

## TELEVISION COVERAGE EXAMPLE

TITLE: The Raja's Dilemma  
AUTHOR: -----  
GENRE: Big Bang Theory sitcom episode  
ANALYST: -----  
PERIOD: Present  
LOCALE: Pasadena  
SERVICE: TV Coverage  
DATE: -----

LOGLINE: When Leonard insults Penny's intelligence and then she passes a test he fails, Penny leads the women in a challenge against the men to prove who has superior intelligence.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Structure		x		
Plot/Story Line		x		
Character Development		x		
Dialogue		x		
First 20 Pages		x		

	Recommend	Consider	Pass
Script		x	
Writer		x	

### **SYNOPSIS:**

Penny takes Leonard with her as she sits an aptitude test that will enable her to get promoted within the Cheesecake Factory. However before

long he is insulting her lack of intelligence, saying that he is clearly more intelligent since he has a PhD.

Later, Leonard waits for Penny to return home telling her that Raj hacked into the system and that she passed the test. Still angry with Leonard she looks at his scores to see that he failed the test. She slams the door on him.

Later, Penny comes over to borrow milk still not talking to Leonard. Leonard tells her he knows why he failed – because the questions were flawed – ‘no-one with half a brain would be able to answer correctly’. Penny picks up on the insult. Raj explains to Sheldon that Leonard failed a test that Penny passed. They begin to examine the questions in detail and Penny storms off.

Meanwhile, Howard and Bernadette awaken and Bernadette initiates a sex game, assuming that she will be the doctor. This bothers Howard, as he does not like her assumption. After she has reassured him that he is the most caring and intelligent man she knows, he wants to play the doctor sex game, but pissed with him, she has gone off the idea.

In Leonard’s apartment, Howard gripes that he hasn’t had sex in 3 days. Sheldon suggests to Leonard that he challenge Penny to a retest as his ‘manhood has been besmirched’. Howard agrees that Leonard should ‘defend the realm’. Raja tells them a story about an Indian man who loved money as much as his wife and lost both, because he doesn’t know of any stories where a guy ‘gets whipped by his highschool-drop-out-ex-girlfriend.’

Leonard claims that he can’t challenge Penny, because it would crush her when he beat her. Walking in at that moment, Penny overhears Leonard and empties the carton of milk, she is returning, over his head and challenges him.

Meanwhile, Howard tries to make up with Bernadette by cooking her a romantic meal of alphagetti. However when he tells her that he forgives her, she storms off.

In Penny’s apartment, Penny tells Bernadette and Amy that she cannot believe Leonard’s ego. They drink wine and Bernadette tells them that ‘Howard is an ass’. They decide to challenge the men.

Howard and the guys discuss how to prove themselves the intellectual superiors. They challenge the women, who accept and introduce the

fourth member of their team, Leslie. A date is set for the following evening in Penny's apartment.

The two teams separately prepare for the challenge with Bernadette dividing her team into subject specialties, and Sheldon arguing with Howard and Raj about the times the people in the questions board the train. Unable to take it anymore, Leonard heads out and runs into Penny in the hall. He helps her carry numerous empty wine bottles and offers to drive her to the liquor store, as she is slightly drunk. Penny says she can make it herself, but thanks him for asking.

The night of the challenge and after agreeing the rules, Leonard and Penny step forward to answer the first question. However instead of answering the geology question, Leonard apologizes to Penny and Penny hugs him. Immediately, Bernadette hugs Howard and asks him if he has something to say. Howard apologizes. Raj tries to hug Amy who pushes him away.

Sheldon says that they still need to find out who the smartest person is and Leslie answers that she thinks that is obvious. Sheldon agrees, but is unnerved by Leslie's smile.

In bed, Howard and Bernadette play a new sex game 'The Maiden and the Masters'.

## **DEVELOPMENT COMMENTS**

### **Premise:**

The premise in The Raja's Dilemma is Leonard insults Penny's intelligence and then fails a test that she passes. This causes concern over how to prove who is the most intelligent and Penny leads the women in a challenge against the men to prove who has superior intelligence.

