

You Should Try Writing Movie Reviews like a Critic

Exemplar: You Should Try Writing Movie Reviews like a Critic

Introduction

Writing movie reviews like a critic requires a blend of analytical skills, creative writing, and a deep understanding of cinema. This lesson will focus on using hyperbole, metaphors, and other literary techniques to craft reviews that are both informative and artistically engaging.

Narrative Outline

1. The Art of Hyperbole in Movie Reviews
2. Mastering Metaphors and Similes
3. Crafting Vivid Imagery Through Description
4. Balancing Criticism and Praise
5. Developing Your Unique Voice as a Critic

Breakdown

1. The Art of Hyperbole in Movie Reviews

Techniques:

- Using exaggeration to emphasise points
- Crafting memorable opening lines
- Balancing hyperbole with credibility

Exemplars:

1. "Don't just say a movie is bad. Channel your inner Rex Reed: 'Watching "Gigli" is like having a root canal while listening to nails on a chalkboard – in fact, that might be preferable.'"
2. "Create impactful openings: 'If "Inception" doesn't leave your mind doing somersaults, you might want to check your pulse.'"
3. "Use hyperbole to praise: "'The Godfather" isn't just a movie; it's a master class in filmmaking that makes film school look like kindergarten.'"

2. Mastering Metaphors and Similes

Strategies:

- Comparing film elements to relatable concepts
- Using extended metaphors throughout a review
- Crafting unique comparisons that stick in readers' minds

****Exemplars:****

1. "Compare plot complexity: 'The intricate plot of "Primer" is like a Rubik's Cube designed by Stephen Hawking – just when you think you've solved it, you realise you're not even close.'"
2. "Describe acting performances: 'Meryl Streep in "Sophie's Choice" doesn't just act; she inhabits her character like a second skin, making every other performance in the film feel like a high school play in comparison.'"
3. "Characterise directorial style: 'Watching a Wes Anderson film is like stepping into a meticulously crafted dollhouse where every character is a wind-up toy with a hidden depth that surprises you.'"

****3. Crafting Vivid Imagery Through Description****

****Approaches:****

- Using sensory details to bring scenes to life
- Employing colourful language to describe visuals
- Capturing the mood and atmosphere of the film

****Exemplars:****

1. "Describe visuals vividly: 'The neon-drenched streets of "Blade Runner" feel like a fever dream of a future where hope is as scarce as the natural light that struggles to penetrate the perpetual smog.'"
2. "Capture sound design: 'The audio landscape of "A Quiet Place" is so precisely crafted that the crunch of a single leaf underfoot lands with the impact of a cannon blast.'"
3. "Convey atmosphere: 'The suffocating tension in "12 Angry Men" builds like a pressure cooker, turning the claustrophobic jury room into a battleground of morals and prejudices.'"

****4. Balancing Criticism and Praise****

****Techniques:****

- Using the "sandwich" method of critique
- Employing contrast for emphasis
- Maintaining objectivity while expressing personal opinion

****Exemplars:****

1. "Balance critique: 'While "Avatar" is a visual feast that pushes the boundaries of CGI, its derivative plot feels like "Dances with Wolves" in space, relying more on spectacle than substance.'"

2. "Use contrast: "'The Room" is a film so beautifully terrible, so earnestly misguided, that it transcends bad filmmaking to become an accidental masterpiece of unintentional comedy."

3. "Maintain objectivity: 'Despite its polarising nature, "The Tree of Life" is undeniably ambitious. Whether Malick's existential exploration resonates with you or leaves you cold, its visual poetry and philosophical reach are impossible to ignore.'"

****5. Developing Your Unique Voice as a Critic****

****Strategies:****

- Incorporating personal anecdotes and experiences
- Developing signature phrases or recurring themes
- Injecting humour and personality into reviews

****Exemplars:****

1. "Use personal anecdotes: 'As someone who grew up in a small town, "Lady Bird" felt like watching my own teenage years played back to me, albeit with better dialogue and less acne.'"

