



Writing Skills

Movie Reviews

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Movie Reviews

Writing a movie review is often a motivating task for students since they get to choose a movie for which they have strong feelings, whether positive or negative. At one of my students' insistence, I actually watched *Sharknado* (don't do it!) This straightforward, easy-to-follow outline provides students with a scaffold from which they can write their own movie reviews. An introduction paragraph, a plot summary and characters paragraph, a critique paragraph, and a conclusion paragraph are outlined and broken down. The framework includes examples of phrasing used to convey opinions, begin plot summaries, and provide recommendations. For their critique, students choose which film aspects to discuss from a list that includes musical score, character development, special effects, realism, cinematography, and more. Includes therapeutic notes.

Name _____

Date _____

Movie Review of _____

*Give one to five stars/popcorn bags/soda cups/smiley faces

Outline

1) Intro

a) your like/dislike

(ex: *"this is my favorite movie of all time ..."* or *"I can't believe I sat through the whole thing ..."*)

b) background info

include genre, release date, director, main actors

may include popularity, box office info (i.e. \$\$\$), and/or other detail

2) Basic info

a) plot summary (keep it super brief!!)

(ex: *"the movie tells the story of ..."* or *"the film follows ..."*)

b) characters

3) Your critique

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

(Choose from: character relationships, character development, character transformation, inspirational story, thought-provoking story, writing quality, dialogue, humor, action, horror, acting quality, cinematography, pacing, special effects, animation, musical score, songs, bad taste, gore, realism)

4) Conclusion

a) summary

b) recommendation (who would like/dislike it)

(ex: *"horror fans will ..."* or *"if you like sappy romances you ..."*)



Therapeutic Notes

When I do this activity with my students, we often start by analyzing one or two movie reviews together, noting the underlying structure of each. Many reviews follow the basic organization of this outline.

Also, students typically require definitions and explanations for some of the features from which they will choose for their critique discussion. In particular, I always need to explain “pacing”, “musical score”, and the difference between “character development” (how the director lets the audience learn more about a particular character) and “character transformation” (how a character changes throughout the film). I like to give lots of examples to accompany definitions. To demonstrate an example of good cinematography, I show a trailer for the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Check it out and you’ll see what I mean!

Lastly, I encourage my students to choose a film they are passionate about: one they either loved or hated.