

A GUIDE TO WRITING EFFECTIVE FILM REVIEWS SECONDARY

Part of Into Film's UK wide film learning programme, film clubs are free to state schools and academies and provide an environment for children and young people to watch, review and make films.

Club leaders (teachers) get:

- Hands-on support in running your club
- CPD and training in film making
- Curriculum and non-curricular interactive in-depth resources
- A supported environment to boost vocation aspirations and encourage reluctant writers
- A catalogue of over 3000 films from over 100 years of cinema

Club members (students) get:

- Inspirational film industry interaction and events
- Free promotional materials, membership cards and posters
- Interactive website tools for reviewing
- Filmmaking advice, competitions and prizes
- The chance to be part of the youth-led Into Film Festival

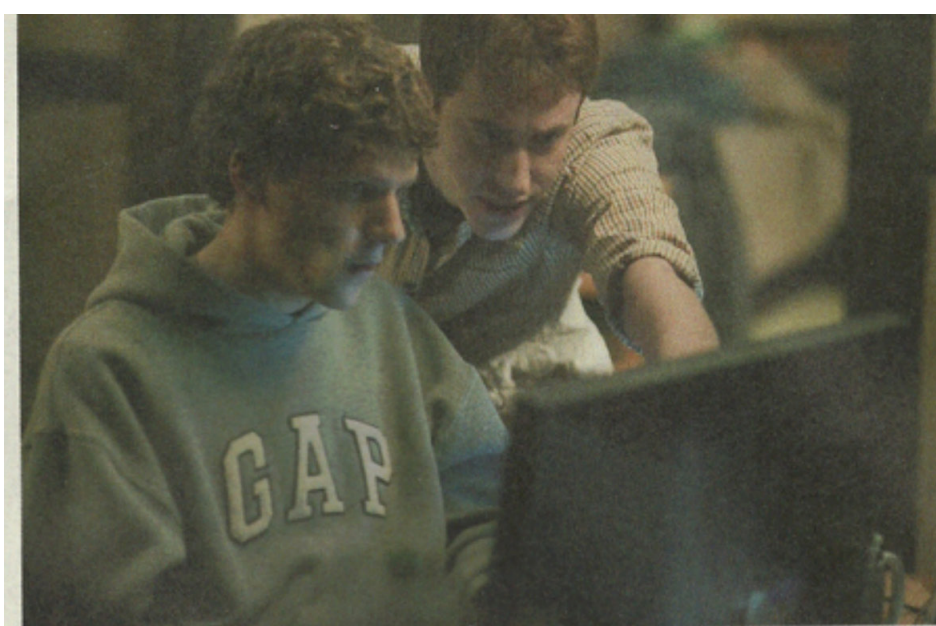
Pupils are encouraged to upload their film reviews to filmclub.org where they can rate films, read the opinions of their peers and be in with the chance to win Review of The Week!

Follow us on twitter [@getintofilm](https://twitter.com/getintofilm) or find us on facebook.com/getintofilm

Activity 1: The Parts of a Review

What is a review for? Read the example review below, then highlight the words or phrases which do the following:

- ▶ Inform (e.g. names of actors and other talent, certificate, release date...)
- ▶ Describe (e.g. adjectives, descriptive phrases...)
- ▶ Entertain (e.g. jokes, stylishly phrased sentences...)
- ▶ Evaluate (e.g. star rating or marks out of ten, positive or negative statements...)



THE SOCIAL NETWORK

SONY PICTURES

The founding of Facebook played as a geek tragedy

**FILM
OF THE
WEEK**

You're on Facebook. Your friends are on Facebook. Even your mum just updated her status. It's an everyday part of millions of lives, but then so is Tesco, and would you really want to sit through a two-hour film about the business wranglings behind that empire? Actually, yes. If it was written by creator of *The West Wing*, Aaron Sorkin, and directed by David Fincher, that is.

