

A45

Lolita: A Screenplay

Nabokov was first approached in July 1959 by Stanley Kubrick and James Harris, who had acquired the film rights to *Lolita*, to write the screenplay. At that time, though, they could not agree on exactly how to structure the screenplay and avoid censorship problems. Nabokov subsequently left America to travel in Europe. Months later, in November 1959, Nabokov was inspirationally struck with a solution. By the turn of the year, he accepted an offer (\$40,000 plus a \$35,000 bonus for getting sole screenplay credit, plus expenses). The Nabokovs sailed to the U.S. in February and arrived in California by March 1 to meet with Kubrick and begin work on the screenplay.

Working “with zest”, Nabokov completed the first draft of the first act before the end of March. A month later came the second act. Through June, July, August, and September, he submitted new scenes, redrafted old ones, rewrote, embellished, and cut dialog (while taking a ten-day break in the Sierras at the end of June). (See *VNSL* 296, 304–9, 311–12, 313–321, 322, 333 and “Foreword” [to *Lolita: A Screenplay*] vii–xiii).

At one point, Kubrick told Nabokov that the screenplay was “much too unwieldy, contained too many unnecessary episodes, and would take about seven hours to run.” Nabokov put the screenplay on a crash diet and submitted his final version on 8-Sep-1960. Harris and Kubrick called it the best screenplay ever written in Hollywood. Eventually, Nabokov got credit as the sole author and a 1963 Academy Award nomination. Nabokov attended the première on 13-Jun-1963 in New York.

In the meantime, Nabokov’s agent, Irving Lazar, fought for Nabokov to have the right to ultimately publish his own version of the screenplay, the book we have here. He finally received a release from Kubrick in 1972. (See *VNTAY* 386–87, 400, 404, 406–8, 409, 473, 580.)

Boyd says (*VNTAY* 409)

...[I]t was important to him from the first that...he be allowed to publish his screenplay so that he could preserve and present his vision intact. When he was at last permitted to publish his screenplay...he would politely point out that he did so “not in pettish refutation of a munificent film but purely as a vivacious variant of an old novel.”

His claim that the most exhilarating part of his task was excising at Kubrick’s request half of what he had spent months composing might also seem mere politeness. But the shorter screenplay—the version he published—is in fact much superior to the still unpublished first version. The early version is diffuse and often strangely pedestrian.

Edition Summary

A45.1 *Lolita: A Screenplay* FIRST EDITION (MCGRAW-HILL), 25-Feb-1974, 2 issues

A45.2 *Lolita: A Screenplay* FIRST WRAPPERS EDITION (MCGRAW-HILL), 1983, 1 issue

A45.3 *Lolita: A Screenplay* NEW WRAPPERS EDITION (VINTAGE), Jun-1997, 1 issue

Vladimir Nabokov: A Descriptive Bibliography, Revised

Lolita: A Screenplay

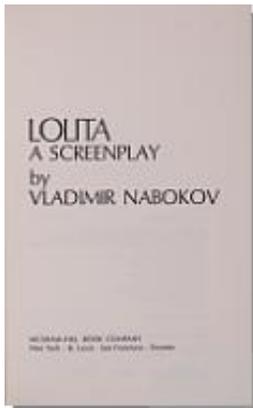
A45.1

FIRST EDITION (MCGRAW-HILL)

¶ First printing, 25-Feb-1974



A45.1 First printing, 1974, cover, front



A45.1 First printing, 1974, title page



A45.1 First printing, 1974, copyright page

Collation: (21.2 X 13.9 cm), perfect bound, 114 leaves, pp. [i–vi] vii–xiii [xiv] 1–213 [214]

Title page: LOLITA | A SCREENPLAY | by | VLADIMIR NABOKOV | MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY | New York • St. Louis • San Francisco • Toronto

