

adventures in the screen trade

Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Comprehensive Journey into the World of Film and Television

adventures in the screen trade is a phrase that captures the excitement, challenges, and unpredictability of working within the dynamic world of film and television. From aspiring screenwriters and directors to seasoned producers and actors, everyone who steps into this industry embarks on a unique voyage filled with creative pursuits, rigorous competition, and unforeseen obstacles. Whether you're dreaming of breaking into Hollywood or navigating the indie scene, understanding the intricacies of the screen trade is essential for turning your vision into reality.

Understanding the Screen Trade: An Overview

The term "screen trade" refers broadly to the industry involved in producing, distributing, and exhibiting visual storytelling content—movies, TV shows, streaming series, and digital content. It encompasses a multifaceted ecosystem where creative talent, business acumen, and technological innovation intersect.

Key Components of the Screen Trade

- Screenwriting: Crafting compelling scripts that serve as the blueprint for visual storytelling.
- Production: The process of filming, directing, and managing logistics on set.
- Post-production: Editing, visual effects, sound design, and other processes that refine the final product.
- Distribution: Getting the finished content into theaters, TV networks, streaming platforms, or physical media.
- Marketing and Promotion: Building audience awareness and anticipation through campaigns and publicity.

The Pathways into the Screen Trade

Breaking into the industry can seem daunting, but understanding the various routes can streamline your journey.

Traditional Routes

- Film School Education: Many successful filmmakers and writers start with formal training at renowned institutions.
- Entry-Level Positions: Working as a production assistant or intern can provide valuable industry experience and networking opportunities.
- Networking and Industry Events: Attending festivals, panels, and seminars to connect with industry professionals.

Alternative Routes

- Online Platforms and Social Media: Showcasing your work on YouTube, Vimeo, or TikTok to build an audience and attract industry attention.
- Independent Filmmaking: Creating small-scale projects with limited resources to demonstrate talent.
- Collaborative Projects: Partnering with other creatives to gain experience and develop a portfolio.

Challenges and Rewards in the Screen Trade

Common Challenges

- High Competition: The industry attracts countless talented individuals vying for limited opportunities.
- Financial Uncertainty: Projects may take years to develop, and income can be inconsistent.
- Creative Pressure: Balancing artistic vision with commercial viability often creates tension.
- Industry Politics: Navigating relationships, studio politics, and gatekeeping can be complex.

Rewards and Opportunities

- Creative Fulfillment: Bringing stories to life and impacting audiences worldwide.
- Recognition and Awards: Achieving critical acclaim, awards, and fan following.
- Financial Success: Successful projects can lead to lucrative deals and career stability.
- Cultural Impact: Influencing society and sparking conversations through storytelling.

Essential Skills for Success in the Screen Trade

To thrive, industry professionals often cultivate a diverse skill set.

Creative Skills

- Strong storytelling and narrative development
- Visual literacy and understanding of cinematography
- Adaptability to different genres and styles

Technical Skills

- Proficiency in editing software (e.g., Adobe Premiere, Final Cut Pro)
- Knowledge of production equipment and technology
- Understanding of distribution platforms and digital marketing

Business and Networking Skills

- Negotiation and contract management
- Building professional relationships
- Marketing and brand development

The Role of Technology and Innovation

Technology continues to revolutionize the screen trade, offering new avenues for content creation and distribution.

Streaming Platforms and Digital Distribution

- The rise of Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and others has reshaped how audiences consume content.
- Independent creators can now reach global audiences without traditional gatekeepers.

Virtual Production and Special Effects

- Techniques like LED walls and real-time rendering streamline production workflows.
- Enhanced visual effects enable more ambitious storytelling.

Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics

- AI tools assist in script analysis, editing, and audience targeting.
- Data analytics help predict trends and optimize marketing strategies.

Navigating the Business Side of the Screen Trade

Understanding the commercial aspects is crucial for sustainable success.

Financing and Funding

- Securing funding through investors, grants, or studio backing.
- Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter and Indiegogo as alternative sources.

Intellectual Property Rights

- Protecting scripts, footage, and creative assets through copyrights and licenses.
- Negotiating rights and royalties effectively.

Distribution Strategies

- Choosing the right platforms for release.
- Crafting compelling trailers and promotional campaigns.

