
How to write a movie review

Writing a movie review is a great way of expressing your opinion of a **movie**. The purpose of most movie reviews is to help the reader in determining whether **they** want to watch, **rent or buy** the movie. The review should give enough details about the movie that the reader can make an informed decision, without giving anyway any essentials such as the plot or any surprises. Below are our guidelines and tips for writing a good movie review.

1. Watch the movie

The first step in writing the review is to **watch the movie**. You do not want to be distracted when watching the movie. Watching the movie a second time will help you absorb a lot more detail about the movie. Most movie reviewers **take notes** as they watch the movie review. This is where you use the jot notes handout.

2. Give your opinion

Most movie reviewers will **give their opinion** of the movie. This is important as the reviewer can express the elements of the movie they enjoyed or disliked. However, as in all good journalism, the reviewer should also **give impartial details**, and allow the reader to make their own mind over an issue the reader liked or disliked. Opinions should be explained to allow the reader to determine whether they would **agree with your opinion**. Many regular movie reviewers will develop a following. If one can find a reviewer who shares a similar taste in films, one can confidently follow the reviewers recommendations.

3. Who is your audience?

You need to consider **who your likely readers are**. Writing a movie review for **children** requires a different approach than if writing for a **movie club**. Ensure you report on the factors that matter to your likely audience.

4. Give an outline

Give the outline of the movie, but **don't give away essential details** such as the end or any surprises. If there is a big surprise you want to entice readers by telling them something special happens, just don't say what.

5. Actors

If the movie contains **actors**, as most do, detail who is starring in the movie and how well you think they acted.

6. Structure

Did the movie follow a regular predictable **story line**, or did it get you thinking like a **Quentin Tarantino** movie?

7. Cinematography and lighting

Give details about **how well** the movie was shot and directed. Was the lighting **good** in the moody scenes?

8. Music

Did the movie have its own score or did it feature songs from popular artists?

9. Read, read and read (Edit Checklist)

Read and check your review **thoroughly**. It can be embarrassing to find errors in your work after it has been published. This is especially important for reviews that will be published on the Internet, as search engines are always looking for the **correct spellings** of key words.

Movie Review Assignment

You are responsible for creating a movie review on *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. In the review you are responsible to include the following information;

- name of movie
- type of movie
- director
- actors
- movie summary
- critique of movie (tell what you think of the movie)
- movie rating (out of 5 stars)

One request, make it creative. Included is a sample of a movie review. Notice that the author is sharing a summary and then their thoughts on the movie. If you haven't seen Shrek 2 yet, it is very funny.

SHREK 2 / *** (PG) Sample Movie Review

May 18, 2004

With the voices of:

Shrek: **Mike Myers**
Donkey: **Eddie Murphy**
Fiona: **Cameron Diaz**
Puss-in-Boots: **Antonio Banderas**
King Harold: **John Cleese**

Queen Lillian: **Julie Andrews**
Prince Charming: **Rupert Everett**

DreamWorks Pictures presents an animated film directed by Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury and Conrad Vernon. Written by J. David Stem, Joe Stillman and David N. Weiss, based on the characters by William Steig. Running time: 105 minutes. Rated PG (for some crude humor, brief substance reference and some suggestive content). Opening Wednesday (with midnight screenings at certain theaters).

BY ROGER EBERT FILM CRITIC

'Shrek 2' is bright, lively and entertaining, but it's no "Shrek." Maybe it's too much to expect lightning to strike twice. "Shrek" was so original in its animation and such an outpouring of creative imagination that it blindsided us; "Shrek 2" is wonderful in its own way, but more earthbound. It's more fun to see Shrek slay a dragon than to watch him meeting his new in-laws.

Shrek (voice again by Mike Myers) actually seems teetering on the brink of middle-class respectability in the sequel. There's nothing like a good woman to tame an ogre. His outsider status as the loner in the swamp has changed dramatically through his romance with Princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz), although his table manners could stand improvement when he has dinner with her parents, King Harold (John Cleese) and Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews).

In the first film, as you may remember, Fiona's curse was that she had been taken captive by a dragon, but could be freed if the dragon was slain and she was kissed by the hero who did the deed. Ideally, that would have been Prince Charming (Rupert Everett), but in "Shrek 2," when he finally arrives in the neighborhood, he discovers to his intense disappointment that the ogre has already slain the dragon and wed the princess -- and that Shrek's kiss dramatically transformed Fiona. No longer petite, she is tall and broad and green, and an ogre.

A summons comes from the Kingdom of Far Far Away: Fiona's parents want to meet her new husband. This involves a very long journey by Shrek, Fiona and Donkey (Eddie Murphy), who insists on coming along. Donkey is the comic high point of the movie, with Murphy's non-stop riffs and inability to guess when he is not welcome. "The trick isn't that he talks," Shrek observed in the first movie. "The trick is to get him to shut up." The kingdom is indeed far, far away, which gives Donkey endless opportunities to ask, "Are we there yet?"

Their arrival at the castle of Fiona's parents provides big laughs; Harold and Lillian are shocked to find that their daughter has not only married an ogre, but become one. A basket of doves is released to celebrate their arrival, and one of them is so astonished, it flies bang into the castle wall and drops dead at Harold's feet.

