



HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE REVIEW

1. Get familiar with the actors. Who are they? What movies/shows have they been in?

2. Formulate a specific opinion about the movie in one sentence. Your job as movie reviewer is to give an opinion of the movie. Ultimately, this may come down to a "thumbs up" or "three stars out of five," but you want to have a specific thesis to drive your critique. For example, "I didn't like this comedy" becomes

"The story had funny moments but it went on too long." "This horror movie is good" becomes "This horror movie works because it builds suspense right up until the end." So, try to find that very specific opinion that will be the foundation of your film review.

3. Create a good lead: Grab your reader immediately. You want your reader to be interested in what you have to say. Grab her in that first or "lead" paragraph in one of several ways:

- Start with a great quote from the movie, and explain how it reflects the movie;
- refer to the reputation of the actor or director and compare it to how he or she did in this movie;
- compare this movie to another well-known film in a few sentences or two;
- explain what your expectation was, and then if it was fulfilled or not.

Then end that first paragraph by writing your opinion statement.

4. Recap briefly, but don't give away anything big (no "spoilers"!). You should write the basic premise, and tell how the story builds, but don't give away key moments, especially not the ending! And keep the movie synopsis (summary) brief. Then get to reviewing.

5. Back up your main opinion with specifics. The readers now know you think "This comedy had funny moments but went on too long." **It's time for you to prove it.** These are types of points/specifics that help prove a reviewer is right...

- Write about how the actors had good timing like they did in other movies they were in
- Write about how the director made a great remake of that famous film. But then add that there were too many scenes involving the one character and not enough of another.
- Talk about the fact that there were multiple endings and all of them were long.
- Use specifics to make your readers see you're right.

6. Be interesting. Just because this is a movie review doesn't mean it's got to be dull. From the lead to the ending paragraph, make the review engaging by using metaphors, analogy, specific adjectives and adverbs to create the images you're looking for. But also be concise. A review isn't a place for long diatribes or flowery prose.

7. Be honest in your appraisal. Your reader and the work you're critiquing both deserve an honest opinion, right? So even if you HATE that actor or LOVE that actress, when writing a movie review **be sure not to hold back your true opinion of the film**. Have some standards in mind. A comedy should be funny, a horror movie should be scary, etc.; judge the movie against those standards, not against any pre-existing opinions you may have. It will make the review more valuable to the reader, and honest writing is always best, isn't it?

Assignment: After viewing *Across the Universe* in class, you will review the movie in 4 paragraphs. This is a major grade, **due April _____**. You can receive 5 extra points for typing it on your blog. You can receive 5 extra points for creating a poster to go with the review...basic information in your review should be on the poster. This review must be your own. Any words taken from other sources must be quoted and cited.

←OUTLINE & SAMPLE→

4-Paragraph Movie Review Outline

Title of the movie

Paragraph 1

1. Start with a good lead (get your readers' attention; make them want to read more).
2. Include the name of the film, prominent stars of the film, the basic setting (time & place), and type of film (comedy, drama, etc.)
3. Write a plot summary without revealing the ending. Discuss at least 5 events and be sure to cover the entire scope of the movie...EXCEPT the very end. (Don't spoil it for those who haven't seen it yet!)
4. Include your one-sentence opinion

Paragraph 2

Discuss one aspect of filmmaking. You may choose from acting, direction, editing, costume design, set design, photography, background music, or anything else you may think of. Be sure that you are specific and cite examples from the movie.

Paragraph 3

Discuss another aspect of filmmaking. You may choose from acting, direction, editing, costume design, set design, photography, background music, or anything else you may think of, but obviously choose something different from what you discussed in the previous paragraph. Be sure that you are specific and cite examples from the movie.

Paragraph 4

Give your overall reaction to the film as well as your opinion on the quality of the film. also include your recommendations for potential viewers.

SAMPLE MOVIE REVIEW

Forrest Gump

"Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." However, when you watch *Forrest Gump* starring Tom Hanks as Forrest and Robin Wright as Jenny, you know you are going to get a lot of laughs and even a few tears. The screenplay for the 1994 movie was written by Eric Roth, based on the novel by Winston Groom. The story follows Forrest through 30 years of trials and tribulations, placing Forrest within historical moments of history, and in pursuit of his one dream—his "most special friend," Jenny. According to the *Washington Post*, *Forrest Gump* won Oscar awards for Best Picture, Best Actor (Hanks), Best Director (Robert Zemeckis), Film Editing, Visual Effects and Adapted Screenplay. The movie was well deserving of these awards since the acting and the visual effects were extraordinary.

The films' actors success in portraying their characters is a major factor in the film's awards. Tom Hanks and Robin Wright worked well together, just like "peas and carrots." The on-screen chemistry between the two was phenomenal. I felt a real connection between the two, finding myself mad at Jenny when she blew Forrest off and in tears when he told her that he was heading to Vietnam. Mokui's *Movie Review* states "Tom Hanks IS *Forrest Gump*...He breathes life into the guy and you will feel what Forrest feels" (1994, par 1). James Berardinelli states, "Robin Wright gives the best performance of her career, surpassing what she accomplished in *The Playboys*" (1994, par2). Another performance that stands out is that of Gary Sinise. Sinise plays the part of Lieutenant Dan Taylor, whose life is saved by Forrest during the Vietnam War. James Berardinelli writes, "In this movie, his Lieutenant Dan Taylor is riveting" (1994, par 3). I thought that Sinise was quite convincing with his emotions throughout the movie, as if he was really a disabled vet who had lost both legs in the war.

Just as good as the actors were those working behind the scenes with the special effects. Throughout *Forrest Gump* the special effects were incredible. During Lieutenant Taylor's scenes, I was convinced that he really didn't have legs. I was studying the scenes, looking for any signs of legs, trying to figure out how it was done. It turns out that each and every frame was painted over to give it the true to life values that it holds. Also bringing the movie more credibility was the ability to place Forrest in history making events. These events ranged from Forrest teaching Elvis how to swing his hips to meeting Presidents for various accomplishments. These television clips of Forrest were done with such finesse that they look real. Critic Brian Webster (2003) states, "This is handled virtually flawlessly; if you didn't know better, you'd believe that a fellow named Gump really did tell President Lyndon Johnson that he had been shot in the rump while acting heroically in Vietnam" (par 2). *Rolling Stone* (2003) states, "The effects dazzle, though never at the expense of the story" (Travers, par 2).

This story, complete with the Oscar winning performances in both acting and special effects is perfect for those in need of a dose of goodness. My family enjoys watching *Forrest Gump* together for rejuvenation, to view someone with true values of honesty, friendship and family. Forrest, with his heart of gold and his low IQ, never gives up. He always looks for the best in every scenario. The movie opens with a feather floating down over the city, landing at Forrest's feet. Near the end of the story, Forrest questions, "Do we each have a destiny - or do we just float around accidental, like on a breeze?" As you are contemplating this question, the feather reappears and floats through the countryside right up into the ending credits.
