

PREMISE

1. WHAT IT IS

The premise is your film's one-sentence claim about the world. A theme asks a QUESTION ("Can a person stand on their own?"); the premise writes your film's ANSWER as a claim. Litmus test: if you can put a question mark at the end, it's a theme, not a premise.

2. WHEN YOU NEED IT

As an inner compass while writing: every scene should test, support or argue with this claim. The logline is said out loud; the premise stays on your desk.

3. EXAMPLE

Theme (question): Can a person stand on their own?

Premise (claim): Resisting alone doesn't keep a person standing – it wears them out; the way out runs through being able to accept help.

The film doesn't preach this claim, it argues it: every character looks at the question from somewhere else, and the ending proves the claim through behaviour – or shows it tragically in reverse.

4. COMMON MISTAKES

× "My film is about loneliness." – That's a subject, not a claim. A premise takes sides.

× "Can a person stand on their own?" – Question-mark test: that's the theme. Turn it into a claim.

× "Loneliness is bad." – A slogan: it has no mechanism to argue. Tie the claim to a price or a result.

BLANK PREMISE TEMPLATE

My theme (question):
..... ?

My premise (claim):
[VALUE / BEHAVIOUR],
leads to [PRICE / RESULT];
the real way out / ruin runs through

Check: ☐ A question mark CAN'T go at the end
☐ It takes sides ☐ Not a slogan, it has a mechanism
☐ My ending tests the claim through behaviour

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