

COVERAGE PRACTICE

TITLE: Coraline
LOCALE: Ashland, Oregon Apartment building
WRITER(S): Henry Selick, Neil Gaiman
PERIOD: 2000s
FORM: Screenplay
GENRE: Fantasy, Horror, Animation, Family
BUDGET: N/A
PAGES: N/A
DRAFT DATE: N/A
COVERAGE DATE: June 15, 2023
PREPARED BY: Alex Block

LOGLINE:

A lonely girl, CORALINE JONES, uncovers a fantastic version of her world with everything she could ever want, but that world is a trap.

SYNOPSIS:

The Jones family moves into a dark and dreary apartment with their 11-year-old daughter, Coraline. With her parents always working, Coraline has to make her own fun. She meets the landlady's grandson Wybie and his Cat, who gives her a doll that looks just like her. The doll leads Coraline to a hidden door with a brick wall behind it. That night in her dream, mice lead Coraline back to the hidden door; the brick wall is missing, inviting her to crawl in. Through the door, Coraline discovers another world that parallels her own but is slightly different. It's her dream world with everything she could ever want, including parents who shower her with love and attention. Coraline awakes

back in the real world, debating whether the other world is real.

Coraline tries to tell her parents, but they don't believe her and send her to meet the neighbors. While meeting her eccentric neighbors, Coraline receives warnings of the hidden door being dangerous. Despite this, Coraline continues to visit the other world.

In her next dream, her Other Father grows a magnificent garden of sentient plants in Coraline's image. Coraline also attends Mr. Bobinsky's Jumping Mice Circus with the other Wybie. She enjoys the wonderful experience before waking up in the real world.

Coraline's mother attempts to be there for Coraline, but it's not good enough compared to Coraline's other mom. The moment Coraline is home alone, she ventures into the other world.

Wybie's real Cat warns Coraline of her danger, but Coraline brushes it off. She watches a spectacular performance by her neighbors, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. Afterward, Coraline's other parents offer her to stay with them forever if she replaces her eyes with buttons. Coraline finally senses the danger she's in and tries to escape by falling asleep. Things aren't so simple anymore since Coraline is physically in the other world.

The other world reveals its true corrupt colors as Coraline searches for a means of escape. Along the way, she finds the ghost of the Other Mother's previous victims, who inform her that the Other Mother ate them and trapped their souls there. Coraline promises to free them and flees through the hidden door.

In the real world, Coraline finds the Other Mother has taken her real parents. Coraline gears up and returns to the other world one final time. Coraline tricks the Other Mother into a deal: if Coraline finds the ghost's eyes and her parents, they are free to leave, but if she can't, Coraline will stay in the other world forever.

The search begins, and Coraline must battle twisted versions of the Other Father, Miss Spinks, Miss Forcible, and Mr. Bobinsky. Coraline manages to get the first and second ghosts' eyes. However, in her fight with Mr. Bobinsky, a rat runs off with the last eye. The Cat comes to the rescue, seizing the rat and giving Coraline the last eye. Now comes the final boss, the Other Mother.

Coraline tricks the Other Mother to open the hidden door, by saying her real parents are behind it. Once the door's open, Coraline throws the Cat to attack the Other Mother. Meanwhile, Coraline takes the snow globe where her real parents are trapped. The Other Mother does everything she can to prevent Coraline from escaping, but Coraline slips away back into the crawl space with the Cat. She shuts the door on the Other Mother's hand, cutting it off. Coraline locks the hidden door in the real world and hides the key at the bottom of the well.

The ghost, Coraline's real parents, and Coraline are all free. Coraline's real parents have no recollection of the other world, believing they just got home. They celebrate the success of their catalog and finally spend more time with Coraline.

COMMENTS

OVERALL

The story balances low and high concepts to feature unique characters, a magical world, and a plot from the Grimms Brothers. Its child-friendly and spooky story has market potential for any Halloween season. It continues to build upon and reimagine its foundation on new levels, contributing to a satisfying ending. The climax does need some revisions as its current gaps in logic break the immersion. A few tweaks would also help prevent smaller yet important details from being forgotten easily. The script has almost everything to deliver the story; it only needs a few more sentences for clarity.

STORY/STRUCTURE

The story's bones is a loose retelling of Hansel and Gretel. Coraline gets neglected by her parents; she wanders into the witch's hut made of candy (the other world); the hut turns out to be a trap for the witch to eat Coraline; Coraline outsmarts the witch and escapes. This is the movie boiled down.

