

Howard Koch

#1 – *Casablanca*

Howard Koch, the co-writer of one of the world's most beloved films, *Casablanca*, was also a blacklisted writer. Born Dec. 12, 1902, in New York City, Koch had a law degree from Columbia University. After writing several Broadway plays that had short runs, he became a radio writer, most notable writing the infamous radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* for Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre on the Air. He became a screenwriter in 1940, writing four films that year under contract to Warner Bros. In 1943, he received an Academy Award for his work on *Casablanca*. The following year, at the request of Jack and Harry Warner, he wrote *Mission to Moscow*, a film that was later pointed to when he was blacklisted as being a communist sympathizer. Unable to get work as a screenwriter in the U.S. after being blacklisted, he moved with his wife to Europe, where he continued to work briefly under the pseudonym Peter Howard until his identity was discovered. Returning to the U.S. and winning a battle to end his blacklisting, Koch eventually moved to Woodstock, New York, where he became a senior member of the counter-culture movement of the 1960s. He died Aug. 17, 1995.