



The Godfather Notebook

Francis Ford Coppola

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THE PUBLISHING SENSATION OF THE YEAR FOR EVERY FILM FAN

The never-before-published edition of Francis Ford Coppola's notes and annotations on *The Godfather* novel by Mario Puzo reveals the story behind one of the world's most iconic films.

The most important unpublished work on one of the greatest films of all time, *The Godfather*, written *before* filming, by the man who wrote and directed it—Francis Ford Coppola, then only thirty-two years old—reveals the intense creative process that went into making this seminal film. With his meticulous notes and impressions of Mario Puzo's novel, the notebook was referred to by Coppola daily on set while he directed the movie. *The Godfather Notebook* pulls back the curtain on the legendary filmmaker and the film that launched his illustrious career. Complete with an introduction by Francis Ford Coppola and exclusive photographs from on and off the set, this is a unique, beautiful, and faithful reproduction of Coppola's original notebook.

This publication will change the way the world views the iconic film—and the process of filmmaking at large. A must-have book of the season. Nothing like it has ever been published before.

The Godfather Notebook Details

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From Reader Review The Godfather Notebook for online ebook

Mike says

The Godfather and The Godfather Part II are by far my favorite films; I think that together they comprise the great American cinematic achievement. The opportunity to read through this notebook, and to see the ways in which Coppola went about collecting the scenes and background for such a towering work of art made for fascinating reading. The Godfather Notebook should be required reading for any director seeking to adapt and glean meaning from a literary text. Brilliant work.

Robert S says

The Godfather Notebook from *The Godfather* trilogy director Francis Ford Coppola is an offer you can't refuse!

(Okay, now that I have gotten that out of the way.)

The Godfather Notebook is a must-read for any fan of *The Godfather* as Coppola gives fans an inside look into the creative process behind the making of the fan for the first time ever. Coppola treats his creation of the movie script in the same way a stage manager would approach the creation of a play, and even dissects the Mario Puzo book of the same name in the process.

The first two films of *The Godfather* trilogy are my two favorite films of all time (although I am slightly more partial to Part II) so this was a real treat for me. Even as someone who has seen both films countless times and read up about them, I was able to take new information away. Definitely pick this up if you can.

Mike says

Coppola's methods and stories are fascinating.

Also enjoyed the many excerpts from Puzo's book, and the side-stories which weren't in the film.

Notes:

A prompt-book, a tradition of stage managers.

24-26, the cutting, pasting, and binding process ... like stalling, or being involved with a long, tedious process ... But you're really ruminating over what it is you're going to do.

29 40s a peculiar time, half of people in bus stations were soldiers

33 Imagery and tone Kazan: every scene has a "core" idea

34 Much of Puzo's dialogue came from his mother, a practical woman given to pithy remarks

Book 1-25 Luca's story (later, in Sicily, infanticide)

56 Never get angry. Never make a threat. Reason with people.

Ignore all insults, all threats; turn the other cheek.

68 Movie producer and horse head ... "The Don would go all the way!! Maybe he won't kill me. He has something much more clever and painful in reserve."

73 Solozzo meeting: "Young people have no manners. They interrupt their elders, they meddle. But I have a

sentimental weakness for my children, I spoil them."

113 Freddie not ruthless enough, too retiring.

147 Don't let anybody kid you. It's ALL personal, every bit of business.

246 Sonny went around the house in his shorts. He was proud of his V-shaped body, the golden skin.

284 Five Families of NY Dons were in the tradition of "men with a belly"... Stout, corpulent, massive leonine heads. They were not too well-tailored or barbered; they had the look of non-nonsense busy men without vanity.

287 Men who refused the dominion of other men

292 We have to be cunning like the business people. There's more money in it.

404 Revenge is a dish that is best served cold.

408 Don's last words: "Life is so beautiful"

Literary references, from Wikipedia:

Honoré de Balzac's "Le Père Goriot" (1834) has been the inspiration for notable lines that have gained wide popularity in cinema history. Puzo opened his 1969 novel with an epigraph popularly attributed to Balzac: "Behind every great fortune there is a crime." The saying is most likely evolved over time from Balzac's original text: "The secret of a great success for which you are at a loss to account is a crime that has never been found out, because it was properly executed."

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse" was included in both the original Puzo novel, *The Godfather* (1969), and used in the film adaptation (1972). Its origin very well may be from the same work to which Balzac is credited with the opening epigraph. Balzac wrote of Vautrin telling Eugene: "In that case I will make you an offer that no one would decline."

