

REVIEWING FILMS

Film reviews should contain most, if not all, of the following:

1) INTRODUCTION

- mention title
- briefly say what film is about
- convey emotional flavour (comedy? tragedy?)
- what is it like to watch the film? Is it engaging, interesting, do you feel drawn?
- foreshadow your own personal response e.g. brilliant or flawed.

2) SUMMARY (PLOT SYNOPSIS)

- give a succinct account of the story, including how it ends
- touch on the underlying themes and issues, as well as emotions
- say a little about the characters

3) DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS AND COMMENTS ON THE ACTING

- Continue (from summary) to say who main characters are, their names and their relationship to one another
- Communicate something of these characters - what are they like as people?
- outstanding performances of minor roles can also be mentioned
- in talking about the characters you should always talk about the acting i.e. - what means did the actors use to communicate?
 - was their acting convincing?

4) COMMENTARY ON SCREENPLAY

There are two kinds of screenplays:

- i. an adaptation of a literary work
 - if the screenplay is an adaptation, mention that
 - name the book if it is different from the name of the film
 - name the author
 - effect of changes between the two?
- ii. an original screenplay (someone has written it for the first time)
 - listen to dialogue; are the lines realistic? Is the dialogue true to character?
 - does it help establish character? Does it give them a life of their own?
 - does the author use the characters as a mouthpiece for his own ideas?
 - consider the dramatic structure, the definition of the theme, sometimes the film's humour

5) PHOTOGRAPHY, ART DIRECTION AND THE MUSIC

- the Photographer translates what is on the set to the screen
 - is it visually impressive, why?
 - how are certain effects produced?
- the Art Director is responsible for the sets - buildings, decor etc.
 - how suitable is the setting?
 - if historical, how authentic is it?
- the music plays an important part in major films because it lends the film sentiment (emotion)
(only write about the music when it is important; when it has an obvious effect)

6) THEME/ISSUES

- the most important part of the review
 - what are the themes?
 - what issues are raised?

7) PERSONAL (BUT REASONED) RESPONSE

- if you like the film, say why
- if you dislike the film, explain why

8) INSIGHTFUL DESCRIPTION OF AT LEAST ONE KEY SCENE

- somewhere in the review, take at least one scene apart
- comment when addressing another aspect e.g. when talking about characters, plot, theme, photography etc.

9) DIRECTION

The Director is responsible for most aspects of the film if you think the film is successful, then give him/her credit.

If you believe the film is "poor", then he/she must accept some responsibility. When making a judgement, you may wish to consider the mood, tone, pace and atmosphere of the film.

SUMMARY Always include most of these aspects in your review.
Attempt to put them together in an interesting way.