Tips for Aspiring Creatives in the Screen Trade

- Develop a Strong Portfolio: Showcase a variety of projects to demonstrate versatility.
- Stay Persistent: Rejection is part of the journey; resilience is key.
- Keep Learning: Stay updated on industry trends, new tools, and storytelling techniques.
- Build Relationships: Networking can open doors to collaborations and opportunities.
- Be Open to Feedback: Constructive criticism can refine your craft.

Notable Stories and Personal Journeys in the Industry

Many successful professionals have faced setbacks before achieving greatness. Their stories serve as inspiration.

Examples of Industry Legends

- Steven Spielberg: Started with small projects and overcame multiple rejections before creating blockbuster classics.
- Ava DuVernay: Rose from independent filmmaking to acclaimed director and producer, advocating for diversity.
- Quentin Tarantino: Built a reputation through grindhouse films and independent releases before mainstream success.

Their journeys underscore the importance of perseverance, passion, and innovation in the adventures within the screen trade.

Conclusion: Embracing the Adventure

The adventures in the screen trade are as diverse as the stories told on screen. While challenges abound, the rewards of creating impactful content and shaping culture are unparalleled. Whether you're a writer, director, producer, or actor, understanding the industry's landscape, honing your craft, and building meaningful relationships are vital steps toward success. Embrace the journey with resilience and passion, and your adventure in the screen trade can lead to a fulfilling and influential career.

Keywords: adventures in the screen trade, film industry, television production, filmmaking, screenwriting, content creation, distribution platforms, industry challenges, filmmaking tips, entertainment industry insights

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main focus of 'Adventures in the Screen Trade'?

'Adventures in the Screen Trade' is a memoir by William Goldman that explores his experiences and insights into the Hollywood film industry, including screenwriting, filmmaking, and the challenges faced by writers and producers.

Why is 'Adventures in the Screen Trade' considered a must-read for aspiring screenwriters?

Because it offers firsthand, candid advice from one of Hollywood's most successful screenwriters, sharing industry secrets, practical tips, and the realities of working in Hollywood, making it invaluable for aspiring writers.

What are some famous films discussed in 'Adventures in the Screen Trade'?

William Goldman discusses iconic films such as 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,' 'All the President's Men,' and 'The Princess Bride,' providing behind-the-scenes insights into their creation.

How does 'Adventures in the Screen Trade' address the challenges of Hollywood screenwriting?

Goldman openly discusses issues like studio interference, rewriting, the unpredictability of success, and the importance of resilience, giving readers a realistic view of the industry's difficulties.

What is the significance of the phrase 'Nobody knows anything' in relation to the book?

Goldman uses this phrase to emphasize the unpredictability of success in Hollywood, highlighting that even experts cannot accurately forecast which projects will succeed, underscoring the industry's uncertainty.

Has 'Adventures in the Screen Trade' influenced modern screenwriting or Hollywood storytelling?

Yes, Goldman's candid insights, storytelling advice, and industry anecdotes have influenced many writers and filmmakers, shaping contemporary perspectives on screenwriting and Hollywood filmmaking practices.

Additional Resources

Adventures in the Screen Trade is a compelling and insightful memoir by veteran Hollywood screenwriter William Goldman. Published in 1983, the book provides an in-depth look at the behind-the-scenes world of filmmaking, revealing both the glamour and the gritty realities faced by those who craft movies. Goldman's candid storytelling, sharp wit, and industry expertise make this work a must-read for aspiring screenwriters, film enthusiasts, and anyone interested in understanding the complex dynamics of Hollywood.

Overview of "Adventures in the Screen Trade"

William Goldman's memoir is more than just a personal recounting of his career; it's a semi-autobiographical journey that offers a nuanced critique of Hollywood's workings. The book blends anecdotes, industry observations, and practical advice, all delivered with Goldman's signature humor and intelligence. It's both a tribute to the art of storytelling and a candid exposé of the business side of filmmaking.

Goldman's narrative is structured around his experiences writing some of Hollywood's most iconic films, including Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, All the President's Men, and The Princess Bride. Throughout, he reflects on the challenges of adapting stories for the screen, navigating studio politics, and maintaining artistic integrity amid commercial pressures.

Key Themes and Insights

The Myth vs. Reality of Hollywood

One of the central themes in Goldman's memoir is the contrast between Hollywood's glamorous image and its often harsh realities. He discusses how the industry is driven by profit motives, studio politics, and the fickle nature of success.

