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Discover, Watch, Review and Rate: How to write a movie review

Overview and Rationale

Entertainment is very important to teens, but few of them lack the knowledge or vocabulary to convey a movie review in writing without giving away the ending. Many of them will say, "It was cool," but have little else to offer. In the world of journalistic writing reviewing movies, shows or products needs to have more comparison, more details, and students need to be aware that it is ok to say you do not like something, but to be clear as to why.

Goals for Understanding

Essential Questions:

- What is a movie review?
- What is the purpose of a movie review?
- What information should a movie review contain?
- What to readers need to know about the movie before they decide to see it?
- What specific vocabulary should be included in a movie review?
- What is the proper format for a movie review?

Critical Engagement Questions (Can refer to state standards of learning and include any plans for grouping classes.)

How does a reporter know when NOT to include certain information in their reports?

How can we determine what movies our readers want reviewed?

Common Core NYS ELA Standards addressed

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1](#) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3](#) Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.5](#) Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a](#) Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1b](#) Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2b](#) Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3a](#) Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4](#) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5](#) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6](#) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4](#) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Resources/Materials (List all materials/audio-visual needs.)

Notes on writing movie critiques (See Handout)

Sample movie reviews for different kinds of movie genres (for movies currently in theaters)

Internet research engines

The film, "Brick"

List of criteria to judge the review (to be gathered in class).

Smartboard

Highlighter

Overviews and Timeline

Activity 1 (One 45-minute class)

Ask students about how they feel about movie reviews. Do they feel that there are certain writers or publications that are more reliable or more entertaining?

Ask students what they are looking for when they read a movie review.

Ask students how the requirements for a movie review might change depending on the genre.

Give notes on writing movie reviews. (SEE HANDOUT)

Break class into groups of four, and hand out sample movie reviews and highlighters. Each group will have one genre. While in groups students should:

- 1- look for examples of how the writer introduces the movie to the audience.
- 2- look for the use of background information on the actors, directors, producers
- 3- look for examples of how the writer's opinion was presented. Does he/she give particular lines from the movie? Is the movie's rating given?

After they have finished and highlighted the reviews, the movie review will be placed on the SmartBoard for the whole class to see. Students from the group will then evaluate the movie review and identify where each of the above components can be found by underlining with different colors on the SmartBoard.

Activity 2 (One 45-minute class) Computer Lab Required

Give students the name of the movie they will be watching and critiquing: "Brick."

Explain to the students the importance of researching the careers of the starring actors, as well as the directors and producers.

Have students research the film to find out who the actors are, and have them get enough background information to make a judgment as to whether these actors were appropriate for the film. After viewing the film, students can use this information to determine if the director and producers did a good job casting the production.

Activity 3 (Three 45-minute class periods)

Students will spend two class periods watching the film and taking notes. Permission Slips will be required.

After they have finished watching the movie, students may have time to outline their reviews and begin writing them. Their first draft is due the following class day. Drafts should be longer than 500 words to allow for edits.

Activity 4 (one 45-minute class period)

Students should be broken up into editing circles where they can copyedit each others' articles. Each student should have at least 2 edits of their reviews. Reviews will be due the following class meeting. Maybe counted as project or test grade.

Assessment:

Assessment would be the identification of characteristics of a good movie review in groups, the draft of the review, and the final draft. The draft and final draft should be handed in together to see how the student edited work based on the comments of peers.

How to Write a Movie Review:

1. Research the movie. Who are the stars? Who is the director? Who is the screenwriter? What is the film's genre? What is the film's rating? What is the film's running time? Websites, such as IMDB.com are ideal for this type of research.

2. See the movie. Even if you are pretty sure it will be bad. You don't want to just see movies that you know you are going to like; your reviews will not only encourage people to view your movie, but they could also discourage people from spending their money if the review is bad. If circumstances permit, view the movie more than once. It is easy to miss key-elements, or even the whole point, with only one viewing.
3. Take notes during the film. Jot down memorable quotes to later use in your review.
4. Write your initial reaction to the film immediately; wait too long and you may forget valuable details.
5. Identify your audience. It is the general public reading a newspaper review? Most movie review readers like to be entertained by the review, so think up a good headline to hook the reader or a theme for your review.
6. Express your opinion of the film, but support your criticism. If you are offended or disappointed or embarrassed, provide a valid reason, even if you think it is obvious. Support is key! While writing, include the basic plot of the movie and cover a few, select events, but do not give away surprise plot twists or the ending. Avoid spoilers. It's a sign of professionalism to refrain from giving such information away.
7. Discuss relevant parts of the movie. Include your opinion of the direction, script, actors, music, special effects, and photography. Judge the story.
 - Are the character's actions justified, and are their motives plausible? Is there an internal consistency to the way each person behaves, or do some words, thoughts, or actions ring false?
 - Does the plot make sense? Is the story line logical? Is the narrative arc well shaped, with an economy of form, or is it flabby or drawn out, with time-killing pointlessness?
 - Rate the actors. Do they meet the expectations dictated by the plot and other story elements? If not, is it their own thespian shortcomings, are they hampered by a poor script, or is there something about their performances that makes you believe the director is at fault? What could the performers, the screenwriters, or the filmmaker have done differently to make the movie work better?
 - Evaluate the technical elements. How do the cinematography, editing, lighting, sound, and other components support or detract from the film? Is music appropriate and effectively employed? You needn't know film-technology jargon to share your thoughts about how these elements contributed to or detracted from the whole.
8. Let your review sit for a few hours, then look at it with fresh eyes and edit it. Make sure that your spelling is impeccable. The slightest typos in a review can change the entire meaning.
9. Keep in mind, while writing, that movie reviews are typically 250 to 500 words.