



Greenlight Screenplay - Oppenheimer

Logline

When physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer leads the race to build the first atomic bomb amidst moral dilemmas and accusations of disloyalty, he must confront the terrifying power he has unleashed.

Genre

Historical drama, biographical, thriller

Top Keywords

security clearance, los alamos, atomic bomb, robert oppenheimer, edward teller, lewis strauss, hydrogen bomb, communism, manhattan project, fbi, kitty oppenheimer, jean tatlock, ernest lawrence, hans bethe, enrico fermi, niels bohr, albert einstein, isidor rabi, general groves, trinity test, hiroshima, nagasaki, mccarthyism

Location Setting

Los Alamos

Script Score

1. Character Development: 9/10

The screenplay excellently develops Oppenheimer's complex character, showing his evolution from brilliant physicist to troubled leader of the Manhattan Project, and later a conflicted public figure. The supporting characters like Kitty, Strauss, and Groves are also well-developed with clear motivations and depth.

2. Plot Construction: 9/10

The narrative is masterfully structured, weaving between different time periods while maintaining clarity and building tension. The parallel storylines of the Manhattan Project and the security hearing create compelling dramatic tension.

3. Dialogue: 9/10

The conversations are sharp, meaningful, and natural while also being intellectually stimulating. The screenplay effectively uses dialogue to reveal character and advance plot while maintaining historical authenticity.

4. Originality: 8/10

While based on historical events, the screenplay takes an innovative approach to telling Oppenheimer's story through multiple timelines and perspectives, creating a unique narrative structure that enhances the emotional impact.

5. Emotional Engagement: 9/10

The script powerfully conveys the moral weight and personal toll of developing the atomic bomb, while also capturing the human drama of relationships and betrayal.

6. Theme and Message: 10/10

The screenplay masterfully explores complex themes of morality, responsibility, power, and the relationship between science and politics. It raises profound questions about the nature of progress and its human cost.

Overall Rating: 9/10

The screenplay is exceptional in its ability to tell a complex historical story while maintaining dramatic tension and emotional resonance. It successfully balances personal drama with larger historical and philosophical questions.

The seven ratings are:

1. Character Development: 9/10

2. Plot Construction: 9/10

3. Dialogue: 9/10

4. Originality: 8/10

5. Emotional Engagement: 9/10

6. Theme and Message: 10/10

7. Overall Rating: 9/10

Based on the Script Score, this screenplay ranks at 100th percentile and received a Recommend

Synopsis

The screenplay tells the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist who led the Manhattan Project during World War II that developed the first nuclear weapons. It follows Oppenheimer from his early days as a radical left-wing professor at UC Berkeley in the 1930s through his work developing the atomic bomb at the secret Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico, the successful Trinity test in 1945, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended WWII, and finally to the 1954 security hearing that revoked his security clearance and ended his advisory role in the government. Throughout, it explores Oppenheimer's complex personality, his moral dilemmas over developing such a destructive weapon, his conflicts with government and military officials, and the ultimate irony that this "father of the atomic bomb" had his career destroyed by the very security apparatus he helped create.

Comprehensive Synopsis

The story follows J. Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist known as the "father of the atomic bomb" for his role in the Manhattan Project that developed the first nuclear weapons during World War II.

In the late 1920s, a young Oppenheimer struggles to understand the perplexing new field of quantum mechanics while studying at universities in Europe under famous physicists like Niels Bohr. He returns to the U.S. in the 1930s and becomes a professor at UC Berkeley and Caltech, where he establishes himself as an eminent physicist. However, his leftist views and associations with Communist Party members put him under government surveillance even before the war.

When World War II begins, Oppenheimer is recruited to lead the top-secret Manhattan Project to beat Nazi Germany in building an atomic bomb. He oversees the creation of research facilities across the country and the secret atomic weapons laboratory at Los Alamos. Despite misgivings over the immense destructive power they are unleashing, Oppenheimer and his team of scientists succeed in developing the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, effectively ending WWII.

Oppenheimer becomes a national hero, but soon has moral qualms about the escalating nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. He tries to influence policy towards international control of atomic energy and opposition to developing the far more powerful hydrogen bomb. However, his leftist past leaves him vulnerable to political attacks. In 1954, opponents within the government initiate proceedings to revoke his security clearance, accusing him of disloyalty.