Copyright page: LOLITA: A SCREENPLAY | Copyright © 1961 by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc. | Foreword copyright © 1974 by McGraw-Hill International, Inc. | Excerpts from the novel *Lolita* copyright © by Vladimir Nabokov 1955. | All rights reserved. | Printed in the United States of America. | No part of this publication may | be reproduced, stored in a | retrieval system, or transmitted, | in any form or by any means, | electronic, mechanical, photocopying, | recording, or otherwise, without | the prior written permission | of the publisher. | 123456789BPBP7987654 | Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data | Nabokov, Vladimir Vladimirovich, 1899- | Lolita: a screenplay. | I. Title. | PN1997.L66N3 1974 812'.5'4 73-15918 | ISBN 0-07-045732-8

Binding: Black cloth over boards with headband. Red endpapers. All edges trimmed. **Front cover:** \blind stamping\ VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | LOLITA: A SCREENPLAY. **Back cover:** \gilt stamping\ 0-07-045732-8. **Spine:** \running down, gilt stamping\ NABOKOV LOLITA: | A SCREENPLAY | \running across\ \gilt stamping background\ Mc | Graw | Hill.

Covering: White dust jacket. **Front cover:** \white background\ \black outline\ VLADIMIR | \black outline\ NABOKOV | \red, with the “O” replaced by a safety-pinned heart\ LOLITA: | \gray-gold\ A SCREENPLAY. **Back cover:** \photo of Nabokov by Halsman\ \white\ 07-045732-8. **Spine:** \white background\ \running down\ \black outline\ NABOKOV \red\ LOLITA: | \gray-gold\ A SCREENPLAY | \running across\ \black background\ \white\ Mc | Graw | Hill. **Front flap:** \$7.95 | \white background\ \black outline\ VLADIMIR | \black outline\ NABOKOV | \red\ LOLITA: | \gray-gold\ A SCREENPLAY | \credits\ **Back flap:** \list of author’s books\ | \publisher information\.

Contents: [i] half-title, [ii] books by author, [iii] title page, [iv] copyright page, [v] dedication, [vi] note, vii–xiii foreword, [xiv] blank, 1–213 text, [214] blank

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 0-07-045732-8

Price: \$7.95

Works:

- 1) Foreword [to *Lolita: A Screenplay*]
- 2) *Lolita: A Screenplay*
 - The endnote states that the original text was finished in Los Angeles in “Summer 1960” and then was revised in Montreux in “December 1973”.

¶ Second printing, 1980

As first printing, except

Copyright page: ... | 23456789BPBP89876543210 | ...

A45.2

FIRST WRAPPERS EDITION (MCGRAW-HILL)

¶ First printing, 1983



A45.2 First printing, 1983,
cover, front

As first edition, except

Collation: (20.3 X 13.3 cm), 228 pages

Title page: LOLITA | A SCREENPLAY | by | VLADIMIR NABOKOV |
MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY | New York ...

Copyright page: ... | First paperback edition, 1983 |
123456789FGRFGR876543 | ISBN 0-07-045768-9 | ... | ISBN 0-07-
045732-8 | 0-07-045768-9 (pbk.)

Binding: White wrappers with black, maroon, and gold lettering

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 0-07-045768-9

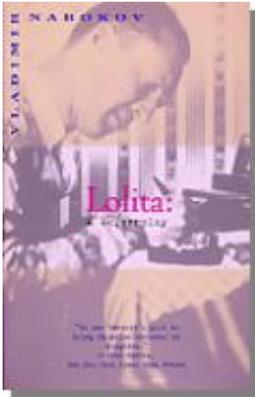
Series and Number: McGraw-Hill Paperbacks

Price: \$6.95

A45.3

NEW WRAPPERS EDITION (VINTAGE/RANDOM HOUSE, USA)

¶ First printing, Jun-1997



A45.3 First printing, 1997,
cover, front

As first edition, except

Collation: (20.3 X 13.0 cm), 238 pages

Title page: Lolita: | A SCREENPLAY | BY *Vladimir Nabokov* | VINTAGE
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HOUSE, INC. | NEW YORK

Copyright page: \publisher's device\ | FIRST VINTAGE
INTERNATIONAL EDITION, JUNE 1997 | ... | ISBN 0-679-77255-3 |
... | 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Binding: White wrappers with cover photograph of young Nabokov writing

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 0-679-77255-3

Series and Number: Vintage International

Price: \$12.00