

# **The Voice of Hind Rajab (2025) – Screenwriter's Breakdown for Educators**

Screenplay By: Kaouther Ben Hania

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Drama / Based on True Events

## **LESSON PLAN**

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

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

REQUIRED READING: The Voice of Hind Rajab (2025) Screenplay (8FLiX.com [free account required for downloads]).

OPTIONAL READING: United 93 (2006 - Paul Greengrass), Son of Saul (2015 - László Nemes), Collective (2019 - Alexander Nanau & Antoaneta Opris).

## **Logline**

January 29, 2024. Red Crescent volunteers receive an emergency call. A 5-year-old girl is trapped in a car under fire in Gaza, pleading for rescue. While trying to keep her on the line, they do everything they can to get an ambulance to her. Her name was Hind Rajab.

## **What This Screenplay Teaches**

**The Voice of Hind Rajab** is a radical act of narrative restraint. Built from real emergency call recordings, the screenplay does not invent conflict, compress time, or engineer emotional arcs. It allows reality to unfold exactly as it did: minute by minute, voice by voice, breath by breath.

This is not a dramatization in the traditional sense. It is a reconstruction.

For screenwriters, this script teaches something rare and difficult: how to build unbearable tension without plot mechanics, how to create presence without spectacle, and how to tell a story without claiming ownership over it.

This screenplay asks a question most writers never confront: *When does storytelling become testimony?*

## **Discussion Topics**

- When does dramatization become exploitation?
- Is it possible to “adapt” real tragedy without claiming it?
- How does real-time structure affect emotional response?
- What is lost when spectacle is removed?
- Can sound alone sustain narrative tension?
- Should cinema always offer resolution?
- What is the responsibility of the storyteller?
- Can witnessing be a form of storytelling?

## **Tone Breakdown**

### **Primary Tone: Real-Time Existential Dread**

The terror is not cinematic. It is procedural, slow, and inescapable.

### **Secondary Tone: Institutional Coldness**

Dispatch protocols, formal language, and bureaucratic delay clash violently with human desperation.

### **Tertiary Tone: Intimate Human Fragility**

A child’s voice becomes the emotional center of gravity.

### **Undercurrent: Moral Helplessness**

No heroics. No rescue fantasy. Only the limits of action.

### **In short:**

Unflinching, unbearable, restrained. A story that refuses comfort.

## **Screenwriting Takeaways**

- **Tension can be created without action**

The script proves that waiting, listening, and procedural repetition can be more terrifying than violence.

- **Sound can be narrative**

Voices replace images. Silence replaces music. Breath replaces score.

- **Form is meaning**

The real-time structure is not a gimmick. It is the point.

- **Restraint is an ethical choice**

The screenplay refuses to embellish, aestheticize, or manipulate.

- **Absence can be presence**

What we cannot see becomes the emotional engine.

- **The writer is not always the author**

Sometimes your role is to arrange, not invent.

## Critical Lens: What Works vs Where It Challenges Students

### **What Works**

#### Radical ethical restraint

- It refuses to turn suffering into spectacle.

#### Formal consistency

- The real-time structure never breaks, building dread organically.

#### Sound-centered storytelling

- Voices become setting, action, and emotion.

#### Institutional realism

- Procedure becomes a character.

#### Unmediated presence

- There is no narrator, no commentary, no framing hand.

## **Where it Challenges Students**

### Emotionally devastating to the point of alienation

- Some audiences may disengage to protect themselves.

### Minimal narrative variation

- The formal purity limits traditional dramatic dynamics.

### No catharsis

- This is intentional but punishing.

### Difficult to teach without preparation

- This script requires context, care, and emotional framing.

## Why This Screenplay Matters in Film Studies

This screenplay challenges almost every convention taught in screenwriting:

- No character arc
- No rising action
- No plot turns
- No climax
- No resolution

Students can study how presence replaces plot, how sound replaces image, and how ethical boundaries reshape form.

This is not a how-to script.

It is a why-not script.

## Legacy & Context

**The Voice of Hind Rajab** belongs in a lineage of testimonial cinema rather than traditional narrative film. Its closest relatives are works like *United 93*, *Collective*, *Shoah*, and *Son of Saul* -- films that treat cinema as witness rather than entertainment.

This screenplay participates in an emerging tradition: stories that refuse dramatization, refuse heroics, and refuse comfort. It positions the audience not as consumers, but as listeners.

For screenwriters, it expands the definition of what a screenplay can be. Not a blueprint for spectacle, but a container for truth.

### **Writing Exercise**

Write a three-page scene using only:

- Dialogue
- Ambient sound
- Time stamps

One rule: No action lines longer than five words.

Then discuss what changed when spectacle was removed.

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