



WRITING REVIEWS



Writing Reviews


A review is an evaluation
of any form of
publication, service or
organization.



What can be reviewed

- Book
- Magazine
- Film
- Play
- Concert
- Exhibition
- Holiday
- Product
- Website...





THE MAIN PURPOSE IS TO DESCRIBE AND EXPRESS A PERSONAL OPINION ABOUT SOMETHING WHICH THE WRITER HAS EXPERIENCED AND TO GIVE THE READER A CLEAR IMPRESSION OF WHAT THE ITEM DISCUSSED IS LIKE. DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION ARE KEY FUNCTIONS FOR THIS TASK, AND A REVIEW WILL NORMALLY INCLUDE A **RECOMMENDATION** TO THE READER.

Target Reader defines the style

REGISTER

- ❖ FORMAL
- ❖ NEUTRAL
- ❖ INFORMAL



Review structure

An attractive title

Drawing the attention of readers

A catchy introduction

Clarifying the topic and attracting the reader's attention.

The body paragraph (1)

A short summary of the reviewed material

The body paragraph (2)

Description of positive aspects and/or weaker points

The body paragraph (3) optional

Name things that could be changed to improve the quality of the product.

Recommendation

Final opinion, recommendation or comment.

Title

for
films/books/restaurants
use the name/title or if
think up an imaginative
title using an
idiom/expression





G.R.R. MARTIN.
PROPER GROWN
UP FANTASY



TITLE



MAD MEN – AN
IRONIC LOOK AT THE
SIXTIES



TITLE

Introduction

The introduction focuses on all the relative background information: the identification of the author, the title, the main topic or issue presented in the question as well as the author's purpose.

Ultimately, to make your introduction more engaging you can determine your position as a reviewer and briefly state your general impression on it.

George R.R. Martin is the undisputed king of fantasy writers, and with the adaptation of his epic *A Song of Ice and Fire* for TV by HBO his audience is set to grow still further. So just what is his secret?

One of my favourite childhood books is the 'Six Bullerby Children' written by Astrid Lindergren, a famous Swedish author. The story is set in a three-farm remote village of Bullerby in Sweden.

The popularity of "Mad Men" is not hard to fathom. Nor is the almost hysterical reaction of critics, who have almost to a man hailed this story of 1960s Madison Avenue advertising executives as the best American series since "The Sopranos".

Introduction

A personal anecdote helps to grab attention. Introduce name of book/film, restaurant + location, course, TV show etc.

Seldom do I find the time to..., however when I do take time out of my hectic schedule, I like nothing more than...

Being a bit of a film buff/book worm/foody, the news that ... had opened a new restaurant/released a new film/book had me itching to try/see/read it. So last week I popped down with a friend to check it out.

Having never seen/read/tried... before I approached ... with a sense of trepidation, not knowing what to expect. Soon however, all my fears were allayed.

The Body: Para 1

Your **first** body paragraph can give a short summary of the reviewed material. Give a brief overview — plot, setting, actors, general idea.

The narrator is a seven-year-old girl, Lisa who, with her parents and two older brothers - Lasse and Bosse, lives in one of the houses. Lisa describes the daily life of the children in Bullerby which - contrary to what one might think when imagining life in a small, remote village - is far from boring. The children have plenty of funny ideas, which often lead to amusing adventures.

His multi-volume epic is set in an invented, and wonderfully realised world called Westeros full of the most appallingly amoral characters ever seen outside an episode of The Borgias. The sheer scope of his invention is staggering, and keeping track of all of the characters can pose problems for the inattentive reader.

The Body: Para 2 & 3

Second and/or third body paragraphs can be used to describe good and bad points respectively. Unlike essay paragraphs don't have to be of the same length — if you liked the described thing then your paragraph with good points will be naturally bigger than the other one.

In the negative points paragraph, you can name things that could be changed to improve the quality of the product.

For each paragraph, it's efficient to use the **topic sentence** to identify the point from the book or the article you intend to summarise or evaluate using one or the other pattern

'Friends' is a great refreshment after a long, exhausting day at work. It is no wonder that it is so popular. People just love it – from children to adults and older people as well. We need to laugh and relax. The actors, producers and creators deserve appreciation and admiration for making such a great show. People are waiting eagerly for new episodes all the time. And that's a sign of success. Otherwise, they would cease producing it, wouldn't they? Not to mention that 'Friends' is popular in every continent of the world. And that proves something.

Recommendation

You should now evaluate the work as a whole, determining whether the author achieves the intended or implied goal and whether the work makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge.

Use this paragraph to sum up the good and bad points to make an objective assessment of the reviewed material. You may then recommend or dissuade your readers from seeing/attending it.

Let me conclude with a word of warning. These are enormous books, six volumes have been published to date with two more to come and they represent a huge investment in time and energy. But if you're looking for a new writer to engage you over the next few years, take the plunge into the world of George R.R. Martin and I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Although some of the more carping critics have slated the show's stately pace and incredible plot devices, it remains true that few TV shows offer the variety of pleasures of "Mad Men" and I am sure it will long be remembered as a classic piece of TV.

