

CRITICAL REVIEWING: WRITTEN CRITIQUE

RELEVANT FIELDS

Film Critic: Critics give audiences important information about literature and works of art. Film critics need to understand the art form and how it relates to the real world. Referring to Pauline Kael, in *The New Yorker* magazine (Sept., 2001) David Denby wrote: "To write criticism she felt, you had to hold back nothing of yourself and keep nothing in the movie or the world at arms length."

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Armed with new perspective on the tools and process of visual communication and adaptation from the written form, students should begin to clarify their ideas. This series of activities is intended to draw students into the analysis of film and literature at a personal level. These activities also match national, state and local standards in language arts, visual arts and drama.

California Language Arts Standards:

"Students research relationships between theatre, history, and culture. Students describe, analyze, interpret, and derive meaning from works in theatre. They develop criteria and then make critical judgments...."

California Language Arts Frameworks reading 3.0. Literacy Response and Analysis and Writing, Persuasive Compositions. Pp. 194-196

Maryland English Language Arts Content Standards:

1.0 Reading - Students examine, construct and extend the meaning of a variety of self-selected and assigned text (traditional and electronic) by applying a range of reading strategies and analytic techniques.

1.8.5, 1.12.5 Comprehension and Interpretation of Informational Text - draw inferences, conclusions or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and experience. Identify and trace the development of an author's argument, viewpoint, or perspective in text.

1.12.6 Evaluation of informational text - #2 Critique

District of Columbia Public Schools Standards:

Secondary English/Language Arts

Standard 1 - Students comprehend and compose a wide range of written and visual texts in the process of making meaning.

"...reads...identifies...recognizes....compares....evaluates..."

Standard 2 - Students respond in many ways to a rich variety of literary texts and relate them to life.

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Challenge:



As a class, select a television show that everyone in the class will watch. Or, select five shows, two teacher-selected and three student-selected. Think of what you liked or didn't like about the show. Write a 100 to 200-word review of the show. Your goal is to convince the reader to 1) watch the show, or 2) not watch the show.

Parameters/Limitations:

Your review cannot give details about the end of the show or how the story is resolved.
Your review may include opinion(s) about the story, but it must include at least one thing other than "what happens" in the story.

Things to Think About:

What is the reviewer's role?
What do they look for?
What would persuade you to watch a show? To not watch?

Exhibit, Reflect, Revise:



Exchange your review with another person who has taken the opposite point of view. Write a "letter to the editor" in response to that person's opinion, trying to convince him/her to change his/her mind. Read the response(s) to your review. Make any changes to your original review that you think will be more convincing.

Summarize:

Divide into groups according to Opinion 1 or Opinion 2. As a group, decide what are the top three reasons for your position. For each reason, which written opinion is most effective for its clarity and persuasiveness? As an entire class, what are the elements you are evaluating in film and TV? What do you agree are the most effective writing elements to convince a reader of your position?

Research, Summarize:



Read film and television reviews from newspapers, The New Yorker, etc. What elements do they use? As a class, summarize the criteria you agree on now.

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Challenge:



From your reading list, select a novel that has been made into a film. Read the book and view the film. Write a review of the film. Your review should communicate your opinions about the ways the film showed the relationships in the story, the setting and any other elements you choose that back up your position.

Things to Think About:

Look for the ways the filmmaker developed any or all of these relationships:

- Relationships among main characters
- Development of supporting characters

How were the characters' feelings toward each other expressed in dialogue, in acting and in visual terms? Were they true to the novel? How was the film different from the way you visualized it?

Did the filmmaker create a setting that feels like the book?

At what points in the film did you feel happy, hopeful, sad, excited, tense, bored or uncomfortable? What did the filmmaker do that made you feel these ways? Did you feel these things more strongly while reading the book or watching the film? What could the filmmaker have done differently?

Exhibit, Reflect, Research:

In small groups, present your reviews to each other. Read actual reviews of the film. Compare your reviews to the published, professional reviews.



Things to Think About:

- Does your review clearly communicate your opinions?
- Is your review interesting to read?
- Is your review convincing? Would a reader want to watch or avoid this movie?
- What does your group think makes an effective review?
- What makes an effective filmed adaptation of a novel?
- What review criteria does the whole class agree upon? Make a summary of these criteria.

Revise: Choose one of these options;



1. Rewrite your review of the film for publication, using the professional criteria you've agreed on.
 2. Write a script and perform a professional-style TV review on video.
- Whichever option you choose, do it with enough quality to show to the AFI professionals.

Summarize: What review criteria does the whole class agree upon? Make a summary of these criteria.