

INTO FILM

Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary

Our resources are designed to be used with selected film titles,
which are available free for clubs at www.intofilm.org/clubs

See, think, make.
Imagine

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Introduction

As part of the Into Film Clubs experience, members are encouraged to voice their opinions in discussion, create reviews and publish their responses on the Clubs website. This resource is designed to introduce club members to the art of reviewing and develop their critical thinking and literacy skills.

By sharing their reviews online, children can develop their own critical voices and communicate with a real audience of other young people. Every single review submitted online at www.intofilm.org/clubs is read by an Into Film member of staff. Each week, ten reviews are chosen as 'reviews of the week' and one review will be featured at the top of the list as the 'featured review', with the reviewer winning a special Into Film goody bag. Members can view past winning reviews here: www.intofilm.org/clubs.



It is an opportunity for our children, no matter what their background, to share an experience of film. They can express their opinions about the films they have seen and listen to different points of view. They enjoy the chance to write reviews online. 

Electra Colios, Teacher, Alfred Sutton Primary School

How to use this resource

This guide offers flexible approaches to reviewing films and is designed for film club sessions or classroom use. It will work with any film and can be easily adapted to suit your group and available time.

This resource features:

- **Step-by-step guide**, featuring fun and simple activities (pages iv-vii)
- **Member workbook** for club or classroom sessions (pages 1-16)
- **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary PowerPoint presentation**, available to download at www.intofilm.org/resources.

The **Member workbook** guides members through the review writing process and includes the following activities:

Member workbook activities	Page number
Getting ready	2-3
Watching the film	4
Discussing the film	5-6
Picture reviews	7
Wow words	8
Creative comparisons	9
What is a good review?	10
Snappy summaries	11
Writing your film review	12-13
Performing your film review	14
Filming your review	15-16

Inclusive activities

Into Film is keen to help all young people express their opinions about the films they have watched. Children with SEN or EAL needs could benefit from mixed ability pairings and composing and recording oral reviews. The SEN symbols on the Into Film website also offer an excellent learning support tool. These picture exchange communication symbols (created by Widgit) can be printed and laminated: www.intofilm.org/sen-symbol-reviewing

Into Film has also brought together best practice for SEN inclusion into one resource, featuring the six most popular and effective films that young people worked with during the Into Film Inclusion project (funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation): www.intofilm.org/resources.

What are the benefits of Into Film Clubs?

There are over 10,000 Into Film Clubs around the country, all of which enjoy the following benefits.

- Joining Into Film is completely free, and starting a film club gives your school access to thousands of fantastic films to watch, as well as opportunities for members to develop skills in reporting, programming and reviewing.
- Clubs can access free educational resources and get support for filmmaking, putting youth voice at the very heart of the scheme.
- Through participating in a film club, children and young people can engage directly with members of the film industry, discover career opportunities and learn how to pursue them.
- Club leaders can benefit from training and CPD to assist the use of film as a learning tool and access support on introducing filmmaking into your club.
- Through film industry support, Into Film is able to offer free cinema events, including the Into Film Festival and year-round screening events and activities.

Step-by-step guide

Summary: This section features a range of activities divided into two parts – ‘Getting started’ and ‘Developing skills’. Activities are supported by resources in the **Member workbook** included in this pack. You can work through these in order or pick those that best suit your group and your available time.

What you will need:

- Copies of the **Member workbook** (pages 1-16 of this pack)
- Internet access
- Access to cameras, tablets or audio recording equipment (optional)
- **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**
- Popcorn (optional)

Getting started

These simple introductory activities are divided into **before**, **during** and **after viewing** a film with your club:

Before viewing the film

- Give members time to write short responses to the questions on pages 2-3 of the **Member workbook**. These answers can be shared in pairs or as a group.
- Help members find out more about the film they are about to see by showing them the film’s page found via, www.intofilm.org/clubs. Discuss what members think the film might be about, based on visual clues. They could talk about the image they see on the website in terms of colours, characters and setting. There is space at the bottom of page 3 for members to record their predictions about characters, settings and storylines.

During the film

Encourage active viewing by getting members to complete the **While you watch the film section** on page 4 of the **Member workbook**. This will ensure that they engage with the film, can make connections to their own experiences and discuss it with their peers. It will also help them recall elements for writing their film review later on.

After viewing the film

- Immediately after watching the film, ask members to give it a star rating out of five, using their fingers. They can also record their response to the film by answering the questions on pages 5-6 of the **Member workbook**.
- If you have flip cameras, iPads or LearnPads you may wish to get members moving around the room interviewing each other using the **After viewing the film** questions on pages 5-6 of the workbook and slide 2 of the accompanying **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**. You can reflect on these initial responses later on, to refresh members’ memories of the film or to see if their responses have developed over time.