CC says

For anyone who thinks *The Godfather* is a masterpiece, this is the book for you. It's Coppola's notebook, where he broke down every page of the book, and figured out what to keep and what to get rid of as he wrote the screenplay. It's a great look inside a creative mind, and the creative process.

Every scene had a synopsis, the "core" of what he was trying to portray, imagery and tone he wanted to include, and what the pitfalls might be, all of which he was holding in his mind before actually writing the scene itself. In addition, his handwritten notes are all over the place.

Some of it is unintentionally hilarious -- in the "pitfalls" section of the scenes he says stuff like, "This is boring." "This is too long." "There's nothing exciting." "This is too slow." "There's nothing at stake." "What is at stake???" "This is too confusing."

Then he'd handwrite things like -- pace. Pace. PACE!!! almost like he was yelling at himself, as he thought, "I have to fix this damn pace!" It's a very funny and touching look at how a classic movie came to fruition, though, at the time, Coppola was seemingly simply trying to survive each choice he made.

Franc says

This amazing book is simultaneously several things: (1) This is an incredible and important document, like a facsimile of Fitzgerald's handwritten *Gatsby* manuscript.

(2) It's one of the best books written about a *single film* for the way in which it enhanced my enjoyment and understanding of that film. (Geoff Dyer's *Zona: A Book About a Film About a Journey to a Room* is only another one I can think of that improved my experience of the film as much as this does.)

(3) It's like reading the Puzo novel with a Coppola Commentary Track pointing out what he chose to stress and why. Thus we get great margin notes like this when the Don is shot: "The Shooting: GREAT DETAIL. The rolling fruit. The Don is the main character of this movie, so as in "Psycho"" we are totally thrown when his is shot."

(4) It's a case study in how to adapt a novel for the screen. How to hone in on the core of scenes, what pitfalls to avoid, what to leave out, what to stress, linking certain scenes and images to others in the film. For example, he explains what you should do ("Every scene should have a core that is at the root of that scene...If you nailed the clarity of that core in each scene, the audience would get that, and that would form the spin of the experience for them.") Then he proceeds scene by scene to show you how he did this for *The Godfather*.

(5) Most surprisingly, it's also a masterclass in book editing. Coppola saw in Puzo's potboiler mafia saga the germ of a Shakespearean drama: the succession story of an aging king with three sons and surrounded by enemies. Coppola refines Puzo's novel — to use the metaphor of precious metals — by removing impurities: unnecessary characters, plot lines, and sensational elements. The end result is more concentrated and stronger than *The Godfather* as published, which I've tried and failed to finish a couple of times on a couple of beaches. From now on I'll be recommending all friends to read this "The Godfather Director's Cut" instead.

Daniel says

If you think the *Godfather* is one of the greatest movies ever made, this is a really cool outline that Coppola put together before he made the film. It will enhance your subsequent viewings and make you appreciate his direction of the movie.

H says

Not just for filmmakers, artists, writers, or people interested in the creative process. This work is for anyone who complains that their latest output was not well received. Coppola did the work, stressed out while doing, did even more work, and ultimately succeed in producing one of the finest pieces of cinema ever. A great look inside the mind of the artist.

Realini says

The Godfather: Part II, based on the novel by Mario Puzo

The Godfather Part II is an exhilarating, magnificent chef d'oeuvre, one of the best ten films ever made.

Some feminists criticize this work of art as expressing the male admiration for a violent mobster. Even if there is some grain of truth in that statement, the reality is much more complex, like the protagonist of the motion picture.

Michael Corleone is the Godfather in this sequel to the other masterpiece, wherein Marlon Brando was Vito Corleone.

In addition, this is both a hero and the evil character, making the film so much more interesting, with his complicated personality.

Some of the Character Strengths that the leader of one of the most powerful Mafia families has are:

- Bravery, Curiosity, Persistence, Perspective, even Citizenship at the time of his volunteer enrollment in the army
- Also Leadership, Vitality, Love, Social Intelligence, Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence, Gratitude...

Some, if not most of these qualities have helped him keep control of the organization and diversify the operations.

However, it is also difficult to appreciate this powerful personality since these skills have been put to the wrong use.

Moreover, it could all have been so different.

One of the most powerful scenes in the movie takes place decades in the past, on the birthday of Vito Corleone.

It was also the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and this is the subject of conversation at the table.

Sonny is meant to be the future Godfather and in the same room, we have Fredo, Tom Hagen, Connie and Michael.

