

The **October 2024 Sundance Collab Script Club** will discuss the screenplay for Jennifer Kent's award-winning psychological horror film *The Babadook* (2021). Kent's debut feature film premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and won Best First Feature at the New York Film Critics Circle Awards.

When a disturbing storybook called 'The Babadook' turns up at their house, Samuel (Noah Wiseman) is convinced that the Babadook is the creature he's been dreaming about. His hallucinations spiral out of control, he becomes more unpredictable and violent. Amelia, genuinely frightened by her son's behavior, is forced to medicate him. But when Amelia begins to see glimpses of a sinister presence around her, it slowly dawns on her that the thing Samuel has been warning her about may be real.

Read the [screenplay](#) and watch the [film](#) on Netflix. Bonus: Watch [Kent's short, \*MONSTER\*](#), a proof-of-concept film that inspired *The Babadook*.

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## Screenplay and Film Discussion:

### I. Act One: Character Introductions, Catalyst, World, Theme Stated

- How is *The Babadook* different from other horror monster movies?
- What is your impression of Amelia? How does Kent establish empathy for this character?
- What about Samuel? What is your reaction to him? Do you think he is the antagonistic force during the first act, why or why not?
- How would you describe the world that these characters live in?
- How does Kent explore theme and subtext? What do you think is the theme or underlying meaning of this story?
- What do the supporting characters – Claire, Ruby, Mrs. Roach, and Robbie – reveal about Samuel and Amelia?
- What are your thoughts about the opening image – the accident within the dream?
- Act I establishes a lot of character-driven conflict. What do you think is the inciting incident for this story?
- What do you think about the Babadook's introduction? How is it similar or different from other monsters we've seen in other films?
- How does Kent foreshadow the obstacles to come?
- What are your thoughts about Kent's writing and/or cinematic style?

## II. Act Two: Conflict, B-Story Relationships, Midpoint, Raising Stakes

- The Break-into-Two happens at Ruby's birthday party when Amelia reacts to an insensitive mother's comment and Samuel pushes his cousin from the tree house. What do you think is the point of this sequence? How does it show the emotional state of its two primary characters?
- Sam's seizure in the car and Amelia's visit with the doctor heighten the emotional reality of the Babadook. What is the POV of Sam v. Amelia at this point?
- Kent makes a juxtaposition between a blissful night of sleep with the return of the *Mister Babadook* book. Why do you think she does this?
- How is Amelia beginning to unravel before the midpoint? What do the police station and cockroach scenes do for the story?
- What are your thoughts about the midpoint? How does it raise the stakes?
- How is lack of sleep portrayed and why is it important to the eventual crisis of Act II?
- The second act is often the toughest to write. How does Kent succeed in accelerating the action toward the film's final act?
- The script is a tight 100 pages. What do you think about the pace of this screenplay? Any notes of appreciation or improvement?
- What do you think are the essential elements of a great psychological horror?

## III. Act Three: Climax, Descending Action, Finale

- What do you think about Amelia's transformation into the villain?
- Do you see Sam differently than you did at the beginning of the film? What role does he now play in the story?
- Why is the repeated apparition of the father so important at this point in the film/screenplay? What does he represent?
- Why was Mrs. Roach's visit important? Or not?
- How did you react to Samuel attacking and binding his "mom"?
- Do you have any thoughts about Buggy's death, how did this raise the stakes?
- What is your interpretation of Amelia confronting the Babadook?
- The Babadook is defeated but not killed. Why do you think Kent kept him alive?
- How is Samuel and Amelia's relationship different, what actions do they take that showcase their transformation?
- What is your interpretation of the final sequence of *The Babadook*?
- How does the final image compare to the first image (her dream about the car crash)? What does this symbolize?
- What alternative ending would you write for this film?
- What techniques, wins, or takeaways did you take from this screenplay? Anything that you hope to apply to your own work?

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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.

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## Recommended References for *The Babadook*:

- [Sundance: Writer-Director Jennifer Kent on the 10th Anniversary of “The Babadook” and Horror as an Independent Art Form](#)
- [Vanity Fair: Director Explains How She Made “The Babadook” and “The Nightingale”](#)
- [Indie Wire: ‘The Babadook’ Turns 10! Jennifer Kent Reflects on Directing One of the Greatest First Features Ever](#)

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## Related Sundance Collab Resources and Courses:

- [How to Craft a Suspenseful Horror Screenplay](#)
- [Screenwriting Course: Core Elements](#)
- [Screenwriting Course: From Outline to First Draft of Your Screenplay](#)
- [Rewriting Your Screenplay and Crafting Your Pitch](#)
- [Writing Horror for Film & TV \(On Demand\)](#)
- [Master Class: Creating the Nightmare in Your Horror Screenplay with Owen Egerton](#)
- [Spotlight Discussion: Jason Blum on Entrepreneurial Producing in the Horror Genre](#)
- [Advisor in Residence Office Hours](#)

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## Horror Logline Writing Challenge:

**Write an original logline for a horror story about one of your greatest fears or scariest memories. It can be for a feature film, short film, or television show.**

Post the logline 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 November 30, 2024 deadline. All entries must comply with our Community Guidelines.

Two prizes will be given: (1) Best logline 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 logline 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 a logline:

- [StudioBinder: How to Write a Logline Producers Won't Pass On \[with Logline Examples\]](#)
- [Premium Beat: The Do's and Don'ts of Writing a Logline for Your Film](#)
- [Industrial Scripts: 105 Famous Loglines: BRILLIANT Examples for Screenwriters](#)