



The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue & Vice for Box Office Success

Stanley D. Williams , Christopher Vogler (Foreword)

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The Moral Premise reveals the foundational concept at the heart of all storytelling and successful box office movies. In concrete terms it explains how you can create your own success and, in the process, entertain, delight, challenge, and uplift this generation and the ones to come.

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From Reader Review The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue & Vice for Box Office Success for online ebook

Sarah Yoon says

The concept that Williams introduces is really important and I know that it will shape how I approach storytelling, but the sad irony is that, as he discusses plot arcs, his own argument is so roundabout that he wastes paragraph after paragraph explaining "I'll discuss that later and I'll discuss this now." Your argument should be clear enough that your reader won't need those directives, but will naturally follow your train of thought.

Okay. I've never been so frustrated by a book on writing, but I have vented enough. I won't even talk about his redundancy, which is just a sad side effect of mangled organization.

If I ever return to this book, I'll skim.

Tamara says

Although I thought there was some good information and examples in the book, I was quickly put off by Williams's roundabout terminology and awkward organizational choices. Instead, he delves too quickly into paragraph after paragraph of other writers' definitions of what premise means and I found it a little irritating and indirect. I wouldn't recommend it for the novice writer as might be intimidated or confused right away. The gist of what Williams is saying can found online for free. Really most important chapters in the book are 1, 5, 14, and 16. If someone chose to read those chapters and no others, I don't think they'd miss anything.

Paula says

The book is primarily written for screenplay writers, but I found that it had a lot to offer the rest of us as well. As a fiction writer, the most difficult part for me has been the plot. I have no trouble imagining characters, dialogue or even setting. I can write scenes all day long, but placing those scenes in a logical and escalating plot line has been my downfall. Part of my trouble is that I don't care for plot driven fiction, and don't want to write it. The novels that I love to read are all about emotional and moral peril, not about physical peril. Stanley Williams' short treatise on writing moral fiction was just what I needed to pull my plot together. His emphasis on the moral side assured me that I would accomplish what I desired from my plot, but the mechanics of planning out that plot were also there to help me assemble a plot worth writing.

John Mountford says

A must-read for authors who enjoy writing fiction with heart! This book helps you to be specific about the moral to your story, and also helps you in implementing it in a systematic way throughout. I found the methodology for implementing this moral structure to a novel enlightening, and it has already

paid dividends on the first draft of my current work. A great aid for authors who like to use both sides of their brain in the creative process.

Ann Miller says

In my humble opinion The Moral Premise came across too academic for a lay person's enjoyment, even for a BA in creative writing who "gets" the concept of premise. Granted, I'm not the brightest bulb in the four-pack, and I never did soldier through to the end--even after paying full price. In fact, I just rescued The Moral Premise from the give-away pile to write this review. I recommend the book for writers of above average intelligence who want to master this essential concept for a successful story. I appreciated the plethora of examples Williams included.

Ron Estrada says

This is now one of my top 5 novel writing books, even though it's written primarily for screenwriters. The elements of story are identical. The addition of a "moral premise" allows writers to keep maintain a focal point while determining every major and minor plot line. Nice helpful graphics on his website, too. If you can make it to one of his workshops, by all means do it! He lives in the Detroit area so we're privileged to hear him more often than most. You can borrow him, but he's ours to keep!

Jeanne says

Very interesting book on theme with a different approach, explaining that themes should come in two parts, one about vice and one about the corresponding virtue. Very helpful and clarifying for those struggling with theme.

Eric M Bumpus says

I'd give Part I only one star. The book is sloppy in organization and chapters referenced aren't always the right numbers. The book's premise, ironically, is not sequentially or logically laid out. There are three separate chapters that stand isolated from the flow of the book, and are in between other chapters. The author digresses from the flow of his argument frequently.

Part II, however, has some worthwhile substance and I can glean much from its pages. I don't fully accept the author's philosophy or premise as holding true to all stories (X-Files breaks this mold in many aspects, as just one example), but his thoughts do fit a good number of stories and it is a stable structure. This is, perhaps, because it is actually just the Hero's Journey repackaged and given some moral/religious wrapping paper ("every story must have a lesson and propose an absolute moral answer to the story's problem"). Still, the advice for preplanning a story and laying it out is worded in a way that simplifies the method, compared to other authors who write in a more 'verbose, recursive, and erudite' manner (i.e.: McKee, Vogler, Snyder, etc.).

For Part II, I give five stars. Thus, the rating I give the book is an averaged 3 stars.

Clint Morey says

This is my third time reading this book. The first time, the concept of the book resonated with me. The last two times, I've used it as a manual for developing some of my stories around a moral premise. If you're a writer, this book is worth reading.

Marliss says

This is an excellent book to read if you want to write a successful book, play, or screen play. It is interesting, easy to understand, and a quick read. It filled in some areas for me where I did not quite understand the importance of conflict, the moral premise, and the three-act structure. Most importantly, the book helped me to understand that the moral premise must be a valid, eternal principle and that every character in the work has to act under the moral premise (the vice or the virtue) for the audience to identify with it.

The examples that Stanley Williams used really brought home what he was explaining. I will never look at *Die Hard*, *Brave Heart*, *The Terminator*, or even *Married with Children* (yes, even that show has a moral premise) the same way again.

Emre Poyraz says

my opinion of the book is rather mixed.

on one hand, it covers an issue that has not been covered in storytelling: where the moral of the story comes from and how to construct a story accordingly. on the other hand, the book talks about the moral of the story as its deeper meaning. well, the deeper meaning of the story is not always in its moral. yes, the moral aspect is important, but its not the only thing.

my suggestion is, read this book, but take it with a grain of salt.

Steven Ramirez says

I really enjoyed this book, and was pleased to find that I'd already read most of the books the author references. Although what he is saying is not new, I feel he does an excellent job of synthesizing the work of others, presenting those ideas in a cohesive way that brings clarity to storytelling, and more importantly provides specific guidance on how to create a solid piece of writing—whether screenplay or novel.

This is one of those books that should be in every writer's library next to Egri's *The Art of Dramatic Writing*.

K.M. Weiland says

If I had to identify just one thing I like about stories (an impossible task!) it would be that they *mean* something. I adore stories that challenge me emotionally, intellectually, and morally. Those that don't may occasionally be fun, but they're ultimately just fluff. The Moral Premise is a wonderfully on-point discussion of *how* to create fundamental meaning within a story without resorting to didactic "the moral is."

Williams does a beautiful job of tying theme in with the engine that makes it run: character arc. He further builds that into the foundation of structure to create the complete package. His writing can be a little academic at times, but any complexities are well worth the time and brainpower to work through.

Janet Chapman says

very helpful for writers crafting novels

Paul says

A practical update of Lajos Egri's The Art Of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives. The author discusses the theory of the moral premise, then gives a procedure for how to structure your own screenplay using this powerful approach.
