



WRITING FILM REVIEWS

THE STRUCTURE

- Introduction (with title, release date, background information)
- Summary of the story
- Analysis of the plot elements (rising action, climax)
- Creative elements (dialogues, characters, use of colors, camera techniques, mood, tone, symbols, costumes or anything that contributes or takes away from the overall plot)
- Opinion (supported with examples and facts from the story)
- Conclusion (announcing whether the filmmaker was successful in his/her purpose, re-state your evidence, explain how the motion picture was helpful for providing a deeper understand of course topic)

MOVIE REVIEW ELEMENTS

- The title of the film/documentary – just because your headline features the name of the movie or documentary it doesn't mean should skip mentioning it in the text. Always name the feature you've watched in the introductory paragraph. This may seem like a stupid thing to point out, but it's one of the most common mistakes that students make
- Summary – the whole point of the review is to summarize the documentary or movie for people who haven't watched it yet. To make this as effective as possible, always assume that your professor hasn't seen it either (as mentioned above). Why is this important? You won't leave out some important details thinking he/she watched it already so they won't bother. As a reviewer, your job is to explain what happened in the film and express whether the filmmaker failed or succeeded. Again, saying you liked or disliked it isn't a viable comment. Your opinion has to be supported by specific reasons and examples from the feature itself
- Filmmaker – do a little research on the person who directed the piece. Is that person a controversial figure? Is he/she known for a political stance? Does the filmmaker have a significant background? Devote a paragraph or two to the person behind the movie and their other works in order to establish the significance of the film you are reviewing for the director's career

MOVIE REVIEW ELEMENTS

- Significance to your class – How does the content of the documentary or film fit into your course topic? Is it important for historical accuracy? If you are watching the motion picture for history class, make note of over-dramatization. If the motion picture is based on the book you've analyzed in English class, you can mention similarities, differences, or some elements that film contains, but book doesn't and so on
- Creative elements – filmmakers work hard to include creative elements into their motion pictures. How are these elements important to the plot and movie in general? For example, costumes can either enhance the movie or betray its intent. Colors can be vivid and lift the atmosphere or mood in the movie or they can be dull and make it seem depressing. Good sound effects enrich the viewing experience while bad ones only destroy everything. Moreover, camera movements and angles also add elements to the story. Take notes of symbols in the story, if any.
- Actors - let's not forget the casting! Were the actors realistic? Did they portray the role of a specific character successfully? Did they have good acting skills? Do you believe that some particular actor was the right fit for the role?

CHECKLIST / OUTLINE FOR A GOOD MOVIE REVIEW

- Introduction (title, topic, release date, background information)
- Accuracy of depiction
- Use of sources in the documentary
- Creative elements that enhance or tarnish the overall story (quality of script, visual design, performance, lighting, hair, and makeup, costume, set design, symbolism)
- Your opinion
- Conclusion

MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Not focusing on the film – while connecting the plot to some specific historical event is a good idea (when applicable), strive to avoid writing about unnecessary details or introducing irrelevant information such as the history of cinematography or that particular genre, snacks, among other things
- Inserting yourself – you're the one who's writing the review. The paper reflects your understanding and opinion of the motion picture you've seen and there is no need to write in first person all the time: I noticed this, I saw that I liked this, I disliked that
- Failing to check facts about movie background and release date, director, casting etc.
- Giving out your opinion without mentioning any reason why you think that way
- Talking about irrelevancies
- Writing a review without a structure
- Writing generalities such as *great acting, cool effects, a good movie, it was bad etc.*
- Writing a review without substance or analysis of the feature

EXAMPLES

<https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/entertainment/article/movies-five-films-see-august>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2018/feb/27/three-billboards-outside-ebbing-missouri-best-picture-oscar>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2018/02/22/tonya-review-margot-robbies-dazzling-skating-biopic-glides-knife/>