The elder brother is convinced that the many thousands that have volunteered to fight the enemy are stupid.

Nevertheless, Michael emphasizes that they will fight for their country and that appears to be the noble thing to do...

- Fight for strangers?...you fight for your family- that appears to be the credo as expressed by Vito Corleone himself
- To fight for the country is the right thing to do
- Yeah? Why don't you skip college and join the army then!?
- I did...
- What?! You idiot...these are not quotes, but the dialogue as I remember it

Then Tom Hagen is expressing amazement and he says:

- Why didn't you come to us?
- What for?
- Your father has pulled a lot of strings to save you from joining
- I did not ask for that
- Your father has talked a lot about your future with me...
- My future?
- Yes, he has such high hopes for you Michael...

The always impulsive and neurotic Sonny tries to beat his younger brother, but this is so relevant and thought provoking.

In The first part of The Godfather, Michael talks to Kate at the memorable wedding and states clearly that, although his family has this very dark side, he is not like that and he has other ideals.

Therefore, it is so ironic that the young idealist, who saw himself so different from his siblings and father, ends up running the family "business".

The values of the young Michael Corleone have all vanished? Alternatively, is this just a case of a found identity?

This of course makes the plot and this phenomenal film so much appealing, with its intricate philosophical issues.

The film that the popular vote on IMDB has placed at number three is not just a gangster movie, violent and simple.

The Godfather is an example of failure, for his marriage is finished under the most gruesome circumstances, his brother Fredo is killed, and the family name is tarnished when a Senate investigation is opened.

The Godfather: Part II is a glorious, phenomenal motion picture.

Marilyn Jess says

This book had been on my To Read list since it was released over a year ago. It gives you all the details behind one of the best Hollywood films ever produced. The book flows according to how the movie unfolds. It includes a lot of actual text from The Godfather book, by Mario Puzo, marked up with Coppola's production notes. You will also see what did not make it into the film's final cut. You will also learn why so much of the book wasn't great material for the film medium. Puzo improved upon his book by helping write the film script.

Francis Ford Coppola and Mario Puzo collaborated to create a cinema classic. Treat yourself to this fine accounting of how The Godfather film was made. Highest recommendation.

Joey says

Francis Ford Coppola saw an advertisement for Mario Puzo's The Godfather in the New York Times on a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1969. The same day, Coppola was visited by two producers from

Paramount AND received a phone call from Marlon Brando. The way The Godfather film came together is rather serendipitous.

"But as they say, beggars can't be choosers; I was a young father of two children with a third on the way, and I was already in debt due to my dream of being an independent filmmaker of small art films. George Lucas, my young protégé and cofounder of our struggling company, American Zoetrope, emphatically told me: 'You have to accept this job; we have no money and the sheriff is coming to chain up the front door.' And so I accepted the offer to direct The Godfather, which surprisingly had been turned down by the best directors of the time, including Elia Kazan- probably the best director of acting in the entire history of cinema." (20)

Coppola created a "prompt book" or notebook of his ideas. He divided the novel into five acts, then subdivided them into fifty scenes.

Each section had a cover sheet with the criteria:

- (1) SYNOPSIS
- (2) THE TIMES
- (3) IMAGERY AND TONE
- (4) THE LORE
- (5) PITFALLS

Coppola had actual pages of the novel in his notebook for reference, used color coding for notes, and created a list of characters at the front of his notebook, including actors he thought could fill those roles accordingly.

"Upon that second reading, much of the book fell away in my mind, revealing a story that was a metaphor for American capitalism in the tale of a great king with three sons: the oldest was given his passion and aggressiveness, the second his sweet nature and childlike qualities, and the third his intelligence, cunning, and coldness." (23-24)

The screenplay took a few months to write after the completion of the notebook. This replication is uncanny and stunning, especially as means to understand how Coppola processed information and put pieces back together.

"The notebook was my anchor through all of it." (42)

"I loved it; I was living a dream." (26)

Bill Powers says

For a committed Godfather aficionado, it doesn't get much better than this. I couldn't believe it when I learned about the Godfather Notebook coming out about six months ago.

The book contains Ford's detailed notes that he used to direct The Godfather. He took the Mario Puzo book and taped each page into his notebook binder and wrote his own notes on each page. You also get to see Ford's handwritten notes on all the actors considered for each role.

I immediately ordered it (as a Christmas gift to myself) and it came yesterday. Christmas came early for me this year! This is history!