Pros:

- Provides an honest perspective that demystifies Hollywood.
- Highlights the importance of resilience and adaptability.

Cons:

- Might be disillusioning for some readers expecting a romanticized view of filmmaking.

The Art and Craft of Screenwriting

Goldman emphasizes that screenwriting is a unique craft, requiring not only storytelling skills but also strategic thinking about what the market demands. He advocates for writers to understand the business side and to craft scripts that are both meaningful and commercially viable.

Features:

- Emphasis on the importance of "writing the script that sells."
- Insights into the collaborative process of filmmaking.
- Practical advice on story structure and character development.

Pros:

- Offers valuable guidance for aspiring writers.
- Balances artistic integrity with commercial considerations.

Cons:

- Some may find his pragmatic approach at odds with more idealistic views of art.

The Business of Hollywood

Goldman provides a detailed look at how movies are financed, marketed, and distributed. He reveals

the complexities of navigating studio systems, dealing with executives, and the importance of timing and luck.

Features:

- Explanation of how screenplays are sold and developed.
- Commentary on studio politics and decision-making.
- Anecdotes illustrating the unpredictability of success.

Pros:

- Illuminates the often opaque processes behind film production.
- Offers practical lessons on how to succeed in a competitive industry.

Cons:

- Can be discouraging for newcomers due to the emphasis on luck and politics.

Notable Anecdotes and Industry Tales

Goldman shares numerous memorable stories from his career, giving readers a glimpse into legendary moments and eccentric personalities.

The Making of "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid"

He discusses the collaborative process, the challenges of adapting a script, and how the film's success was partly due to the chemistry of the cast and the innovative direction.

Behind the Scenes of "All the President's Men"

Goldman details the meticulous research and narrative choices involved in turning Woodward and Bernstein's reporting into a compelling screenplay, emphasizing journalistic integrity and storytelling.

The Story of "The Princess Bride"

He reflects on how the film, initially considered a risky project, eventually became a beloved classic thanks to passion, perseverance, and a strong vision from the filmmakers.

Features and Strengths of "Adventures in the Screen Trade"

- Candid Industry Perspective: Goldman's honesty about failures, setbacks, and the often unpredictable nature of Hollywood gives readers an authentic view.
- Humor and Wit: His sharp, humorous writing makes complex topics engaging and accessible.
- Practical Advice: From story structure to navigating studios, the book offers invaluable tips for writers and filmmakers.
- Historical Context: The memoir provides a snapshot of Hollywood from the 1960s through the early 1980s, capturing a transformative era.

Criticisms and Limitations

While Goldman's insights are invaluable, some criticisms include:

- Industry-Centric Viewpoint: The focus is primarily on Hollywood's major studios, which may not fully represent independent or international filmmaking.
- Skeptical Tone: His pragmatic, sometimes cynical outlook might be off-putting for those seeking idealistic inspiration.
- Limited Technical Focus: The book discusses storytelling and industry practices but does not delve deeply into technical aspects like cinematography or editing.

Legacy and Influence

"Adventures in the Screen Trade" has become a seminal work in the field of screenwriting and Hollywood memoirs. Its influence extends beyond Goldman's own career, shaping how writers and filmmakers understand the business.

Impact:

- Encouraged aspiring screenwriters to pursue their craft with realism and resilience.
- Provided a blueprint for navigating Hollywood's complex landscape.
- Inspired subsequent books and discussions about the art and business of filmmaking.

Conclusion: Is It Worth Reading?

Absolutely. William Goldman's "Adventures in the Screen Trade" is a masterful blend of memoir, industry analysis, and practical advice. It offers an honest, often humorous, look at what it takes to

succeed in Hollywood, making it an essential read for anyone interested in the world of film. While some may find its pragmatic tone challenging, the insights and stories Goldman shares are invaluable for understanding both the craft and commerce of screen storytelling.

Whether you're an aspiring screenwriter, a film student, or a devoted cinephile, this book provides a wealth of knowledge and entertainment. It demystifies the Hollywood machine, celebrates the art of storytelling, and reminds us that behind every great film is a complex, often unpredictable adventure.

Final thoughts: "Adventures in the Screen Trade" remains a classic because it captures the magic, madness, and meticulous craft of making movies. Its lessons resonate with anyone passionate about storytelling and filmmaking, emphasizing that, despite the industry's flaws, the pursuit of great stories is a noble and rewarding adventure.