Picture reviews

- Use the **Picture review** sheet on page 7 of the **Member workbook** to encourage members to review the film using images only (also on slide 3 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**). Encourage members to swap their pictures and see if they can interpret the images and understand how their partner responded to the film.
- The Widgit symbols for students with SEN on the Into Film website could also be used to give immediate responses – children could select and hold up the symbols that most apply to their feelings about the film: www.intofilm.org/sen-symbol-reviewing. Extend this by using stills cameras or tablets and getting members to record facial expressions to reflect how the film made them feel, or get them to act out their best or worst bits of the film. These could be displayed as a photo gallery with captions to explain the photos.

Collect Wow words

- Direct members to the **Wow words** sheet on page 8 of the **Member workbook** and encourage them to circle any words that they feel are relevant to the film. They may be describing the clip, the storyline, an actor, a scene or the film as a whole. Explain that these awesome adjectives can be used to enhance their film review later on. Give them access to dictionaries if they are unsure about the meanings.
- Members must then add at least three Wow words of their own.
- From these three words, members pick their best word and create a calligram (a word that is presented in a way that visually reflects or expresses what the word means) on page 8 of the workbook.
- These could be used in a word bank wall display to extend vocabulary and give members ideas for words to use in their review.

Creative comparisons

- One of the best ways to help someone understand something that they haven't experienced before is by comparing it to something that they *have* experienced.
- Stimulate creative thinking and extend members' writing from words to sentences by setting the **Creative comparisons challenge** on page 9 of the **Member workbook** and slide 4 of the accompanying **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**.

Developing skills

A selection of activities to develop members' reviewing skills and their confidence in expressing and sharing opinions.

What is a film review?

- Share the definition of a review at the top of page 10 of the **Member workbook** and on slide 5 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**.
- Discuss the purpose of film reviews by talking about how we tell our friends and family about a film we have seen, and that their opinions help us decide whether to go and see it or not (also called word of mouth – the most powerful way a film is promoted).
- As a group, mind map the different types of reviews you might come across. Compare with the list on slide 5.
- If computer access is available, look at **Reviews of the week** at www.intofilm.org/clubs.

What is a film critic?

- Give members an insight into being a film critic by watching the clip 'Behind The Scenes with Mark Kermode', which is linked to on slide 6 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**.
- In this interview he gives pupils some insights into the tricks of the trade. If watching the full video online, you may wish to split the clips to break them up and allow for discussion in between. Appropriate times to pause would be 1:55, 5:02, 6:25 and finish at 7:05.
- Can the children identify three top tips for writing reviews? They write these in the **top tips box** on page 10 of the **Member workbook**.
- Question members on what makes a good film review, and the job of a film critic, to check their understanding. Explain that we are all film critics when we talk about and give our opinions on films we have seen, but some people do this as their job and get paid for it.
- Direct members to the example film reviews on page 10 of the workbook. One review is more effective than the other. Ask members to read and select the review they think is most effective. They should write one sentence explaining their reasoning next to each review in the space provided.

Planning a film review

- Ask members to write down three films they have seen recently (a mixture of films they liked and didn't like) on the **Snappy summaries** worksheet on page 11 of their workbook.
- Members then need to think of an appropriate word to describe how they felt about each film.
- Underneath, they review each film in just one sentence. You could model a couple of examples and direct less-confident members to the sentence starters that are available, to help them get started.
- Explain what a synopsis is and share some examples on slides 7–13 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**. Can members guess the name of the films?
- Direct members to the **Snappy synopsis challenge** on page 11 of the workbook. They must write a short synopsis for a film they have seen recently in less than three sentences.
- They could then share this with a partner whilst making sure they avoid using spoilers. This could be made into a 'guess the film' game.

Writing film reviews

- Share the success criteria for a good film review on slide 14 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation**.
- Members use the **Film review writing frame** on page 12 of the workbook to write their review.
- Once children are happy with their reviews, they can read them aloud to each other in order to improve them further. Encourage children to read clearly and with expression.
- Allow children the opportunity to peer-assess their film reviews against the success criteria. Encourage them to use the **two stars and a wish** AFL strategy (two positives and one suggestion for improvement) in the box at the bottom of page 13 of the workbook.

