Person in the World*, *Autumn Sonata*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, and *A Separation* -- films that examine family as a living system rather than a fixed identity.

Vogt and Trier continue their exploration of how artists metabolize personal history, asking difficult questions about authorship, ownership, and emotional responsibility. The screenplay's refusal to sentimentalize memory is its most radical choice.

Mentor Nick says:

"Emotionally literate storytelling respects the audience's intelligence."

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