The "camera" remains on the A plot, showing what happens on Coraline's POV. The subplots with the parent's catalog and Wybie's Grandma are told to Coraline by the secondary characters. The A plot maintains enough interest to keep the audience's attention as the subplots poke in and out without overstaying their welcome.

The events occur in chronological order to present information at the most useful time without dumping it on the reader. The exposition takes just enough time to share the real world; it's dreadful, dark, and lonely.

It establishes Coraline's feelings of isolation, which, in turn, presents her goal: her parent's attention. It prepares us for ACT 2 and the contrast of the Other World; it's bright, colorful, fun, and magical. Essentially, it tells us this is the world Coraline wants, and even so, she is hesitant to accept it. The rest of Act 2 serves as a compare and contrast where Coraline explores more of the real world and then the "better" versions in the other world; it also teases us that the other world is the world Coraline prefers.

It builds to the midpoint where Coraline is given the choice to stay in the other world forever, and here comes the twist. Coraline refuses to live in the other world, and now the other world shows its true colors. Twist after twist, Coraline's goal changes as she learns what she wants is not what she needs. The obstacles become harder and build toward the ultimate boss fight that requires Coraline to outsmart Beldam (the Other Mother).

In short, the exposition sets a foundation for the rest of the story to build from. It establishes something, and it keeps re-envisioning that thing into something stronger and stronger to get the most out of it. Instead of introducing entirely new locations, the audience is introduced to new versions of the same location. For example, we first see the garden as dead; then it's full of life and magic like a wonder to behold; then it becomes the enemy Coraline confronts to gain the first eye; lastly, we see it as a sign of hope for the future. The story familiarizes the audience with something and then continues to build off it.

CHARACTERS

The characters are foils of either, adding to their uniqueness while tying them together. Individually, they also have contradicting needs and wants, which gives them depth. No one feels out of place with the script's style and tone.

Coraline

Coraline is a strong protagonist, constantly driving the story and making her goals and motivations clear. It's heartbreaking to watch her attempts for her parent's attention. Despite rejection, she remains persistent and determined to get what she wants. This trait is established very clearly, so it undermines the big pit moment where she loses the third eye. She acts like she lost the game when she seems like the kind of person who would continue looking for the eye, meaning she has yet to lose the game.

A quick fix would be rewriting the banter between Coraline and the Cat at this moment. The Cat could point out Coraline being out of character; Coraline expresses why now she feels defeated, and then the Cat says, "I guess you don't need this," and then he reveals the third eye.

Coraline also has an interesting character flaw of wanting "attention/love" but also pushing others away. This dimensionality springs internal and external conflict between Coraline, her parents, other parents, and Wybie. It pushes and pulls the characters' relationships and contributes to the story. It also strengthens the bond between Coraline and the story, so it's her story; it won't work without her.

Parents

There's a strong dynamic between the parents with Mel as serious and Charlie trying to be the fun dad. Mel acts serious and super focused on her catalog, actively neglecting Coraline in the process. Meanwhile, Charlie actively shows his love for Coraline through songs and engages in conversations. Sadly, his fun dad attempts are limited by Mel; he does what Mel says, so he's forced to neglect Coraline to finish his work. These contrasting fun and serious personalities distinguish the parents.

Alongside that, it's interesting to see Mel's attempts to be a mother to Coraline. It shows that she loves Coraline but is caught in a tough situation. This adds dimensionality to Mel and leads to the film's ending.

Other Parents

The framing of these characters as "better" versions makes them stand out from the cast. They feel like different characters with their own philosophy instead of copies of the real parents.

That said, a similar family dynamic still continues with the other parents. The Other Mother still acts as the head of the household, forcing the Other Father to follow her. Like Charlie, the Other Father still loves Coraline and wants to protect her. However, that is complicated by the Other Mother, who forces him into silence and later attempts to kill Coraline. It's similar to Mel, forcing Charlie to neglect Coraline. This characterization made the Other Father an amazing character for whom his death and sacrifice had meaning.