At the hearings, Oppenheimer's early radical views, Communist associations, and wartime secrets come under intense scrutiny. Old friends like Edward Teller testify against him, despite his critical contributions to the atomic bomb program. In the end, the panel denies Oppenheimer his security clearance, which destroys his career and public influence. The story concludes with reflections on how the man who unlocked the power of the atom ultimately sacrificed himself in vain, as the nuclear arms race and threat of atomic war continued unabated.

Plot Assessment and Enhancement

What's working well:

- The story provides an intriguing behind-the-scenes look at the development of the atomic bomb and the complex character of J. Robert Oppenheimer. The historical details about the Manhattan Project and tensions during World War II and the Cold War era add richness.
- The writing vividly captures the urgency and high stakes of the race to develop an atomic bomb before Nazi Germany. The technical and moral debates among the scientists are highlighted well.
- Oppenheimer is portrayed as a complex, contradictory figure - a brilliant physicist but also unstable and conflicted. His relationships with figures like General Groves, Edward Teller, and Kitty Oppenheimer add interesting personal dimensions.
- The drama and tension build steadily, culminating in vivid scenes of the Trinity test and aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The reactions of the scientists to seeing their creation unleashed is powerful.
- Structurally, the flashbacks to the Oppenheimer security hearing provide a frame for the story and explore the legacy of his actions.

What could be improved:

- The screenplay is dense with historical detail and physics concepts that may be difficult for general audiences to follow at times. Some additional explanation or simplification in places might help.

- With such a sweeping historical story, some characters and subplots feel underdeveloped, like Oppenheimer's relationship with Jean Tatlock. More time on key relationships might enrich the drama.

- The ending feels abrupt - Oppenheimer's later redemption from the security hearing outcome to receiving the medal from President Johnson could be developed more for emotional impact.

- There are opportunities for more thematic exploration on topics like the moral dilemmas of scientists, the corrosive effects of power, and philosophical questions about scientific progress.

Overall, it's a compelling dramatization of a complex historical figure and seminal moment in scientific history. With some additional character and thematic development, this could make for a powerful film.

Character Profiling

J. Robert Oppenheimer

The 'father of the atomic bomb'. Brilliant physicist who led the Manhattan Project. His arc follows his work developing the atomic bomb, grappling with the moral implications, being put on trial over security concerns, and eventually receiving redemption.

Archetype: The Sage

General Leslie Groves

Military head of the Manhattan Project. Focuses on accomplishing the mission at all costs. His arc traces his partnership and conflicts with Oppenheimer in developing the bomb.

Archetype: The Ruler

Lewis Strauss

Initially supports Oppenheimer's work but later turns against him. His arc follows his political maneuvering and personal vendetta to take away Oppenheimer's security clearance.

Archetype: The Shadow

Kitty Oppenheimer

Robert's wife. Her arc explores her struggles in their marriage and unwavering devotion during his trial.

Archetype: The Caregiver

Edward Teller

Physicist who proposes development of the hydrogen bomb. His arc follows his conflicts with Oppenheimer over weapon development and eventual betrayal when he testifies against Oppenheimer.

Archetype: The Shadow

Main Character Casting

J. Robert Oppenheimer

- Paul Giamatti: Paul Giamatti has the ability to portray complex, intellectual characters with depth and nuance. His previous roles in historical dramas and his age and ethnicity align well with Oppenheimer's profile.

- Mark Ruffalo: Mark Ruffalo has a strong track record of playing morally conflicted characters. His age and American nationality make him a suitable choice for Oppenheimer.

- Adrien Brody: Adrien Brody's Jewish heritage and experience in historical dramas make him a compelling choice for Oppenheimer. His ability to convey internal conflict would suit the role well.

- Liev Schreiber: Liev Schreiber's commanding presence and experience in portraying historical figures make him a strong candidate. His age and American nationality align with Oppenheimer's character.

- David Krumholtz: David Krumholtz's Jewish background and experience in both drama and biographical roles make him a fitting choice for Oppenheimer.

- Ben Stiller: Ben Stiller, known for his dramatic roles in addition to comedy, has the range to portray Oppenheimer's complex personality. His Jewish American background aligns with the character.

