The [August 2024 Sundance Collab Script Club](#) is a discussion of the screenplay for the award-winning film *CODA* (2021), a coming-of-age comedy-drama written and directed by Sîan Heder. The feature film premiered at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the U.S. Dramatic: Grand Jury, Directing, Audience, and Special Jury Prize for Ensemble Cast. It later received numerous accolades, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay at the 94th Academy Awards.

As a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family's fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her passion at Berklee College of Music and her fear of abandoning her parents.

See the [CODA screenplay](#), watch the film on [Apple+](#), and check out the [trailer here](#).

Screenplay and Film Discussion:

I. **Character Introductions and World**
Clip: Ruby's parents pick her up at school, she translates for them at the doctor's office

Discussion Prompts: From the opening scene on the family's fishing boat to Ruby's life in school, our protagonist is caught between two worlds:

- How does Heder establish empathy for the protagonist? What makes a great character introduction?
- How do the environments of the Rossi family's world add to the story?
- Why are these characters full-bodied and memorable (both on-screen and on the page)? Beyond being a deaf family, what makes this family dynamic unique?
- What are your thoughts about the first act, what do you think is the inciting incident?

II. **Midpoint and Raising Stakes**
Clip: Ruby trains for her college audition with Mr. V, and her family stands up to the fishing board and starts their own business

Discussion Prompts: A good midpoint brings characters both closer to and farther away from their goals, propelling the story forward:

- How is Ruby evolving? What do you think her stated and internal goals are in this film?

- The Rossi family standing up to the fishing board feels like a win, but why is this a potential "false victory" for Ruby? How does their proclamation raise the stakes?
- Heder has stated that CODA is a coming-of-age story for each character. What do you think is the arc for each of the secondary characters?

III. **Emotional Touchpoints and Story Resolution**
Clip: Ruby sings for her dad, and the family insists that she audition for college

Discussion Prompts: The third act is filled with many emotional touchpoints:
- What do you think is necessary for a great ending and how does CODA satisfy that for the audience? How does each character evolve and grow?
- What do you think is the major theme of this story?
- What lessons did you gain from reading this screenplay or watching the movie? Any techniques that you hope to apply to your work?

Please see the #scriptclub channel on the [Sundance Collab Discord for continued discussion](#). This community forum is a great place to connect with fellow filmmakers.

Recommended References for *CODA*:

- [Writers Guild Foundation: CODA Writer/Director Siân Heder Breaks down her Oscar-Winning Screenplay](#)
- [Blcklst: Go Into the Story: 'CODA' Six-Part Script Analysis](#)
- [American Film Institute: Siân Heder on CODA](#)
- [Save The Cat: CODA Beat Sheet Analysis](#)

Related Sundance Collab Resources and Courses:

- [Screenwriting Course: Core Elements](#)
- [Screenwriting Course: From Outline to First Draft of Your Screenplay](#)
- [Course: Adapting Intellectual Property for Film & TV (On Demand)](#)
- [Master Class: Screenwriting with Meg LeFauve (INSIDE OUT, CAPTAIN MARVEL)](#)
- [Master Class: Adapting a Screenplay from Source Material with Robin Swicord (THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON)](#)
- [Advisor in Residence Office Hours](#)

September Back-to-Film-School Writing Challenge:

Write a 90-second elevator pitch (less than 150 words) for a coming-of-age story. Include a hook, an extended logline, and what makes your story unique. It can be for a feature film, short film, or television show.

Post the elevator pitch to the #challenges channel on our [Sundance Collab Community Discord](#). Limit three (3) entries per person. Community feedback and improvement are encouraged; entries can be edited before the September 30, 2024 deadline. All entries must comply with our Community Guidelines.

Two prizes will be given: (1) Best elevator pitch as selected by Sundance Collab community leaders and staff, and (2) best feedback given to the person who meaningfully contributes to the improvement of others' work through constructive comments on Discord.

The winner(s) of the elevator pitch will receive a free on-demand online course of their choice, as well as a certificate of accomplishment that they can post to their website, social media, etc. The winner(s) of the best community feedback will receive a master class of their choice. Both winners will receive bragging rights and kudos.

See these resources about how to write an elevator pitch:

- [Industrial Scripts: How to Write an AWESOME Movie Pitch or TV Pitch: The 10 KEY Steps](#)
- [Film Pitch Pro: Elevator Pitches](#)
- [Clear Voice: Three Successful Elevator Pitch Examples for Movies](#)