2. "Develop signature phrases: 'This film isn't just bad, it's "Cats" bad – a level of misfire so spectacular it's almost admirable in its audacity.'"

3. "Inject humour: 'If "Fast and Furious" movies were any more over-the-top, they'd need oxygen masks. But like a roller coaster that defies physics, that's precisely why we keep coming back for more.'"

Exercise/Activity

Write a 300-word review of a recent film you've watched, incorporating at least one example each of hyperbole, metaphor/simile, vivid imagery, balanced criticism, and a touch of your personal voice. Remember to reference other films for comparison where appropriate.

Vocabulary List

1. Cinematography: The art of photography and camerawork in film-making
2. Mise-en-scène: The arrangement of scenery and stage properties in a play or film
3. Diegetic: Elements within a film that are part of the narrative space of the story
4. Non-diegetic: Elements in a film that are outside the narrative space (e.g., background music)
5. Auteur: A filmmaker whose personal influence and artistic control are so great that they are regarded as the author of the film
6. Denouement: The final part of a play, movie, or narrative where the strands of the plot are drawn together
7. MacGuffin: An object, device, or event that is necessary to the plot and the motivation of the characters, but insignificant, unimportant, or irrelevant in itself

8. Deus ex machina: An unexpected power or event saving a seemingly hopeless situation, especially as a contrived plot device
9. Chiaroscuro: The use of strong contrasts between light and dark in cinema
10. Pastiche: An artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period
11. Exposition: The part of a film that provides important background information to the audience
12. Leitmotif: A recurrent theme throughout a film, often associated with a particular person, idea, or situation
13. Foley: The reproduction of everyday sound effects added to films in post-production
14. Doppelgänger: A character in a film that is a look-alike or twin of another character
15. Montage: A sequence of film shots, often with music, showing a series of related events or images
16. Cameo: A brief appearance or voice part of a known person in a work of the performing arts
17. Easter egg: A hidden message, image, or feature in a film
18. Breaking the fourth wall: When a character in a film acknowledges the audience or camera
19. McGuffin: An object or device in a film that serves merely as a trigger for the plot
20. Homage: A special honour or respect shown or performed publicly in cinema

Exemplar Response to Exercise

"Dune" (2021) is a cinematic sandstorm that will scour your senses and leave you gasping for more. Denis Villeneuve has not just adapted Frank Herbert's seminal sci-fi novel; he's alchemised it into pure visual gold. The sweeping vistas of Arrakis are so immersive you'll be checking your teeth for grit as you leave the theatre.

Timothée Chalamet's Paul Atreides broods with the intensity of a thousand suns, making Hamlet look like a carefree optimist. His journey from privileged heir to desert messiah is as gripping as watching a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis – if that butterfly were destined to lead a jihad across the galaxy.

The film's pacing is as measured as a Bene Gesserit's heartbeat, which might test the patience of viewers expecting the breakneck action of "Star Wars." But like the spice melange that permeates Arrakis, "Dune" is a slow-burning intoxicant that seeps into your consciousness.

Villeneuve orchestrates the elements of cinema like a maestro conducting a planetary symphony. Hans Zimmer's score doesn't just accompany the visuals; it seeps from the screen like the heat haze over desert sands. The sound design is so crisp you can practically feel the crunch of sand between your toes.

While "Dune" is a feast for the senses, it's only half a meal narratively. The film's abrupt ending feels like reaching the end of "The Fellowship of the Ring" only to find the last chapter torn out. It leaves you satisfied yet ravenous, like a Fremen eyeing the last drop in a stillsuit.

Despite this, "Dune" is a landmark in sci-fi cinema, making "Avatar" look like a quaint postcard from the Uncanny Valley. It's a film that demands to be seen on the biggest screen possible – anything less would be like trying to contain a sandworm in a fishbowl.

(Word count: 300)