- Jake Gyllenhaal: Jake Gyllenhaal's versatility and experience in intense, character-driven narratives make him a suitable choice. His age and American nationality fit the role.

- Jesse Eisenberg: Jesse Eisenberg's Jewish heritage and ability to portray intellectual characters with depth make him a good fit for Oppenheimer.

- Joseph Gordon-Levitt: Joseph Gordon-Levitt's experience in biographical films and his ability to convey complex emotions align well with the role of Oppenheimer.

- Oscar Isaac: Oscar Isaac's range and experience in historical dramas, along with his ability to portray morally complex characters, make him a strong candidate for Oppenheimer.

General Leslie Groves

- Bryan Cranston: Cranston's commanding presence and experience in roles requiring authority, such as his portrayal of Lyndon B. Johnson in 'All the Way,' make him an excellent fit for the no-nonsense military officer overseeing the Manhattan Project.

- John Goodman: Goodman's robust build and ability to portray authoritative figures, as seen in 'The Monuments Men,' align well with the character of General Groves.

- Jeff Bridges: Bridges' versatility and experience in historical dramas, combined with his ability to convey complex characters, make him a strong candidate for the role.

- Woody Harrelson: Harrelson's ability to portray intense and driven characters, as demonstrated in 'True Detective,' suits the role of a determined military officer.
- Josh Brolin: Brolin's rugged demeanor and experience in playing authoritative roles, such as in 'Sicario,' make him a fitting choice for General Groves.
- Kevin Costner: Costner's history of playing leadership roles in films like 'Thirteen Days' and 'Hidden Figures' aligns with the character's military background.
- Tommy Lee Jones: Jones' extensive experience in portraying military and authoritative figures, along with his commanding presence, make him a suitable choice for the role.
- Ed Harris: Harris' strong screen presence and history of playing military roles, such as in 'Apollo 13,' make him a compelling choice for General Groves.
- Sam Elliott: Elliott's distinctive voice and authoritative presence, combined with his experience in historical dramas, make him a good fit for the role.
- Kurt Russell: Russell's experience in playing strong, authoritative characters and his ability to convey determination make him a suitable choice for General Groves.

Hans Bethe

- Daniel Brühl: Daniel Brühl is a German actor known for his roles in historical dramas such as 'Rush' and 'The Alienist.' His ability to portray complex characters and his German heritage make him an ideal fit for Hans Bethe.
- August Diehl: August Diehl is a German actor with a strong presence in films like 'Inglourious Basterds' and 'A Hidden Life.' His experience in historical settings and his German background align well with the character of Hans Bethe.
- Sebastian Koch: Sebastian Koch is a seasoned German actor known for his roles in 'The Lives of Others' and 'Bridge of Spies.' His gravitas and experience in historical narratives make him a strong candidate for Hans Bethe.
- Alexander Fehling: Alexander Fehling is a German actor recognized for his work in 'Inglourious Basterds' and 'Homeland.' His youthful energy and German roots suit the portrayal of a younger Hans Bethe.
- Tom Schilling: Tom Schilling is a German actor known for his roles in 'Generation War' and 'Never Look Away.' His ability to convey intellectual depth and his German nationality make him a fitting choice for Hans Bethe.
- Florian David Fitz: Florian David Fitz is a German actor with a strong presence in films like 'Vincent Wants to Sea.' His versatility and German background make him a suitable option for the role of Hans Bethe.
- Matthias Schweighfer: Matthias Schweighfer is a German actor known for his roles in 'You Are Wanted' and 'Resistance.' His experience in both drama and thriller genres, along with his German heritage, align well with Hans Bethe.
- Moritz Bleibtreu: Moritz Bleibtreu is a German actor recognized for his work in 'Run Lola Run' and 'The Baader Meinhof Complex.' His strong screen presence and German nationality make him a good fit for Hans Bethe.
- Jrgen Vogel: Jrgen Vogel is a German actor known for his roles in 'The Wave' and 'The Free Will.' His intense performances and German background make him a compelling choice for Hans Bethe.
- Lars Eidinger: Lars Eidinger is a German actor with a reputation for his work in 'Personal Shopper' and 'Babylon Berlin.' His ability to portray complex characters and his German roots make him a suitable candidate for Hans Bethe.