Although this is a strong comic premise for an episode of The Big Bang Theory, it is less successful than it could be for two reasons. Firstly because the resolution reads a little easy with Leonard just deciding at that point to apologize to Penny. This seemingly could have happened earlier in the script, such as the scene where he helps her with the bottles. She already seems to have forgiven him at that point, and earlier than this, he seems to have known that his attitude towards her during the test was wrong. Consequently the resolution seems a little easy. Secondly, the comedy in the script needs to be maximized throughout. Perhaps, having Leonard's apology much harder for him to make and Penny less willing to forgive him, will add to the comedy in the script.

Therefore, although it is a good premise, the writer receives lower marks because some of the actions in the script read as too easy for the characters. If the writer is able to make changes to this effect, then perhaps the writer and the script will receive higher scores.

At 44 pages, the script is a good length for a sitcom script in this format.

### **First Twenty Pages:**

In the first few pages of a sitcom the writer needs to reveal the comic premise, create the world and tone of the story, introduce the characters, their goals, and the conflict between them. In addition it needs to be funny.

In The Raja's Dilemma the writer succeeds in establishing the comic tone of the show. The writer also succeeds in credibly re-creating the world of The Big Bang Theory and the lives of the main characters that populate the show. The central characters of Leonard, Howard, Penny, Raj, Sheldon, Amy, and Bernadette are all introduced, and their goals for the episode established. Penny wants to prove she isn't stupid to

Leonard and Howard wants to prove men are more intelligent than woman.

The writer then successfully sets the funny A and B stories in motion, with Penny challenging Leonard and Howard making it a team challenge.

### **Structure:**

The traditional A and B story sitcom structure is evident here. The script also demonstrates a clear two-act sitcom structure.

Cold Open – Leonard insults Penny for her lack of intelligence. He tells her she passed the test. She tells him that he failed the test.

Act I – Leonard says the questions were flawed. Penny is insulted and storms off. Bernadette initiates a sex game, assuming that she will be the doctor, which bothers Howard, which in turn annoys Bernadette. Leonard claims that he can't challenge Penny to an intellectual battle because it would crush her. Penny overhears and challenges him.

ACT II – The men challenge the women to an intellectual battle. Leonard apologizes to Penny who hugs him. Bernadette hugs Howard. Howard apologizes. Raj tries to hug Amy who pushes him away. Sheldon says that they still need to identify the smartest person. Leslie answers that it is obvious.

Tag – Howard and Bernadette play a new sex game 'The Maiden and the Masters'.

### **Additional notes:**

Give the script a rigorous edit, to give the comedy as much focus as possible.

Look at the ending of each scene and see if this is the best place, with the greatest point of anticipation or joke, to end on. The viewer needs to continue to want to know what happens next.

Consider where additional jokes can be added into scenes, and how the comedy of a scene can be maximized. Ensure jokes do not get lost in over long chunks of dialogue.

Read as many sample Big Bang Theory scripts as possible, to ensure you are following the show's style of writing. There are several available at [http://www.zen134237.zen.co.uk/Big\\_Bang\\_Theory/](http://www.zen134237.zen.co.uk/Big_Bang_Theory/)

Consider the ending of act two and the tag and whether there are stronger jokes to end on. The lactose intolerance joke at the end of act one is much funnier.

### **Character and Dialogue:**

Generally the characters are credible within their context and seem to fit with the show's depiction of the main characters. Many of the program character's characteristics are present from Howard's insecurity over the lack of his PhD to Leslie calling Sheldon 'dumb ass'. There are also some funny one-liners such as Raj's comment about Howard's mother as boss. The writer has also captured the dynamics of the relationships within the group.

The dialogue in the script generally works well, and captures the voices of the show's characters, however some of the dialogue is overlong and needs editing. By giving the dialogue a rigorous edit, some of the banter in the script should increase in pace.

### **General Notes:**

Overall, The Raja's Dilemma has funny and credible A and B storylines for an episode of The Big Bang Theory. However, the writer needs to work through the script maximizing the comedy in each scene. It would be worth the writer reading many sample scripts from The Big Bang Theory and sitcom scripts in general, to help them achieve this.

It would also be recommended that the writer work on a new draft, editing the script and resubmit for a higher score.