The Other Mother/Beldam made an incredible antagonist. She was one step ahead of Coraline, constantly manipulating her, and was well aware of the situation

and how to spin it. The early framing of her character also worked to present the possibility of her being evil. When Coraline meets the other Mother, Other Mother puts on a convincing facade; like a caring mother, she prepares a huge feast for Coraline. Because the Other Mother doesn't eat the meal, it hints at something ominous going on. It plays on the film trope that the chef doesn't eat the food because they know it's poison. The meal acts as a nice gesture while also hinting at the Other Mother's evil nature.

The moment the Other Mother eats for the first time is a nice touch to pull back the curtain on her character. She eats a living thing, revealing her evil intentions to eat Coraline.

The Other Mother's actions and her description did her justice. The facade was there with evil undertones in the beginning. Then at the midpoint, the facade was dropped and the writer ran with Beldam. She was a monster out for herself and manipulated whatever to get what she wanted. The last game demonstrated her love of torturing her prey. She kept asking more and more from Coraline, making Beldam the ultimate challenge.

Wybie/Other Wybie

Wybie is a foil to Coraline; his strange persona pushes Coraline's buttons and helps build the lore outside the A plot. He gives clues to what's really going on, explaining the reason behind the doll, the opening hook, and the other world. Because he's framed as an annoying kid who means well, his mentions of his Grandma's sister going missing didn't stand out. It flowed well with his conversations.

The other Wybie's silence and caring nature make him a foil to the real Wybie. He acted as the friend Coraline needed, and his fear of the Other Mother set him as a sympathetic character.

The Neighbors

The neighbors were associated with different forms of entertainment to distinguish them from each other. The Misses' witty banter and arguments made them a joy to have on screen. Mr. Bobinsky's acrobatic tendencies made him eccentric and scary.

The Cat

The Cat was a very mysterious character who served a vital purpose in the story. Without him, Coraline would never have been able to escape Beldam. He is more than the animal sidekick; he actively looks after Coraline and comes to her aid. His sassy dialog also made him a joy on screen and framed him as independent. He also acts as a mentor, pushing Coraline to improve.

THEME

The main theme is love can not be bribed. The Other Mother gives Coraline everything she could want to get her love. Despite that, Coraline still ends up choosing her real mother. Unconditional love prevails over bribed love as Coraline battles the others to save her real parents.

PLOT LOGIC

The film demonstrates its rules and mechanics very clearly without being too excessive. The film waits to introduce the dogs with button eyes after the first time audiences see the Cat in the other world. The placement of these moments highlights the contrast

between the animal's eyes, thus proving the Cat as real while the thought remains in the audience's mind.

Also, the enter/exit rule added great tension to Coraline's third visit to the other world. It makes sense that Coraline can only leave the other world by the way she entered. If she physically entered the other world, she would have to physically leave the other world. Also, structuring the story so Coraline's first two visits use the same entrance and exit helps set up the later surprise on her third visit when her first attempt to leave fails.

There's also a clear thread of cause and effect linking the scenes. Coraline sharing her dreams with her mother prompts Mel to lock the hidden door in jealousy and try to spend time with Coraline. However, Mel is still herself and can't meet the high bar that the Other Mother has set. This leads Mel to still fall short of Coraline's expectations and pushes Coraline further away. Essentially, there is an apparent butterfly effect from every decision carried through the film.

The logic has been very sound and easy to grasp, but it doesn't completely carry to the mechanics of the game at the end: the losing condition for Coraline becomes very blurry. I understand she loses if she can't find the ghosts' eyes and her parents, but what determines she can't find them? I'm assuming this game is basically hide-and-seek because it's very similar, and it was mentioned when Coraline first met Other Mother, making it poetic for it to be the last game they play. Typically, hide-n-seek continues until everything is found or the seeker gives up, but because Coraline has been very determined and persistent, it's hard to believe she would give up. So logically, there's no way for Coraline to lose, and the stakes are dropped.

Another rule should be added to the game to ensure the stakes are constantly raised. It could be a ticking clock, or the others capturing Coraline before she gets the eyes. We do see this kind of stuff happening, but it needs to be clearly established as a losing condition for Coraline. That way, the current obstacles raise the stakes and make Coraline feel hopeless during her search.