Composing spoken reviews

- You could also get members to practise their oracy skills by creating and performing spoken reviews.
- These can work as shared discussions, in a 'film show'-style format. Build up to this by encouraging talk in pairs or small groups.
- Members can think about what they would like to say about the film and start to use notes, pictures or symbols as prompts to help them when talking out loud.
- They can prompt each other to talk and share ideas as they go, and could think about how to share their enthusiasm and their opinions with listeners through their tone of voice, emphasis and volume.
- To support this activity, listen to film reviews on FunKids Radio, soundcloud.com/filmclubuk and use the **Spoken reviews** sheet on page 14 of the **Member workbook**.

Filming a review

If cameras, tablets or audio recording equipment are available, put members in pairs and use the examples and top tips on slides 15 and 16 of the **Creating Effective Film Reviews – Primary presentation** to help them record their reviews.

These can be saved and shared, revisited later and used as self- or peer-assessment tools to help develop members' confidence in sharing their opinions.

Share!

- Reviews can be published on the Into Film website at www.intofilm.org/clubs.
- When members are logged into the site, they just need to find the film that they would like to review. They can use the search bar on the top right hand side of the screen and click the 'write review' wording in turquoise.
- Once they have typed in their review, they can give the film a star rating by rolling the mouse over the star icons.
- Then they should click 'preview my review' and they will be given the opportunity to 'edit' or 'post'.
- You may also want to share reviews on the school website or by displaying them in school.
- To submit members' filmed, audio or picture reviews, just email your Into Film Programme Coordinator.

Here are some useful keywords for developing film language vocabulary in film club members. Challenge pupils to find definitions and create a club glossary or classroom display:

Character
Colour
Camera
Setting

Story
Sound
Narrative
Lighting

Soundtrack
Dialogue
Genre
Narrative

Sound effects
Mood
Editing
Shots



Member workbook

Welcome to the Into Film guide to writing fantastic film reviews.

You can submit your excellent reviews to the Into Film Clubs website for a chance to be selected as film review of the week and win great Into Film goodies.

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Before you watch the film

Take some time to answer these questions in the spaces provided. You will be discussing your ideas, so think carefully about your answers!

1. Think of two things that you know about the film that you are going to see:

One thing I know about this film is...

Another thing I know about this film is...

2. How do you most like to watch films and why? (cinema, tablet, DVD etc)

My favourite way to watch films is...

3. What are two great films that you have watched recently and why were they so good?

I recently watched...

It was really good because...

 Before you watch the film

4. What is your favourite type (or genre) of film – is it animation, comedy, action...?

My favourite type of film is...

I like these films because...

5. Which genre does the film that you are going to see belong to (comedy, action etc)?

The film we are going to see is...

6. Have you seen a picture from this film? Write a prediction below of what you think the film might be about:

I predict this film might be about...

 While you watch the film

Use this sheet to write notes or draw pictures that show your thoughts and feelings about the film.

Who are the main characters and what happens in the film?

Things I like...

Things I don't like...

Exciting or interesting moments

Rate it:



Wow words to describe this film:

 After viewing the film

Interview each other! Now you have watched the film, answer the questions below to record your first reactions. Then, use these questions to interview each other about the film! If you can, use cameras to record these interviews to create vox pops – the short interviews that you find in radio or television programmes.

What did you like about the film?

Did anything confuse you? Why?

Which parts will you remember the most and why?

What surprised you about the film?

 After viewing the film

Have you seen any other films like it? How is this one the same? How is it different?

Would you like to watch it again? Why?

If you had directed this film, how would you have made it better?

What will you tell your friends about this film?



Draw pictures that show what you thought of the film you have just seen.

Film title:

Star rating:     

WHAT What did you watch?

HOW How did the film make you feel?

WHO Who was your favourite character?

 Wow words

Circle any words you feel describe the film you have seen.

funny **FANTASTIC** **depressing**  dull *Magnificent* **DARK**
GREAT FRIGHTENING **Confusing** **SILLY** **Fantastic** SCARY Different
Colourful sad *Unbelievable* **BEST** **EXCITING** Beautiful *Fast*
 annoying Distinctive *Magical* **BORING** awful **HILARIOUS** STRANGE

Come up with at least three of your own words here:

Draw your best word as a calligram here. A calligram is a way of drawing a word so it creates a visual image that shows what the word means.

Example:





Creative comparisons challenge!

One of the best ways to help someone understand something they haven't experienced yet is by comparing it to something that they *have* experienced.

Can you complete the sentence for each of these comparisons?

Example



If this film was an animal
it would be...

If the film *Toy Story* was an animal it would
be a puppy because it is playful and cute.



If this film was a well-known
person it would be...



If this film was an ice cream
flavour it would be...



If this film was a book
it would be...



If this film was an animal
it would be...

What is a film review?

A review is an opinion that comments on how good or bad a book, film, play or other work of art is.

