

# Chinatown: The Screenplays of Robert Towne, 1960-2000



## ChinaTowne: The Screenplays of Robert Towne 1960-2000 by David Mikics

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Robert Towne is one of the most influential screenwriters of the 20th century. His work has spanned a wide range of genres, from neo-noir to mystery to thriller to suspense. But it is for his work on Chinatown, a 1974 neo-noir film directed by Roman Polanski, that he is best known.

Chinatown is a complex and layered film that explores themes of corruption, power, and the American Dream. Towne's screenplay is a masterpiece of its kind, and it is widely considered to be one of the greatest screenplays ever written.

In this article, we will take a comprehensive look at Towne's screenplays, from his early work in the 1960s to his later work in the 2000s. We will examine his unique writing style, his approach to character development, and his ability to create suspenseful and thought-provoking stories.

## **The Early Years**

Robert Towne was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1934. He began his writing career in the early 1960s, working on low-budget films and television shows. His first major breakthrough came in 1967, when he co-wrote the screenplay for the Western film Bonnie and Clyde.

Bonnie and Clyde was a critical and commercial success, and it helped to establish Towne as a rising star in Hollywood. Over the next few years, he wrote a number of successful screenplays, including *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), and *The Last Detail* (1973).

## **Chinatown**

In 1974, Towne wrote the screenplay for *Chinatown*, which would become his most famous work. *Chinatown* is a neo-noir film set in 1930s Los Angeles. It tells the story of J.J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson), a private investigator who is hired to investigate a case of adultery. As Gittes investigates, he uncovers a complex web of corruption and deceit that reaches the highest levels of power in the city.

*Chinatown* is a masterpiece of neo-noir filmmaking. Towne's screenplay is a complex and layered piece of writing that explores themes of corruption, power, and the American Dream. The film's characters are richly drawn and complex, and the story is suspenseful and thought-provoking.

*Chinatown* was a critical and commercial success, and it won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. It is widely considered to be one of the greatest films of all time, and it is a testament to Towne's skill as a screenwriter.

## **The Later Years**

After *Chinatown*, Towne continued to write successful screenplays throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He wrote the screenplays for such films as *Shampoo* (1975), *Personal Best* (1982), and *Tequila Sunrise* (1988).

In the 1990s, Towne's career began to slow down. He wrote a few more screenplays, including *The Firm* (1993) and *Mission: Impossible* (1996), but he did not achieve the same level of success that he had in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 2000s, Towne returned to writing with a vengeance. He wrote the screenplays for such films as *Ask the Dust* (2006), *Rules Don't Apply* (2016), and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019). These films were all critical and commercial successes, and they helped to re-establish Towne as one of the most respected screenwriters in Hollywood.

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Towne's work has had a profound impact on the world of cinema. He has inspired a generation of screenwriters, and his films continue to be enjoyed by audiences around the world.

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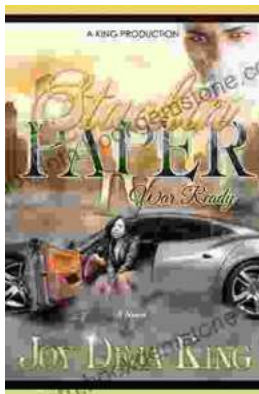
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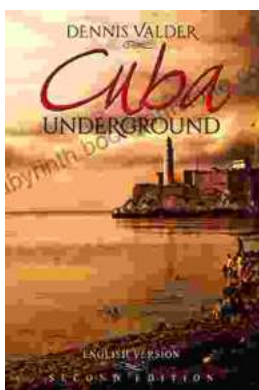


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