Also, it doesn't make sense for Beldam to assume Corline lost because she was wrong about the location of her parents. It was not established as an automatic loss if Coraline's first guess was wrong, especially since she was given a 2nd chance at getting the 3rd eye. Also, Beldam is smart; she wouldn't open Coraline's only escape to prove her parents aren't there unless it guarantees Coraline loses the game. To raise the stakes and make the moment grander, I suggest Coraline convince Beldam to open the door by betting everything on her parents being behind it. That way, she'll lose the game in a way that makes sense, misdirects audiences to think it's over for Coraline, and the tensions are raised when she sees her parents in the snow globe (proving she guessed wrong). Also, in this case, Coraline would have actually cheated, cueing the line "you horrible cheating girl."

TONE

The tone complements the mood of every moment. It gets excited to share the magic of the other world while also going dark for the more serious moments. I could imagine the writer's emotion expressed in the words, which is hard to translate through paper. The tone also presents the information as if the narrator was experiencing it for the first time. Thus, the story properly unfolds in real-time. The tone emphasizes the

subject as if the camera were Coraline's eyes. It directs the reader to what Coraline focuses on and suggests her mental state.

MARKETABILITY

It works as a family friend horror film for the Halloween season. It's bound to stand out in the sea of gorey and excessively violent horror films released during this season.

TITLE

The title summarizes and matches the film. The title comes from the protagonist's name, which sets the expectation that this film will focus on this character's story. The camera follows Coraline all the time in the film; she is in every scene as well as being the connecting point between scenes. There's also meaning in the fact that the protagonist's name is Coraline instead of Caroline.

Wybie explains, "An ordinary name, like Caroline, can lead people to have ordinary expectations." I believe the title follows the same concept. The unusual name sets a different kind of expectation for audiences. It's a sign to the audience that the film is no ordinary kid film.

MISCELLANEOUS

The little details add a ton to the story. The capitalized words in the action paragraph express excitement at the right moment. The space on the page emphasizes the most important moments, like when Coraline opens the box to find buttons for her eyes. That said, sometimes too much stuff happens between when a small detail is set up and when it pays off. It

causes us to forget that small detail and undervalue it's payoff.

For example, in the scene where Beldam unlocks the hidden door to reveal Coraline's parents aren't there, it's important to note she leaves the key in the door. This allows Coraline to get the key and lock the door behind her in her escape. However, by the time Coraline escapes, so many pages have passed that I forget the key was in the door. For the action paragraph to say, "Coraline has the key," it took me by surprise since it seemed the key came out of nowhere. Another sentence could be added to explain she got the key from the lock, where Beldam left it.

CONCLUSION

Coraline has potential. It's got lively characters capable of entertaining mass audiences of all ages. It's a unique spin on the Hansel and Gretel story and reimagines it into something new. The visuals have the opportunity to showcase film at its finest. Plus, it's a horror film for the whole family, making it a goldmine for the Halloween season. The story constantly builds upon itself until the climax, where it almost falls flat; the logic here needs to be tweaked to clarify that Coraline will lose by guessing her parents' location wrong. A small rewrite and clarification of the rules will stack the odds against Coraline and make her victory more satisfying.

CRITERIA	YOU BET !	YES	KINDA- SORTA	NOT SO MUCH	N/A
Strong PREMISE?		X			
Is the material ORIGINAL?	X				
Is the script COMMERCIAL? (mainstream or indie)		X			
Is the PROTAGONIST dimensional, well-developed?		X			
Does the story have a clear ANTAGONIST or ANTAGONIST FORCE?	X				
Are the SECONDARY CHARACTERS well developed and believable?		X			
Is the STORYLINE believable and effective?		X			
Does the FOCUS remain clearly on the protagonist and not get lost in secondary character's subplots?	X				
Are the STAKES high? If the protagonist fails in his or her quest, are the consequences of failure dire?			X		
Does the story have a strong STRUCTURE, 3-Act or other?		X			
Do the first ten pages set the TONE for the rest of the story?		X			
Does the script have solid PACING?		X			
Does each scene move the story forward?		X			
Does the CONFLICT rise effectively?		X			
Does the DIALOGUE sound natural?		X			
Does the DIALOGUE contain sufficient		X			

subtext?					
Does the writer's STYLE reflect the professionalism quality and ability?		X			
Is the writing tight and punchy, with a minimum of bloat?		X			
Length appropriate for genre?					X
Format/Mechanics/Spelling/Grammar?		X			
Is the TITLE a grabber? Does it reflect the material's genre or tone?	X				

RECOMMEND, CONSIDER, OR PASS

SCRIPT: Recommend

WRITER: Recommend

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