1. Explain the problem with only “writing what you know”. How will you as the screenwriter go about telling stories that exist beyond your realm of experience?

* One aspect of writing I’m really interested in right now is research. By researching articles in the newspaper or compiling data from other sources you can gain insight into the human experience and write educated portraits of other experiences that you yourself have not had.
* One thing that I personally have had trouble with is, in having many bad experiences and set backs, I tend to dwell in a very negative and dramatic place but when good things do occur it makes me optimistic about life and I’m able to imagine not only a happy life for myself but a happy life for my artistic creations as well. Getting out of a slump or depression and feeling good emotions come back is a great way to write something new and get out of your old self that you have known for extended periods of time.

1. Explain what makes a fantastical story believable.

Gravity. Still exists. Even on make believe planets. Forces of good and evil can be depicted in make believe apparel in various forms. The visual language of light and dark, color and no color, and characters with visages that express universal emotion can all exist and tell a story that is believable. Often times, fantasy writing may express truths that have yet to find other modalities of expression in science. I think of the “Wheel of Time” series and how those characters all wield energy in ways that are in some ways grounded in the reality of the human psyche however they are extended and amplified to create magic. Even the magic of Harry Potter has some truth in it. The road map of the psyche can be laid out in a number of different settings both real and fabricated and it’s interesting when “magic” actual conveys something that is a real dynamic of the human spirit which may not have found an expression before in any other form.

1. What tools are needed to write believable characters?

Believable characters have flaws. Believable characters have desires. Believable characters must be facing obstacles to those desires.

1. How do you move a story idea beyond simple spectacle?

Spectacle brings us to the level of the visual. Moving beyond visual spectacle could require the development of greater emotional depth to a character. Your audience needs to be invested in a character and that actor who plays the part must convey emotion well or else they are not going to be engaged in the inner life of the character and they are going to need distractions like exploding helicopters to hold their attention.

1. What ingredients are necessary to create a compelling story?

The protagonist must desire something. There will be obstacles in place to keep that character from achieving those desires. Each scene must push the story forward and the writer must ask himself/herself what is it that this character is fighting for? What are the stakes in this particular scene? A compelling story often has some sort of sex appeal. It evokes desire in the audience members. They want to see the two characters get together because those actors have earned some sort of place in the hearts of the audience members.

A compelling story has something relatable going on that the majority of human beings can relate to or if nothing else find interesting. The themes of a compelling story in my opinion often involve some sort of social commentary and the very UTMOST quality stories reveal things to us about our culture that we ourselves didn’t realize.

1. Explain the difference between the inner and outer focus of a story.

The outer focus of the story relates to the perspective of the audience. The audience sees things that the characters are not aware of. You could call this dramatic irony. It gives the audience a foothold into the ownership of the story and it’s more engaging to an audience member to make them feel as though they know something that the character doesn’t. Maybe it makes them more invested in the movie.

The inner focus is the structure of the scenes which drives the story towards some sort of resolution. It is the blueprint that is funneling everything towards a resolution and hopefully a new understanding or place in the world for the protagonist.

1. What is the biggest mistake beginning writers make? Why is it a problem?

Beginning screenwriters often try to make their screenplays into a novel instead of a barebones blueprint. Also, they tend to add too many details rather than letting some decisions get made along the way with the help of an array of other knowledgeable people on the team. The writer has to do it alone to an extent but also has to make way for the input of others.

1. What are the structural elements of a script?

You have your Title page which must be formatted professionally. You have your “slug line” which tells you where your scene is and what time of day it is – whether it’s interior or exterior. You have your dialogue. You have your character descriptions. Every time a new character comes in, their name is in CAPITAL LETTERS and there is a description of them. You have your parentheticals to give a bit of color to the mood of the character’s lines. You also have something called an “Extension” such as when there is text but the text is meant to be spoken as a voice over so you can type “V/O”.

1. Why is it important to predict Hollywood’s upcoming trends?

It’s important to be out of the way in case your project is too much like other projects that are being finished and released. If you get the warning that there are three Big foot films being made to be released next year, you might want to abandon the plan to pitch your Yeti feature to someone.

1. Describe what a synopsis should entail.

A synopsis should not be overly detailed. It should leave you wanting more so it shouldn’t be 5 pages long. There should be a sense of urgency in the synopsis. Using exact lines or describing things too exactly could ruin some surprises and reveal too much.

1. What is “creative discipline”? Why is it important?

Creative discipline means finding a routine for your writing so that it becomes a daily ritual. I have read time and time again that early morning is the best time for creativity. To do your best work you can’t just expect to produce pure gold automatically. It takes persistence and discipline to really live up to your potential.

I am personally trying to build a routine and I have found an amazing drafting desk at World Market that I intend to use for story boarding. I think my process will be heavy in story boarding and that the text will be derived from the images and not the other way around.