How to Write a Movie Review

Writing a movie review is a great way of expressing your opinion of a **movie**.  The purpose of most movie reviews is to help the reader in determining whether **they** want to watch, **rent or buy** the movie.  The review should give enough details about the movie that the reader can make an informed decision, without giving anyway any essentials such as the plot or any surprises.  Below are our guidelines and tips for writing a good movie review.

**1. Watch the movie**

The first step in writing the review is to **watch the movie**.  Watch the movie in a relaxed environment you are familiar with.  You do not want to be distracted by an unfamiliar room.  Watching the movie a second time will help you absorb a lot more detail about the movie.  Most movie reviewers **take notes** as they watch the movie review.

**2. Give your opinion**

Most movie reviewers will **give their opinion** of the movie.  This is important as the reviewer can express the elements of the movie they enjoyed or disliked.  However, as in all good journalism, the reviewer should also **give impartial details**, and allow the reader to make their own mind over an issue the reader liked or disliked.  Opinions should be explained to allow the reader to determine whether they would **agree with your opinion**. Many regular movie reviewers will develop a following.  If one can find a reviewer who shares a similar taste in films, one can confidently follow the reviewer’s recommendations.

**3. Who is your audience?**

You need to consider **who your likely readers are**.  Writing a movie review for **children** requires a different approach than if writing for a **movie club**.  Ensure you report on the factors that matter to your likely audience.

**4. Give an outline**

Give the outline of the movie, but **don't give away essential details** such as the end or any surprises.  If there is a big surprise, you want to entice readers by telling them something special happens - just don't say what.

**5. Evaluate the Actors**

If the movie contains **actors**, as most do, detail the major players starring in the movie and how well you think they acted.

**6. Comment on the Structure**

Did the movie follow a regular, predictable **story line**, or did it get you thinking like an Alfred Hitchcock or Quentin Tarantino movie?

**7. Address the Cinematography and lighting**

Give details about **how well** the movie was shot and directed.  For instance, describe how the pacing, the sets, the special effects, the lighting, the costumes, the animation, etc… affected the overall movie.

**8. React to the Music**

Did the movie have its own musical score like Aladdin, Jaws, *Star Wars* or *ET*, or did it feature songs from popular artists like *The Great Gatsby* or *Twilight*? Evaluate whether the music enhanced the film or simply added background to the events unfolding on the screen.

**28 tips for Writing Theater, Movie and Performance reviews**

By Robert Greenman

Consider these guidelines with what you see in newspaper reviews of movies, plays and concerts.

1. Begin a review with an opinion.
2. Critique throughout the review.
3. Support your opinions with examples.
4. Point out strengths as well as weaknesses.
5. Compare and contrast the work being reviewed with works readers may be familiar with and with other works of the author.
6. Don’t reveal too much of a play’s or movie’s plot; a review is not a synopsis, nor do you want to give away too much.
7. Give credit to work, talent and skill.
8. Write conversationally; always have your audience in mind; you must hold them.
9. Re-create the experience of a live concert for the reader who wasn’t there, and have the reader who *was* there, think, “Yes, that’s what it was like!”
10. Don’t let your prejudices influence your review.
11. If you are ambivalent, say so; ambivalence is ever-present in taste and opinion.
12. Sarcasm, satire and ridicule are a consideration when you deem a work a travesty, a rip- off or really, really awful.
13. Don’t be mean; even a well-deserved panning must not be mean-spirited.
14. Even something not very good may require a kind or tender review – yet, still, an honest one.
15. Your readers are your main responsibility; but you must be fair to those you write about.
16. Vary your sentence lengths and types.
17. Write concisely, but write richly.
18. Develop and use a broad vocabulary.
19. Use allusions, similes, and other literary techniques.
20. Experiment with writing styles.
21. Mix colloquial, informal and formal language; slang, too.
22. Make humor a part of your style.
23. Don’t write to impress.
24. Be informative; be persuasive; be interesting; be engaging; be readable.
25. Do your homework; produce knowledgeable reviews.
26. Add to your readers’ knowledge, appreciation and understanding.
27. Care deeply about standards and quality in the arts.
28. Know your field; become literate in *all* the arts; learn a *lot;* become literate in *all* the arts; learn a *lot;* be passionate about your interest in, and love for, the arts

*Robert Greenman is a writer, educator and speaker with major interests in journalism education, vocabulary acquisition, and education in general. Reprinted with permission.* [*http://www.robertgreenman.com/*](http://www.robertgreenman.com/)

*© 2009 by Robert Greenman. This material is available without charge to teachers and students at all levels for their personal and classroom use.*

**Journalism Movie Review Project**

* **With one partner (or alone if you prefer), choose a movie you have seen with which you are familiar. I encourage you to watch it again this week to refresh your memory.**
* **Without using any outside sources, for at least 10 minutes, make a list of ideas, details, facts, or opinions that could be included in a review of this movie.**
* **Next, using your own device or a classroom computer, research the movie you have chosen. Confirm the facts you have included using a reputable source such as imdb.com, fandango.com, commonsensemedia.org, etc…**
* **Locate and print at least four reviews on your movie, being sure to record correct MLA citation information for each article. (Prior to the due date, look up your movie on Wikipedia – not as a source but to assess Wikipedia’s accuracy.)**
* **Following the movie-review-writing advice provided, write a review of your movie in digital format (PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Drive Slides, SlideDog, SlideShare, etc…). I encourage you to fill your presentation with ORIGINAL ideas; however, feel free to include worthy information found in another review (as long as you give proper MLA credit).**
* **Conclude your presentation with your overall rating of the film (1-5 STARS) with general comments and a recommendation for potential viewers.**
* **Be ready to present on or before Friday, January 16th. I’ll bring the popcorn! ☺**