Adventures In The Screen Trade

adventures in the screen trade: Adventures in the Screen Trade William Goldman, 2012-06-05 Enter Hollywood's inner sanctums in this gossipy and honest book, named one the top 100 film books of all time by The Hollywood Reporter, by the Academy Award-winning screenwriter and bestselling author of *The Princess Bride*. No one knows the writer's Hollywood more intimately than William Goldman. Two-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter and the bestselling author of *The Princess Bride*, *Marathon Man*, *Tinsel*, *Boys and Girls Together*, and other novels, Goldman now takes you behind the scenes for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President's Men*, and other films . . . into the plush offices of Hollywood producers . . . into the working lives of acting greats such as Redford, Olivier, Newman, and Hoffman...and into his own professional experiences and creative thought processes in the crafting of screenplays. You get a firsthand look at why and how films get made and what elements make a good screenplay. Says columnist Liz Smith, You'll be fascinated..

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1985-04-01

adventures in the screen trade: My Grandma Loves This! Leo Ifing, 2013-04 In this book, we have hand-picked the most sophisticated, unanticipated, absorbing (if not at times crackpot!), original and musing book reviews of *Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting*. Don't say we didn't warn you: these reviews are known to shock with their unconventionality or intimacy. Some may be startled by their biting sincerity; others may be spellbound by their unbridled flights of fantasy. Don't buy this book if: 1. You don't have nerves of steel. 2. You expect to get pregnant in the next five minutes. 3. You've heard it all.

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adventures in the screen trade: What You Made of It C. K. Stead, 2021-05-13 Having left the university to write full-time at the end of volume two, Stead throws himself into his work. In novels like *Sister Hollywood* and *My Name Was Judas*, criticism in the *London Review of Books* and the *Financial Times*, poetry and memoir, Stead establishes his international reputation as novelist, poet and critic. It is also a period when Stead's fearless lucidity on matters literary and political embroil him in argument &- from *The Bone People* to the meaning of the Treaty to the controversy over a London writer's flat. What was it like to be Allen Curnow's designated &'Critic across the Crescent'; or alternatively to be labelled &'the Tonya Harding of NZ Lit'? How did poems emerge from time and place, sometimes as naturally as &'leaves to a tree', sometimes effortfully? And how did novels about individual men and women retell stories of war (World War II, Yugoslavia, Iraq) and peace? Covering Stead's travels from Los Angeles to Liguria, Croatia and Crete to Caracas and Colombia, as New Zealand poet laureate and Kohi swimmer, *What You Made of It* takes us deep inside the mind and experience of one of our major writers &- and all in Stead's famously lucid &'story-telling' prose.

adventures in the screen trade: Cinemas of the World James Chapman, 2004-06-03 The cinema has been the pre-eminent popular art form of the 20th century. In *Cinemas of the World*, James Chapman examines the relationship between film and society in the modern world: film as entertainment medium, film as a reflection of national cultures and preoccupations, film as an instrument of propaganda. He also explores two interrelated issues that have recurred throughout the history of cinema: the economic and cultural hegemony of Hollywood on the one hand, and, on the other, the attempts of film-makers elsewhere to establish indigenous national cinemas drawing on their own cultures and societies. Chapman examines the rise to dominance of Hollywood cinema in the silent and early sound periods. He discusses the characteristic themes of American movies from the Depression to the end of the Cold War especially those found in the western and film noir - genres that are often used as vehicles for exploring issues central to us society and politics. He looks at national cinemas in various European countries in the period between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second, which all exhibit the formal and aesthetic properties of modernism. The emergence of the so-called new cinemas of Europe and the wider world since 1960 are also

explored. Chapman is a tough-thinking, original writer . . . an engaging, excellent piece of work.—David Lancaster, *Film and History*

adventures in the screen trade: *Naked Screenwriting* Lew Hunter, 2021-03-15

Award-winning screenwriters reveal their Hollywood secrets in crafting brilliant stories and methodology through interviews with world-renowned UCLA screenwriting professor Lew Hunter. *Naked Screenwriting* includes interviews with Francis Ford Coppola, Billy Wilder, Oliver Stone, Bruce Joel Rubin, William Goldman, Julius Epstein, Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor, Alfred Uhry, Tom Schulman, Ted Tally, Ruth Praver Jabvola, Eric Roth, Jean-Claude Carrière, Frank Pierson, David Ward, Horton Foote, Ron Bass, Alan Ball, Callie Khouri, Robert Benton, Irving Ravetch, and Harriet Frank Junior. Never before has a book covered Oscar-winning writers so thoroughly, shedding insight and wisdom into the art of screenwriting.

