

Superman (2025) – Screenwriter’s Breakdown for Educators

Screenplay By: James Gunn

GENESIS/FYC: 10.24.2025; 138 pages.

Action / Adventure / Sci-Fi

LESSON PLAN

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

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

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

OPTIONAL READING: Superman: The Movie (1978 - Mario Puzo, David Newman, Leslie Newman, Robert Benton, Tom Mankiewicz), Spider-Man 2 (2004 - Alvin Sargent), Eric Heisserer (2016 - Eric Heisserer).

Logline

Superman must reconcile his alien Kryptonian heritage with his human upbringing as reporter Clark Kent. As the embodiment of truth, justice and the human way he soon finds himself in a world that views these as old-fashioned.

What This Screenplay Teaches

James Gunn’s **Superman** is not a reboot. It’s a moral recalibration.

This screenplay asks a question most superhero films avoid: not “*what can he do?*” but “*what should he do?*” In a media environment saturated with cynical antiheroes and deconstructed icons, Gunn makes a radical choice -- he writes **Superman** as sincerely good.

Not naïve.

Not stupid.

Not bland.

But intentionally moral.

This script teaches how to write sincerity without corniness, myth without pomposity, and political allegory without lectures. It treats Superman not as a power fantasy, but as an ethical one -- a being capable of anything who chooses restraint, empathy, and responsibility.

For writers, this is a masterclass in tone discipline, character-first spectacle, and how to restore emotional meaning to IP storytelling.

Discussion Topics

- What does sincerity look like in modern cinema?
- Can optimism be radical?
- How does allegory function without speeches?
- Superman as immigrant metaphor
- Power vs responsibility
- Why cynicism became dominant in pop storytelling
- Can a hero be morally clear without being simplistic?
- IP as myth, not product

Tone Breakdown

Primary Tone: Earnest Moral Drama

This is a story about choices, not domination.

Secondary Tone: Mythic Americana

The script leans into American folklore rather than modern irony.

Tertiary Tone: Political Allegory

Power, surveillance, borders, and fear are baked into the narrative.

Undercurrent: Loneliness of Moral Certainty

Being good is isolating when the world prefers complexity.

In short:

Sincere, hopeful, restrained, and quietly radical.

Screenwriting Takeaways

- **Sincerity is a tonal choice, not a weakness**

The script commits fully to emotional honesty without apology.

- **Character precedes spectacle**

Every major action beat grows out of a personal decision.

- **Myth must evolve with culture**

Superman is framed as a moral immigrant, not a military asset.

- **Political allegory works best when embedded**

The screenplay never lectures -- it situates.

- **Restraint is dramatic**

The tension often comes from what Superman won't do.

- **Iconography is a narrative tool**

The suit, the symbol, and the legacy all carry story weight.

Legacy & Context

This screenplay arrives at a moment of superhero fatigue, cultural distrust, and ideological fragmentation. Where earlier **Superman** adaptations leaned into godhood, destruction, or operatic despair, Gunn's version returns to something simpler and more difficult: decency.

It draws lineage from *Superman: The Movie* (1978), but also from Gunn's own work (*Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Suicide Squad*), where misfits and moral outsiders form ethical communities.

Unlike recent deconstructions, this film does not ask whether Superman should exist -- it asks how he should exist in a world that no longer trusts uncomplicated goodness.

This is myth restoration, not reinvention.

Critical Lens: What Works vs Where It Challenges Students

What Works

Moral clarity without moralizing

- The story never lectures, but it does stand for something.

Tone discipline

- Gunn never undercuts sincerity with cheap jokes.

Character-forward mythology

- Clark Kent remains the emotional anchor.

Modern relevance without buzzwords

- Themes are embedded, not announced.

Restraint as heroism

- This is not a dominance fantasy.

Where it Challenges Students

Earnestness will alienate cynics

- Some audiences prefer irony as armor.

Less operatic than prior versions

- Those expecting epic gloom may be disappointed.

Political allegory may feel understated

- It trusts the audience to connect dots.

Not built for meme culture

- This is not a snark machine.

Why This Screenplay Matters in Film Studies

This screenplay challenges the default posture of modern storytelling: irony. It proves that emotional honesty, moral clarity, and mythic storytelling can coexist with sophistication.

Students can study:

- How to write hope without naivety
- How tone governs audience trust
- How character can carry spectacle
- How to adapt icons without hollowing them

Writing Exercise

Rewrite a superhero scene where the hero chooses not to act, and make that choice the dramatic climax.

Then discuss: *Why was that harder?*

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