Reading says

Would have given five stars except The Godfather is really not all that great a book. Of course I did not read this so i could read that novel, I read because of all of the gems and sheer brilliance revealed in Coppola's notes and the insights revealed relating to his filmmaking process. Upon completion I wanted to re-watch the film immediately and then go start working on another film.

bravo Mr Coppola - we miss you.

Lenny says

I love the movies. I love everything about them. I'm always interested in how artists go about making their art, especially how a director pulls together all the myriad threads of their vision, how they join in collaboration with hundreds of other artists to make a film.

The Godfather is considered one of the greatest films of all time so to be given the opportunity to see how Francis Ford Coppola began the work of adapting Mario Puzo's novel for the screen is, for me, a supreme gift. This is not a book to be downloaded onto an ereader. Attention must be paid. The film and its place in history have real weight and it is only right, I believe, to hold this gorgeous book in one's hands when reading it.

Coppola explains how, when he realized he was going to actually make a film of this novel he went through the book, page by page, his "pencil poised." He breaks each scene down into 5 sections: The Synopsis, The Times, Imagery and Tone, The Core (something he learned from Elia Kazan, and probably the most important part of each scene), and Pitfalls. As he reads the novel, underlining, making notes in the margins, cutting parts of the book that are not necessary to the main thrust of the film we can see the finished film in our heads. It is a fascinating, exciting, wonderful book for any fan of this fantastic film, and exhilarating to read the novel while reading all of Coppola's notes. At times he will make a note: "Think how Hitchcock would stage this scene," or "a gift of gold - tennessee williams." It's interesting to see his influences throughout the work and how they help him shape the book into a film.

Coppola sometimes brings out his red pencil to underline really important points in the book. At one point, on page 365 of the novel he writes in red: "WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT." In black he writes, "THE ENTIRE CREDO OF THE BOOK," and underlines it in red. He has found his meta theme. He is talking to Kay after he returns from Italy and Appolonia has been killed. Here is that passage: "You've got the wrong idea of my father and the Corleone Family. I'll make a final explanation and this one will be really final. My father is a businessman trying to provide for his wife and children and those friends he might need someday in a time of trouble. He doesn't accept the rules of society we live in because those rules would have condemned him to a life not suitable to a man life himself, a man of extraordinary force and character. What you have to understand is that he considers himself the equal of all those great men like Presidents and Prime Ministers and Supreme Court Justices and Governors of the States. He refuses to accept their will over his own. He refuses to live by rules set up by others, rules which condemn him to a defeated life. But his ultimate aim is to enter that society with a certain power since society doesn't really protect it member who do not have their own individual power. In the meantime he operates on a code of ethics he considers far

superior to the legal structures of society."

Society IS rotten. It is corrupt. Those in power will bribe, steal and kill to keep their power. Politicians, judges, policeman are criminals. The Corleone family is just another part of that corruption. In this world, the manner in which they gain and hold onto power, live their lives, and provide for their families is the same as every other powerful person. Probably one of the most significant reasons it's such a successful story is that we feel it is true as well.

There's a great scene in the mediocre film "You've Got Mail" in which Tom Hanks advises Meg Ryan on how she needs to "go to the mattresses" to save her business. He explains why men are so obsessed with this film. There are many articles written on all the lessons taught in The Godfather. If you want to read an intricate notebook on how this iconic film began its road into the marrow of our culture, pick up this book now. It's an offer you can't refuse.

Albert says

Have you read Mario Puzo's "The Godfather"? If not, you should have; it is one of the great American novels of the 20th century. That novel served as the template Francis Ford Coppola used to film "The Godfather", which is on every film critic's short list of the greatest American films ever made.

But how did the book become the movie? How did Coppola decide what parts of the book to use and what to avoid? What was Coppola's thought process as he converted a book into a movie?

Luckily for us, he kept a notebook, which has now been reproduced and published so we can see this process. Coppola explains his process for creating the notebook and how he used it during filming. For fans of the movie, this is an amazing artifact, and one that you need to get your hands on and read.

For fans of the novel, you can reread the novel here and see exactly what Coppola used in the movie.

This is truly a special volume and Godfather fans need to get their hands on it.

Amy says

Wow! The book of all books! It took me two separate library check-outs but I finished it.. What an awesome gift Coppola has shared: his screenplay and director notes exactly as they were. Why a character wore a certain color, posed a certain way, laughed, cried, looked away--the detail is an amazing insight to such an incredible work of art. After reading the book, I then watched the movie and followed it with the book..

A must for all Godfather fans but also for those interested in writing screenplays. Truly a classic American masterpiece.
