

WRITING A MOVIE REVIEW

A. BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO WRITE YOUR REVIEW

- **SEE THE FILM**, and then **immediately** note your responses. Your analysis will be based on your memory of the film and it is important to get some notes on paper so you don't forget vital details. Memorable scenes should be listed. They may turn out to be key points of discussion for your paper. You also need to write down your initial overall impressions of the film. How did it make you feel? Try as well to figure out why you responded that way. That is the beginning of your critical response.
- **SEE THE FILM AGAIN** if possible. This time you need to be more analytical. Pay close attention to the scenes which impressed you before, and try to figure out how they work. Watch the film with the following subjects in mind: **characterization, setting, types of film techniques**. If your response to the movie changes on a second viewing, note how and why.



B. LIBRARY RESEARCH (if required)

- Look up the film's credits (if you don't have them in your notes). You may want to refer to the director, producer, writer, cast, etc. in your review. Background information on these people may also be available in reference books or periodicals.
- If the film is based on a real person or event, you may want to compare the reality to the filmed version. In that case, you may want to consult an encyclopedia or other reference books.
- If you want the definition of any technical terms, consult a film dictionary. e.g. DICTIONARY OF FILM TERMS by F. E. Beaver - REF PN 1993.45 B4 1983. Some of the techniques with which you should be familiar are: montage; long shot; zoom; close-up; panorama; middle-distance; slow motion; sharp focus; tracking; fade; dissolve; fixed camera.
- If you want help in actually writing your review, you could consult: **WRITING THEMES ABOUT LITERATURE** by E.V. Roberts - PE 1408 R593 1983 - Chapter 15 and 17. (One copy of this book is kept at the Reference Desk, and there others in the regular book stacks.)





C. ANALYZING SETTING


- Note the setting of the film, its **TIME** and **PLACE**. **Be specific**. What details revealed the setting - costumes? sets? props? makeup? Does the film specifically state a time and place?

-  Is the film in color or black and white or both? Any reason why? Is it important?
-  How important is the setting to the movie as a whole? How does it relate to plot and character and theme?





D. ANALYZING PLOT

-  Your review should not just be a summary of what happens in the film. You should, however, discuss important turning-points in the film; important scenes which reveal character; the opening and closing scenes; the importance of subplots (if they exist).
-  The time-frame of the film could also be discussed here. How much time elapses during the film? (an hour? 30 years?) Are there flashbacks? dream sequences? flash forwards? This might be the place to discuss the choice of the film's title.


E. ANALYZING CHARACTER

-  Who are the important characters? What are their major traits? How are they revealed to you? (Note camera shots and angles, the camera's point of view, the use of voice-overs.) Is what the characters important, or what they do? Do you come to know them by what others say about them? How important is their appearance? their language? Are the characters realistic? Do they change? Are there clear-cut heroes and villains?

F. ANALYZING STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

-  Note recurring visual images, symbols.
-  How is music used?
-  Discuss important camera and editing techniques.
-  Discuss special effects, sound effects, lighting.

G. DETERMINE THE THEME OF THE FILM

-  All the elements of the film should work together to lead you to the film's theme. It may be explicitly stated, but it is usually derived from the work as a whole. You may be able to deduce it from the film's mood, or by considering the conflicts presented. It may help to think about what the film presents as "good" and what it presents as "evil." Are these issues clear-cut and simple or complex? Perhaps the struggle of the main character(s) will lead you to the themes.