Tips

NEVER

- use plain common adjectives like "nice" or "interesting" when writing a book/film review
- use any word more than twice
- **tell us the end of the film/book!**

ALWAYS

- give your opinion
- show off and demonstrate the wide variety of words that you know: phrasal verbs/idioms/impressive collocations
- use inversions when writing stories to make them more sophisticated and dramatic

Good Turn of Phrase

- An inversion (not only/no sooner/seldom)
- An inverted conditional (Were we to...)
- A participle clause (Being.../Having gone...)
- A double comparative (The more we... the more)
- A cleft sentence (What is most crucial is...)
- Idioms
- Phrasal verbs

Planning

	6 simple steps
1	Read task, underline content points.
2	Divide content points into paragraphs: Intro, décor, ambiance, service, food, recommendation. (<i>restaurant example</i>)
3	WHAT do you want to say? Add your notes to each paragraph in simple form.
4	HOW are you going to say that? Brainstorm advanced grammar and vocabulary for each note.
5	Forms and conventions: Title paragraph titles, fixed introduction.
6	Write! Remember word limit

Book Reviews

Vocab to describe

the book in general:

a page-turner / a white-knuckle ride / a tearjerker / a laugh a minute / I couldn't put it down.

specific parts:

a slow start / a gentle introduction / gripping climax / nail-biting conclusion / cliff-hanger ending / a shocking twist in the tail

Setting:

The book is set in _____(place/time)

The action takes place in _____(place/time)

the present day (now)

an alternate reality where vampires / wizards walk the earth

a sleepy village in the USA

the bustling city of New York

Plot:

The plot centres around / focuses on (the adventures / lives of _____)

The plot follows the adventures of _____(character name)

Characters:

Villain / hero / heroine / anti-hero / main character / protagonist

The characters are believable / well-crafted / a bit 2 dimensional.

Film/TV reviews:

An all-star cast

heavily influenced by the films of..

glowing reviews

startling originality

suspense builds up

a polished performance

a bold experiment

an accomplished actor

an unmitigated disaster (bad film)

a dazzling display of his/her talents

made a lasting impression on me.

Brought a tear to my eye

Like watching paint dry (boring)

I was on the edge of my seat (exciting)

A blockbuster (big commercial film eg Superman)

... sets off an amazing chain of events

Gripping film (exciting)

The director/author evoked a magical atmosphere

... awakened my interest in...

Hold my attention

Capture the audience's imagination.

Spectacular set-pieces (main action scenes)

... is cast in the role of...

... is miscast in the role of...

...gives a(n) (un)convincing performance as...

The film is let down by a clichéd script.

Restaurant review:

- Hearty meal
- Wholesome food
- Piping-hot
- Succulent/juicy (meat)
- Creamy
- With a kick (spicy)
- Crunchy/crispy
- Well-seasoned
- Packed with flavour
- A steaming plate of..
- Hungry/starving/ravenous/famished
- Bustling eatery(restaurant)
- Lively atmosphere
- Service with a smile
- A plate piled high with..
- Mouth-watering
- To die for
- Heavenly
- To lick your lips in anticipation
- Roast
- Pan-fried
- Grilled
- Steamed
- Freshly-baked
- Make a pig of one's self
- To feast/gorge on (eat a lot of)
- To eat/drink to your heart's content
- Devour/gobble up
- Savour
- Nibble
- Bite
- Lick
- Aromas wafting from the kitchen
- Cheap – economical/reasonably-priced
- Expensive – pricey/costs an arm and a leg
- €20 a head (per person)

Film Review: Practical Magic

Practical Magic is a Warner Bros film which was released in 1998 and was based on a book by Alice Hoffman. This supernatural comedy-drama is the story of a long distinguished line of female witches who are the victims of a curse as “any man who dares love an Owen woman is doomed to die”.

Sandra Bullock (Sally Owen) plays a young botanist who tries desperately to live a magic-free life only to find herself victim of the curse when her beloved husband dies. Nicole Kidman, her sister (Gilly Owen), has her own share of suffering when her love spell backfires and her delinquent boyfriend tries to kill her. This is actually the climax of the story when Sandra Bullock is forced to embrace her long-denied wiccan legacy to tap into the magic she urgently needs to save her sibling.

Even though Practical Magic has been severely criticised by Hollywood reviews, allegedly because of its light-hearted plot, there are a couple of strong points which I like about the film and I believe are worth mentioning: The setting, for a start. The story develops in a lovely village which is a kind of New England and you can actually see what a wonderful job they did with the scenography. Then, there is the soundtrack, which includes one of my favourite songs of all times “This Kiss” by Faith Hill.

I would no doubt recommend Practical Magic to anyone who is fond of fantasy films like me, or who is interested in witch stories or magic.