adventures in the screen trade: *The Bondian Cold War* Martin D. Brown, Ronald J. Granieri, Muriel Blaive, 2023-09-01 James Bond, Ian Fleming's irrepressible and ubiquitous 'spy,' is often understood as a Cold Warrior, but James Bond's Cold War diverged from the actual global conflict in subtle but significant ways. That tension between the real and fictional provides perspectives into Cold War culture transcending ideological and geopolitical divides. The Bondiverse is complex and multi-textual, including novels, films, video games, and even a comic strip, and has also inspired an array of homages, copies, and competitors. Awareness of its rich possibilities only becomes apparent through a multi-disciplinary lens. The desire to consider current trends in Bondian studies inspired a conference entitled 'The Bondian Cold War,' convened at Tallinn University, Estonia in June 2019. Conference participants, drawn from three continents and multiple disciplines – film studies, history, intelligence studies, and literature, as well as intelligence practitioners – offered papers on the literary and cinematic aspects of the 'spy,' discussed fact versus fiction in the Bond canon, went in search of a global Bond, and pondered gender and sexuality across the Bondiverse. This volume of essays inspired by that conference, suitable for students, researchers, and anyone interested in Cold War culture, makes vital contributions to understanding Bond as a global phenomenon, across traditional divisions of East and West, and beyond the end of the Cold War from which he emerged.

adventures in the screen trade: *Nixon at the Movies* Mark Feeney, 2012-10-22 "People will be arguing over Nixon at the Movies as much as, for more than half a century, the country at large has been arguing about Nixon."—Greil Marcus Richard Nixon and the film industry arrived in Southern California in the same year, 1913, and they shared a long and complex history. The president screened Patton multiple times before and during the invasion of Cambodia, for example. In this unique blend of political biography, cultural history, and film criticism, Mark Feeney recounts in detail Nixon's enthusiastic viewing habits during his presidency, and takes a new and often revelatory approach to Nixon's career and Hollywood's, seeing aspects of Nixon's character, and the nation's, refracted and reimagined in film. *Nixon at the Movies* is a "virtuosic" examination of a man, a culture, and a country in a time of tumult (Slate). "By Feeney's count, Nixon, an unabashed film buff, watched more than 500 movies during the 67 months of his presidency, all carefully listed in an appendix titled 'What the President Saw and When He Saw It.' Nixon concentrated intently on whatever was on the screen; he refused to leave even if the picture was a dud and everyone around him was restless. He was omnivorous, would watch anything, though he did have his preferences...Only rarely did he watch R-rated or foreign films. He liked happy endings. Movies were obviously a means of escape for him, and as the Watergate noose tightened, he spent ever more time in the screening room."—The New York Times

adventures in the screen trade: *More Popcorn Principles: The Sequel!* John Gaspard, 2024-06-04 Unlock Your Novel's Full Potential with *More Popcorn Principles: The Sequel!* John Gaspard's *More Popcorn Principles: The Sequel!* (Further Cinematic Storytelling Strategies for Novelists) is an illuminating guide that takes you on a cinematic journey, revealing the secrets to crafting compelling narratives and characters that resonate. This book is an invaluable tool for any aspiring or seasoned novelist, blending Gaspard's deep understanding of the art of storytelling with inspiration from the world of film. Gaspard presents 23 power-packed principles that will