Eventually the plot leads us into the environs of the Fairy Godmother (Jennifer Saunders), a sinister figure who operates a vast factory manufacturing potions and hexes. Is it possible that her Happily Ever After potion could transform ogres into humans? Not if she can help it; she wants to get rid of Shrek and marry Fiona to Prince Charming, according to her original plan.

The screenplay, by J. David Stem, Joe Stillman and David N. Weiss, has the same fun that "Shrek" did in playing against our expectations. Who would anticipate a fight between the ogre and his bride, with Shrek marching out of the house? What about the arrivals ceremony at the matrimonial ball, with all of the kingdom's celebrities walking down a red carpet while an unmistakable clone of Joan Rivers does the commentary? And there's real sweetness when Shrek and Fiona start smooching.

The movie has several songs, none of which I found very memorable, although of course I am the same person who said the Simon and Garfunkel songs in "The Graduate" were "instantly forgettable." The first song, "Accidentally in Love," explains how Shrek and Fiona fell for each other. It's cut like a music video, which is OK, but I think it comes too early in the film, before we really feel at home with the narrative.

A few minor characters from the first film, like the Gingerbread Man and the Three Blind Mice, return for the sequel, and there's a new major character: Puss-in-Boots, a cat who seems to have been raised on Charles Boyer movies, and is voiced by Antonio Banderas. Donkey and Puss build an enormous mutual resentment, because each one thinks he's the star.

Sequels have their work cut out for them. Some people think "Godfather, Part II" is better than "The Godfather," but the first film loomed so tall in my mind that I gave "Part II" only three stars. In the same way, perhaps I would have liked "Shrek 2" more if the first film had never existed. But I'll never know.

Still, "Shrek 2" is a jolly story, and Shrek himself seems durable enough to inspire "Shrek 3" with no trouble at all. Maybe it will be "Shrek Meets Cheaper by the Dozen."

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"It was funny, but not 'Laugh So Hard Your Soda Comes Out Your Nose' funny."



"PERSONALLY, I THOUGHT IT STUNK!"

Objective	Exemplary Performance 10 – 8 points	At or Above Average 7 to 5 points	At or Below Average 4 to 3 points	Low Performance 2 to 0 points
Effective and Appropriate lead	Lead is original and gets the readers' attention; appropriate to the film being reviewed; evaluation of the writer is clear from first paragraph	Lead is appropriate to film and fairly effective at getting attention; shows some signs of originality; evaluation may not be as clearly evident	Lead is adequate but not extremely catchy or original; evaluation of the writer is unclear	Lead is neither original nor catchy; is boring overused trite, or inappropriate to film; evaluation is unclear
Summary of movie and details support reviewer's opinion	Writer gives a brief summary of film without disclosing ending; includes enough info to satisfy; details from the movie and evidence from summary strongly support reviewer's opinion	Writer gives a brief summary of film without disclosing ending; includes enough info to satisfy; details from the movie and evidence from summary strongly support reviewer's opinion	Summary is either much too short or much too long; may be vague or tell too much; few details from the movie and little evidence from summary to support reviewer's opinion	Little or no significant summary; no details from the movie and little evidence from summary to support reviewer's opinion
Evaluation of various aspects of film support opinion	Contains sufficient and knowledgeable evaluation of many aspects of film to support reviewer's opinion, including directing, acting cinematography, editing, scenery, special effects and soundtrack; references are made to other works of key players (actors, director) or other films in genre as appropriate	Contains some evaluation of many aspects of film to support reviewer's opinion, including directing, acting cinematography, editing, scenery, special effects and soundtrack; references may be made to other works of key players (actors, director) or other films in genre as appropriate	Contains insufficient evaluation of many aspects of film to support reviewer's opinion, including directing, acting cinematography, editing, scenery, special effects and soundtrack; no references made to other works of key players (actors, director) or other films in genre	Contains no significant evaluation of many aspects of film to support reviewer's opinion
Effective Organization and Flow (deals with structure)	Review is strongly organized with clear transitions and logical connections that create a sense of being tightly woven together; review offers a clear evaluation of the movie	Review is organized and most transitions and connections are clear, but either organization is somewhat lacking or the sense of flow is somewhat abrupt; review gives clear evaluation	Review lacks strong organization; jumps around too much or lacks effective transitions; not in logical order; may not offer a clear evaluation	Review is choppy or incohesive; organization is unclear; few effective transitions; may be unclear on evaluation
Clear Focus and Unity (deals with content)	Focus of review is clear; nothing detracts from primary focus; everything contributes to overall theme	Focus is fairly clear but one or two things on the story detract from the primary focus	Story lacks strong sense of unity and focus; several things seem to detract from focus	No clear focus; review is rambling and awkward
Interesting and Effective Writing Style	Writing is strong and effective with a clear voice and a variety of sentence structures; piece is tightly written; strong and effective word choice	Writing is adequate but not extremely compelling or original; may be wordy or voice may be unclear; diction may not be as vivid; s/s may not be as varied	Writing is rather bland; has no clear voice and or sense of originality; is wordy or redundant; or diction &/or sentence structure may be repetitive	Writing lacks a clear voice and original style
Grammar and Spelling	Review is well edited. Edit checklist signed by 3 editors	Review is spell checked; some grammar errors; editor checklist signed	Review is spell checked; numerous grammar errors;	Was this even edited or read?

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