Top tips for creating fantastic reviews:

Read the two example reviews of *Frozen*, below. Which do you think is most effective?

Review one:

This film was ok because a snowman sang. I liked the bit where the wolves chased the sled. This film is about two princesses. They have some problems but they get help from the other characters. Everyone should watch this film because it was good. But I would not recommend this film for old people.

Review two:

In a kingdom far, far away, two young princesses who were once close now live a quiet and lonely life in their castle. But when elder sister Elsa is asked to take the throne, a secret is revealed – with serious consequences for the two sisters and for the whole kingdom. This beautiful CGI animation features strong characters, including a supporting cast of reindeer and snowman, coupled with fantastic songs to make this film a feel-good festive treat. Suitable for all ages.

Review one is a more/less effective review because...

Review two is a more/less effective review because...

Extension: can you improve the less effective review? What could you add, change or move to make it more effective? **Remember:** a review is just an opinion – there are no right or wrong answers!

One-word review

List three films you have watched recently in the first column below. In the second column write **one word** to describe how you felt about that film. In the third column write **one sentence** about that film. **Use this to help you get started:**

Film title	One-word review	One-sentence review
<i>Fantastic Mr. Fox</i>	Funny!	This film was fantastic because the characters were funny and the animation helped to bring my favourite book to life.

The part of a review that describes the plot is called a ‘synopsis’. We want a review to tell us a little bit about what happens in the film – but not too much. Too much detail can be boring for the reader and might even spoil the film. That’s why giving away the end of the film in a review is called a ‘spoiler’.

The snappy synopsis challenge

Pick one film from the list above and describe what the film is about **in no more than three sentences**.

Challenge: Tell a friend about your film using your synopsis. See if they can guess your film from the synopsis you have written. Remember: no spoilers!



Film review writing frame

Use this writing frame to draft your film review. Remember: a review is a chance for you to give your own opinions on a film – there are no right or wrong answers!

Title

Introduction

Remember to hook the reader in. Engage the reader by making it interesting or exciting.

Paragraph 1 – Synopsis

Using your snappy synopsis skills, briefly describe what happens in the film. Don't include any spoilers – never give away an ending or reveal an important part!

 Film review writing frame

Paragraph 2 – Context

Use your favourite creative comparisons to help your reader understand what watching the film is like. You might also want to include information like the names of the actors or other films the director has made.

Paragraph 3 – Evaluation

Did you like the film? Why? Why not? Use your favourite Wow words to describe how you feel about the film.

Swap reviews and evaluate someone else’s review.

Peer-assessed by (your name):

Two ‘stars’ (what was great about the review):

One ‘wish’ (something you would like to improve about the review):

Spoken reviews

You can find examples of spoken film reviews on this online radio station: soundcloud.com/filmclubuk. When you listen to a spoken review – such as a radio programme or a podcast – what do you notice? See if you can spot the following:

How long did the review last?

How many people were speaking?

What sorts of things did they say about the film?

Was the review easy to listen to and understand?

My top tips for a spoken review:

Notes for my own spoken review:

Things I would like to say about the film:

I should remember to... (eg talk clearly)

 Plan your filming here:

Location:

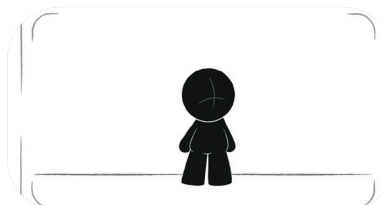
Equipment needed:

Shot types to use:

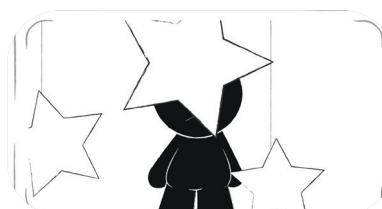
Performance notes:

 Top five tips to make recording your review a success

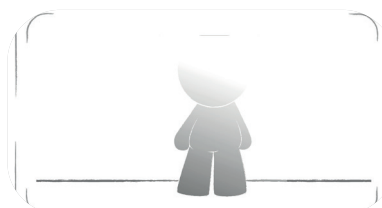
1 Camera
 Would a long shot or close up be best for filming your review?



2 Camera positioning
 Where is the best place to position the camera to get a clear shot? Do you need to move any objects?



3 Lighting
 Are the people being filmed standing in the light? Can you see them clearly through the camera?



4 Sound
 Can you hear the people who are speaking? Can you close any doors or windows to cut down other noises?



5 Using a tripod
 Use a tripod if you have one, or steady your camera by propping your elbows on a table, shelf or wall.