revolutionize your approach to writing. Just as a film director uses a camera to capture the most captivating scenes, Gaspard teaches you to wield your pen to craft striking narratives and unforgettable characters. This accessible guide allows you to jump to topics that spark your interest, with each chapter concluding with thought-provoking questions and a curated viewing list, engaging your mind and stoking your creative fires. Gaspard's approach is grounded in his comprehensive understanding of storytelling and is shaped by his vast experience in both novel-writing and filmmaking. More Popcorn Principles: The Sequel! is not just a book— it's an immersive masterclass, a transformative journey that will empower and enlighten you, helping you shape your experiences, ideas, and passion into a captivating narrative. As you turn its pages, you'll discover how to harness your narrative voice, master the craft of dialogue, and weave plots that will leave your readers wanting more. Get ready to take your novel-writing journey to the next level! You'll learn key concepts, such as: The challenge of beginning a novel Harnessing your unconscious mind during drafting Managing self-doubt and negative internal voices Ignoring external voices that hinder creativity The role of theme in guiding the writing process Raising the stakes to create tension and engagement Taking big creative risks for original storytelling Using repetition intentionally for dramatic effect Getting straight to the point to engage readers Crafting effective cliffhanger endings Avoiding frustrating cliffhangers that lack closure The importance of taking breaks from writing The art of movie dialogue Blending fact and fiction in historical storytelling Playing with story structure for innovative storytelling The role of personal cost in story stakes Implementing a ticking clock for increased tension Making the antagonist formidable Testing the main character's values

adventures in the screen trade: The Improv Handbook Tom Salinsky, Deborah Frances-White, 2013-06-13 The most comprehensive, smart, helpful and inspiring guide to improve available today. Applicable to comedians, actors, public speakers and anyone who needs to think on their toes. From The Improv Handbook: The problem for improvisers is anxiety. faced with a lot of nameless eyes staring at us, and feeling more than anything else like prey, we are likely to want to display very consistent behavior, so that anyone who looks at us, looks away and then looks back sees the same thing. Thus we become boring, we fade into the background, and we cease to be of interest. The Improv Handbook provides everything someone interested in improvisational comedy needs to know, as written by a husband and wife comedy duo with years of experience and teaching in the field. in addition to providing a comprehensive history of improvisational theater as a backdrop, it also looks at modern theories and practices of improvisation on a global scale, including how the form of comedy has evolved differently in different parts of the world, from Europe to the UK to the Chicago scene. The Improv Handbook also contains an essential performance segment that details different formats of improvisation. Chapter topics include Theatresports, Micetro, Gorilla Theatre, and the inventions of Keith Johnstone and Del Close as well as other popular forms of improv, like those on Whose Line is it Anyway. The core section of the book is called simply, How to Improvise and delves into issues of spontaneity, the fundamentals of storytelling, working together, upping the ante, and character development. The book concludes with sections on how to improvise in front of an audience and- just as crucially- how to attract an audience in the first place.

adventures in the screen trade: Marathon Man William Goldman, 2001-07-03 William Goldman's remarkable career spans more than five decades, and his credentials run the gamut from bestselling novelist to Oscar-winning screenwriter to Hollywood raconteur. He's beloved by millions of readers as the author of the classic comic-romantic fantasy The Princess Bride. And he's notorious for creating the most harrowing visit to the dentist in literary and cinematic history--in one of the seminal thrillers of the twentieth century. . . . MARATHON MAN Tom Babe Levy is a runner in every sense: racing tirelessly toward his goals of athletic and academic excellence--and endlessly away from the specter of his famous father's scandal-driven suicide. But an unexpected visit from his beloved older brother will set in motion a chain of events that plunge Babe into a vortex of terror, treachery, and murder--and force him into a race for his life . . . and for the answer to the fateful question, Is it safe?

adventures in the screen trade: America in Quotations Bahman Dehgan, 2015-08-31 "America

is a land of wonders, in which everything is in constant motion and every change seems an improvement.... No natural boundary seems to be set to the efforts of man; and in his eyes what is not yet done is only what he has not yet attempted to do"—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835). "Americans will pay a big price for an invention that will help them save time they don't know what to do with"—Anonymous. This collection of quotations—both serious and humorous—about America is divided into 19 main topics: The Nation, The American People, Places, Nature, Mind, The Individual, Human Relations, Social Life, Culture and Media, Literature and Language, Religion and Belief, Past and Future, History, War and the Military, International Relations, Politics and Government, Law and Order, Business and Economy, and Food. Each main topic is divided into subtopics; for example, "Culture and Media" has these: Architecture, Art, Charlie Chaplin, Dance, Fashion, Intellectuals, Marilyn Monroe, Movies, Music, Elvis Presley, and Television. The author attributes each quote to its speaker, author or composer, and wherever possible, provides the date of the quote and the name of the work in which it was published. In the case of uncertainty about the exact date of a quote, the author provides the birth and death dates of the person to whom the quote is attributed. Also included are a keyword and subject index and a speaker index.

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