The Social Network transfers the trademark Fincher gloom from the serial killer-stalked streets of *Seven* and *Zodiac* to the mahogany-panelled rooms of Harvard. It was here that Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) took his first steps to becoming the world's youngest billionaire.

The story flits back and forth between those heady days of algorithms and romantic rejection, and the deposition rooms where he found himself a few years later, being sued by

– among others – his former best friend Eduardo Saverin (Andrew Garfield).

To this story of genius and betrayal, Sorkin contributes dialogue that's fast, funny and forceful. Eisenberg does particularly well out of Sorkin's lines, demonstrating both the arrogance of an alpha geek, and a talent for put-downs (business rivals, the Winklevoss brothers, are grammatically corrected to "the Winklevi"). While Zuckerberg's reputation doesn't exactly survive unscathed, what Fincher and Sorkin have created is so much more than a gleeful hatchet job. Their Zuckerberg – obsessed with the outward signs of social advancement, yet completely uninterested in real relationships – isn't just a man: he's a metaphor for an age that's made mini-Zuckerbergs of us all. **NME** 'likes' this. *Ellen E Jones* **8**

Watch a video interview with *The Social Network's* Justin Timberlake and get the latest movie news at NME.COM/movies

Activity 2: Avoiding Clichés

A cliché is a word or phrase that's been used so often it's almost lost its original meaning and become trite and unexpressive. An over-reliance on clichés is a hallmark of bad writing. The following phrases are movie review clichés. Can you think of an original way to make the same point?

"If you only see one [INSERT GENRE] this year, make it [INSERT FILM NAME]"

▶

"Spell-binding"

▶

"[INSERT FILM TITLE] will have them rolling in the aisles!"

▶

"[INSERT FILM TITLE] is a rollercoaster of emotions."

▶

"The feel-good movie of the summer!"

▶

"[INSERT ACTOR'S NAME] in the role of a lifetime"

▶

"Oscar-worthy"

▶

Activity 3: Snappy Synopses

The part of a review that describes the plot is called the 'synopsis' (plural: synopses). 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 ruin the film. That's why giving away the end of the film in a review is called a 'spoiler'.

Get into pairs. Pick a film you have seen and your partner hasn't. Describe what the film is about in no more than 20 words. Try to get them excited about the film, but remember to keep it snappy!

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Activity 4: Comparisons, Metaphors, Similes and Analogies

One of the best ways to help your reader understand something they haven't experienced is by comparing it to something they have. Metaphors, similes and analogies are all types of comparison and most reviews will contain an example of one kind, if not all three. Can you find an example in The Social Network review? Coming up with original metaphors is a key reviewing skill. Here's an exercise to help you do that.

Pick a film you have seen recently and complete the following sentences:

- ▶ If this film were an animal, it would be
- ▶ If this film were an ice cream flavour, it would be
- ▶ If this film were a sport, it would be
- ▶ If this film were a celebrity, it would be

Activity 5: Writing Your Review

Now it's time to piece together the skills you've learnt into a finished review. This will contain three paragraphs, each doing a different job...

- ▶ **Paragraph 1: Intro**
Grab the reader's attention with an intriguing opening sentence. You may also want to hint at your assessment of the film
- ▶ **Paragraph 2: Synopsis**
Using your snappy synopses skills from Activity 3, describe what happens in the film. Don't include any spoilers! You might also want to include information like the names of the actors or other films the director has made
- ▶ **Paragraph 3: Entertain / Describe**
This is the real meat of your review. Use your favourite comparisons from Activity 4 to help your reader understand what watching the film is like. What parts were good? Why? What parts were bad? Why? Avoid clichés and use precise language
- ▶ **Paragraph 4: Evaluation**
Is the film any good or not? This is where you summarise the argument you've been making in the rest of your review. You might also want to include a star rating or a mark out of 10

Vocabulary List

synopsis	An outline of the plot of a play, film, or book
adjective	A describing word or phrase
spoiler	A description of an important plot development in a television show, movie, etc., before it is shown to the public
context	The set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event, situation, etc.
evaluation	The act of judging value or worth