

The film is due three weeks from today and must be typed and proofread/spell-checked. The paper must be turned in before or at the start of class.

The paper is on, your choice: *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (USA: Bitzer, 1928) or *City Lights* (USA: Chaplin, 1931).

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A review is often between 600-1,000 words long and between 2 to maybe 3 1/2 pages maximum double spaced. Our reviews may be a bit longer since this is a scholarly-based review and we have academic requirements such as citing sources, providing appropriate examples to support our arguments, pulling in related discussions or evidence from printed sources, etc.

While I have said that the review may take many forms and cover a wide variety of concepts, the structure is remarkable the same from one to the next. Hence, when writing your review, consider the following structure:

- 1) You need to do an **Introduction** where you introduce your film review, likely spell out the most basic credits such as title, and director, possibly main actors. The first paragraph also should contain a **statement of purpose**. The first or second paragraphs may include a **brief summary of the plot**, background info on the story and maybe a reference to the genre if not done above.
- 2) Then you typically look at **3-5 dimensions or criteria** upon which you are evaluating the film. Often, you devote a paragraph to each.
- 3) Your analysis may involve one, but normally 3-5 of the following, or possible (an) other variable(s) not listed here:
 - are characters believable? developed appropriately/effectively?
 - are actors cast appropriately? do they perform effectively?
 - what is the theme of film?
 - is the setting/locale, time period appropriate and effective? is set, décor, landscape/geography effective?
 - is the cinematography effective? does the film make use of color, texture, lighting, movement etc. to enhance theme, mood, setting, etc.?
 - is editing effective?
 - is the sound track effective?
 - is music appropriate/functional? or inappropriate/obtrusive?
 - are camera angles used effectively? Used for a particular effect?
 - Are there special effects and if so, are they essential to plot? Necessary, sacrifice plot, skillfully handled?
 - does film use symbols or symbolism? If so, what purposes are serve? Used effectively? How does it contribute to film overall?
 - is there a moral or message?
 - are there attributes that can be attributed to contributions by the director? how does film compare to director's other work?
 - who is the audience and did film achieve its objective or appeal to intended audience?
- 4) You may want to study the **PROS versus CONS** overall (*Optional*), and reflect on and discuss these.
- 5) Finally, you **draw conclusions**. What is your opinion of the film? Here you would review the arguments/evidence you used and then draw conclusion. NOTE that you never introduce new evidence in the conclusion!
- 6) Quality of writing also is important as well as degree of research carried out. In addition, as I said above: effort to bring outside sources and even opinions of others into your discussion may be a plus, as well as efforts made to appropriately attribute credit to outside sources used.

Good luck! Ask if you have any questions.

"Film reviews are assessments of the aesthetic, entertainment, social and cultural merits and significance of a current film or video. Reviews tend to be short to medium length articles, often written by a single staff writer for a particular publication. Although reviews are usually fairly "quick takes" on a movie, they can, in some instances, be lengthy, substantive, and very insightful." [SOURCE: "Film Reviews and Film Criticism: An Introduction," <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/filmstudies/filmreviewsintro.html>]; Revised, 3-5-14.

Guidelines for writing a Film Review

Research and preparation	Actively watch the film and take profuse notes. Do research and get all relevant names, facts, figures, details, etc. you think you will require. Use online and print resources. Double check for accuracy. Develop a critical perspective — consider both the film's merits and weaknesses. Then do an outline of your intended review.
Title or headline	The title of the review and the "deck" (a sentence in special print above the review) suggest the reviewer's opinion — whether he or she thinks the movie is worth seeing or not. Rate the film. MPAA rating may also go here.
Dateline and Byline	Date of review and name of author/reviewer. Sometimes city in which written is cited.
Where	At the top of the review, is the name the movie and the places where it can be seen. May address hours film shown, admission prices, phone number of theater, film length, opening date, MPAA rating, crowdedness, etc.
Introduction	Why you think the movie is good or not? There is also often a brief summary of what the movie is about, the story line and what type of film it is — action-adventure, comedy, documentary, drama, horror, romance, etc. Name of director, producer or principal actors may go here. Give dates when important.
Statement of Purpose	Don't forget to tell the reader what you are trying to do in essay; or another way to put it: What is your objective here? Ideally goes into first paragraph.
Actors' Roles/Performance	This part gives a short description of the main characters and names the actors who play the parts. Reviews refer to roles the actors have play in other movies. Are the characters in the movie easy to understand?
Story line/Plot/Location	More about the story line and also where and when the movie takes place and what the setting or mood is (but don't spoil it for the viewer). How about themes or ideas raised? There may be more information about the roles vis-à-vis the story line — may include particular geographic locations/scenes, opening, closing, an action or romance scene, etc. Is the movie based on a book or a stage play? Does the movie tie into anything currently in the news, or is there something else that makes the movie relevant? Is story particularly complex? How was pace of the story telling? Is there a certain tension in the story? Was it funny? Was it sad?
Other cinematic characteristics	Here you address other qualities of the film, particularly those that are inherently special to the cinematic medium, such as camerawork, color, directing, editing, film texture, level of sex or violence, music, scenery, sound (digital), soundtrack, special effects, visual effects, etc.
Other	Compare to other films/movies. Does the movie portray historical events accurately? Are there a few interesting quotes or facts? Name sources when appropriate — if quoting another person, cite source and give credit to original author.
Conclusion	May conclude with an interesting or thought-provoking question or statement to tempt you to see the movie for yourself. Sometimes a review will make a link with a local situation or certain social attitudes.

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