How to write your movie review - PDF

First and foremost, a movie review is you asserting your opinion of the movie using a personal, more casual tone. Movie reviews are relatively short (about 600-1200 words) and more than whether or not you liked the movie. A good movie review shares your opinion about the movie and what the movie was trying to accomplish. Of course, what the movie is trying to accomplish is up for debate, and is woven into what you believe is the quality of the film. So, take risks when you write your review to make sure your opinion is clear and compelling.

Writing the Film Review

Although there is not a set formula to follow when writing a film review, the genre does have certain common elements that most film reviews include.

1. Introduction –

In the opening of your review, provide some basic information about the film. You may include film’s name, year, director, screenwriter, and major actors. - Your introduction, which may be longer than one paragraph, should also make it clear whether or not you thought the movie was effective in what it’s trying to accomplish. In this specific case where the movie is made from the novel, you may want to assert whether or not the movie is complimentary to the novel or whether it goes in an all-together different direction. A film review does not have to contain a specifically stated thesis or main claim at the end of the introductory paragraph, but it can. Either way, your opinion should be clearly discernable.

1. Plot Summary –

Remember that many readers of film reviews have not yet seen the film. While you want to provide some plot summary, keep this brief and avoid specific details that would spoil the viewing for others. You may, however, focus on what was different from the novel. For example, the train ride was a central part of the first 1/3 of the novel. It was a cramped and horrifying experience. But it was not that way in the movie. Whatever summary you choose, make sure that it contributes to your opinion expressed in the review.

1. Description –

While the plot summary will give the reader a general sense of what the film is about, also include a more detailed description of your particular cinematic experience watching the film. This may include your personal impression of what the film looks, feels, and sounds like. In other words, what stands out in your mind when you think about this particular film and how it was made? You may want to check out the Purdue OWL [link](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/terminology_and_starting_prompts.html) to learn terms that movie reviews use to talk about films.

1. Analysis –

How does this film act as a representation of the novel? Is the film an accurate account of what Sepetys created in her book? What was changed? What was added? What did they leave out? Did the changes make the movie better than the novel? Did the movie oversimplify the novel? What do you think? Use this space to discuss the relation between the movie and the novel and share your overall opinion.

1. Conclusion/Evaluation –

The closing of your film review should remind the reader of your general thoughts and impressions of the film. You may also implicitly or explicitly state whether or not you recommend the film. Make sure to remind the reader of why the film is or is not worth seeing.

\*With help from the Duke Writing Studio