Main Character Casting Limited Budget

J. Robert Oppenheimer

- Paul Giamatti: Giamatti's ability to portray complex, intellectual characters makes him a strong fit for Oppenheimer. His experience in historical dramas and his age align well with the character.
- Liev Schreiber: Schreiber's commanding presence and experience in biographical roles suit the portrayal of Oppenheimer. His Jewish American background and age are appropriate for the role.
- Mark Ruffalo: Ruffalo's nuanced performances and ability to convey internal conflict make him a great choice for Oppenheimer. His age and American nationality align with the character.
- David Krumholtz: Krumholtz's Jewish heritage and experience in both drama and historical films make him a fitting choice for Oppenheimer. His age and nationality are suitable for the role.
- Michael Stuhlbarg: Stuhlbarg's expertise in portraying intellectuals and his Jewish American background make him an excellent candidate for Oppenheimer. His age and acting range are ideal for the role.
- Ben Shenkman: Shenkman's experience in dramatic roles and his Jewish American heritage make him a strong contender for Oppenheimer. His age and acting skills align well with the character.
- Corey Stoll: Stoll's ability to portray complex characters and his experience in historical dramas make him a good fit for Oppenheimer. His age and American nationality are appropriate for the role.
- Zachary Quinto: Quinto's experience in portraying intellectual and conflicted characters, along with his age and American nationality, make him a suitable choice for Oppenheimer.
- Jason Schwartzman: Schwartzman's Jewish heritage and experience in both drama and historical films make him a fitting choice for Oppenheimer. His age and acting range are suitable for the role.
- Adam Goldberg: Goldberg's experience in portraying complex, intellectual characters and his Jewish American background make him a strong fit for Oppenheimer. His age and acting skills align well with the character.

General Leslie Groves

- David Harbour: David Harbour has the commanding presence and gravitas needed to portray a no-nonsense military officer like General Leslie Groves. His experience in roles that require authority and leadership, such as in 'Stranger Things,' makes him a strong fit for this historical drama.
- John Goodman: John Goodman has a robust and authoritative presence that suits the role of General Groves. His extensive experience in both drama and thriller genres, along with his ability to convey complex characters, aligns well with the character's demands.
- Bryan Cranston: Bryan Cranston's versatility and ability to portray intense, driven characters make him an excellent choice for General Groves. His work in 'Breaking Bad' demonstrates his capability to handle roles with moral complexity and leadership.
- Woody Harrelson: Woody Harrelson's ability to portray both charm and intensity makes him a suitable candidate for General Groves. His experience in historical dramas and thrillers adds to his credibility for this role.
- Jeff Daniels: Jeff Daniels has a strong presence and the ability to convey authority and intelligence, which are essential for portraying General Groves. His work in 'The Newsroom' and other dramatic roles showcases his capability

to handle complex characters.

- Josh Brolin: Josh Brolin's rugged demeanor and experience in roles that require leadership and decisiveness make him a good fit for General Groves. His performances in films like 'No Country for Old Men' highlight his ability to handle intense and authoritative characters.

- Kyle Chandler: Kyle Chandler's experience in portraying authoritative figures, such as in 'Friday Night Lights,' makes him a strong candidate for General Groves. His ability to convey both strength and vulnerability aligns well with the character's complexity.

- Michael Shannon: Michael Shannon's intense screen presence and ability to portray complex, driven characters make him a suitable choice for General Groves. His work in films like 'The Shape of Water' demonstrates his capability to handle roles with depth and authority.

- J.K. Simmons: J.K. Simmons' commanding presence and experience in roles that require authority and leadership make him a strong fit for General Groves. His performances in films like 'Whiplash' showcase his ability to handle intense and authoritative characters.

- Sam Rockwell: Sam Rockwell's versatility and ability to portray complex characters make him a good fit for General Groves. His experience in both drama and thriller genres, along with his ability to convey both charm and intensity, aligns well with the character's demands.

Hans Bethe

- Daniel Brhl: Daniel Brhl is a German actor known for his roles in historical dramas such as 'Rush' and 'Inglourious Basterds.' His ability to portray complex characters and his German heritage make him an ideal fit for Hans Bethe.

- August Diehl: August Diehl is a German actor with experience in historical films like 'Inglourious Basterds' and 'A Hidden Life.' His intense performances and German background align well with the character of Hans Bethe.

