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**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!** 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. **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 - 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?

**The Film Review Assignment**

**Learning Goals:** The student will understand:

- that films are a form of literature and can be analyzed accordingly
- terms used in film analysis
- the impact of types and length of shots, camera angles and movements, edits, etc. in the development of meaning in the film
- the significance of the mise-en-scene, the placement of actors and arrangement of the scene
- the significance of casting, acting and script in developing the dramatic aspects of the film

**The assignment:** Because we have only scratched the surface of cinematography, I would like you to compose a **review** of *Rebel without a Cause*. A review usually consists of only a superficial analysis of the cinematic aspects because it is directed to the "layman" audience, so **you should focus mainly on the dramatic and literary aspects** in the analytical portion of your review. However you should discuss any outstanding cinematic aspects which contribute to the meaning of the film, but do not focus on them.

**The method:** The audience for your review consists of people who have not seen the film. Your job is to critically review the film in order to help your readers make a decision about seeing it. Therefore, your review must not reveal so much about the film that you spoil it. In other words, do not reveal the ending. You will want to utilize the information you gathered based on the "Gathering Information for Your Film Review" handout. You may reflect enthusiasm or disdain for the film in your review, but save your strongest language for the conclusion.

**Writing Your Film Review**

Look over the notes you made based on the handout "Gathering Information for Your Film Review."

- I. Plan your **introduction**. Use a "hook" (an opening paragraph that catches your reader's attention). For example:
  - Describe a scene, incident, or bit of dialogue from the film,
  - remind your reader of this director's last movie (or other movies of the lead actors), or
  - connect the movie to something happening in society today.
- II. After the introduction, follow this organizational plan:
  1. Description/summary
  2. Analysis (**the major portion of the review**)
  3. Evaluation
  4. Conclusion

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Plot Development:</b> List three things that "STUCK" in your head that happened at the beginning, the middle, and at the end of the movie.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p><b>Setting</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Theme(s)</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Key Characters &amp; Their Roles within the Film</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Things I Liked</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Things I Disliked</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

**MOVIE REVIEW TEMPLATE**

Note: DON'T FORGET that movie titles are written within "quotation marks!"

**HEADLINE:** Include the title of the movie (try to use a pun!)

**PARAGRAPH #1:** Introduce the movie by stating that you've just seen this movie and would like to give an opinion about it. Mention a couple of details that might help the reader understand what type of movie you are talking about. Give credit to the company that published it.

**PARAGRAPH #2:** Summarize the plot (story). Where and when did it take place? Who are the main characters? What is the story about? Remember, do NOT include spoilers and do not tell how the story ends!

**PARAGRAPH #3:** Talk about the actors/actresses and discuss who did a good job and who didn't. (Is "A Christmas Carol" it would be voice overs and cartooning.)

**PARAGRAPH #4:** Talk about what you liked about the movie and what you didn't like. Be sure to include specific details and scenes.

**PARAGRAPH #5:** What lessons did you learn from this story (homework)? What do you think others will learn from it?

**PARAGRAPH #6:** What group of people would like this movie? Who would you recommend it to? Who would you not recommend it to? What's the MPAA rating of the movie (G, PG, PG-13, R, etc...)? What is your final word on the film. Is it good or bad?

**RATING SYSTEM:** Give the movie a score. You can do grades (A,B,C,D,F or -), stars (\*\*\*) out of \*\*\*\*\*, numbers (3 out of 5) or something totally original... just don't use "thumbs up" or "thumbs down."

**SHORT BIOGRAPHY:** Explain who you are, what grade you're in, sports you play and interesting things you like to do. Talk about yourself in the "3rd person." That is, pretend someone else is writing the bio about you.



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