- Tom Schilling: Tom Schilling is a German actor known for his roles in 'Oh Boy' and 'Never Look Away.' His youthful appearance and German nationality make him a suitable choice for portraying Hans Bethe in his 40s.

- Alexander Fehling: Alexander Fehling is a German actor recognized for his work in 'Inglourious Basterds' and 'Labyrinth of Lies.' His experience in historical dramas and German roots make him a strong candidate for Hans Bethe.

- Florian David Fitz: Florian David Fitz is a German actor with a versatile range, known for films like 'Vincent Wants to Sea.' His German nationality and acting skills make him a good fit for the role of Hans Bethe.

- Matthias Schweighfer: Matthias Schweighfer is a German actor and filmmaker known for his roles in 'You Are Wanted' and 'The Red Baron.' His German background and experience in historical settings make him a suitable choice for Hans Bethe.

- Sebastian Koch: Sebastian Koch is a German actor known for his roles in 'The Lives of Others' and 'Bridge of Spies.' His experience in historical dramas and German heritage align well with the character of Hans Bethe.

- Jrgen Vogel: Jrgen Vogel is a German actor with a strong presence in films like 'The Wave' and 'The Free Will.' His German nationality and acting prowess make him a viable option for Hans Bethe.

- Moritz Bleibtreu: Moritz Bleibtreu is a German actor known for his roles in 'Run Lola Run' and 'The Baader Meinhof Complex.' His German roots and experience in intense roles make him a good fit for Hans Bethe.

- Lars Eidinger: Lars Eidinger is a German actor known for his work in 'Personal Shopper' and 'Clouds of Sils

Maria.' His German nationality and ability to portray complex characters make him a suitable choice for Hans Bethe.

Comparative Film Analysis

This screenplay appears to be a complex narrative that combines elements of historical drama, scientific exploration, political intrigue, and personal conflict. Here are ten movies that could be considered a mash-up to describe this screenplay, along with their box office performance and reasons for their inclusion:

1. **"The Imitation Game" (2014)**

- **Box Office:** \$233.6 million

- **Reason:** Both films explore the lives of brilliant scientists during World War II, focusing on their contributions to pivotal wartime projects and the personal and political challenges they face.

2. **"A Beautiful Mind" (2001)**

- **Box Office:** \$316.8 million

- **Reason:** This film delves into the life of a genius dealing with personal struggles and societal pressures, similar to Oppenheimer's journey in the screenplay.

3. **"The Social Network" (2010)**

- **Box Office:** \$224.9 million

- **Reason:** The screenplay's exploration of ambition, betrayal, and the impact of innovation on personal relationships mirrors the themes in "The Social Network."

4. **"J. Edgar" (2011)**

- **Box Office:** \$84.9 million

- **Reason:** Both films depict historical figures navigating complex political landscapes and personal controversies, with a focus on their legacies.

5. **"The Theory of Everything" (2014)**

- **Box Office:** \$123.7 million

- **Reason:** This film shares themes of scientific discovery and personal challenges faced by a renowned physicist, akin to Oppenheimer's story.

6. **"Bridge of Spies" (2015)**

- **Box Office:** \$165.5 million

- **Reason:** The screenplay's Cold War tensions and espionage elements are reminiscent of the political intrigue in

"Bridge of Spies."

7. **"Lincoln" (2012)**

- **Box Office:** \$275.3 million

- **Reason:** Both films focus on historical figures dealing with significant political and moral dilemmas during critical periods in American history.

8. **"The Post" (2017)**

- **Box Office:** \$179.8 million

- **Reason:** The screenplay's exploration of government secrecy and the moral responsibilities of influential figures aligns with the themes in "The Post."

9. **"Good Night, and Good Luck" (2005)**

- **Box Office:** \$54.6 million

- **Reason:** The film's focus on McCarthyism and the impact of political scrutiny on individuals parallels the challenges faced by Oppenheimer in the screenplay.

10. **"First Man" (2018)**

- **Box Office:** \$105.7 million

- **Reason:** Both films depict the personal and professional struggles of pioneering figures in scientific history, highlighting the human side of monumental achievements.

These films collectively capture the essence of the screenplay's blend of historical drama, scientific exploration, and personal and political conflict.