

YOUNG FILM CRITIC

TEACHERS' NOTES: SECONDARY SCHOOL ENTRIES

ABOUT THE COMPETITION

Film Education's UK-wide Young Film Critic competition aims to encourage young people to be active participants in and critical commentators on the cinema experience. By building on the excitement and enjoyment of watching a film on the big screen, either independently or at one of Film Education's cinema events including National Schools Film Week, the competition develops students' ability to reflect on what they watch. As well as screening Hollywood blockbusters, our screening events aim to broaden young people's cultural perception and experience of cinema, with this competition encouraging them to reflect on their response after the film has finished. There are two categories at secondary level: 11–14 and 15–19.

THE BRIEF

Students are required to produce an original review of a film they have seen at the cinema in the last twelve months, either at a Film Education cinema event or independently. As well as creating an engaging review that informs its audience about the film, students should aim to include some of the conventions associated with the review format. Reviews can be submitted in written, filmed or audio format.

In preparation for writing reviews, teachers should introduce key critical terms (http://www.filmeducation.org/staffroom/film_in_the_classroom/film_language) and broaden students' understanding of review writing by offering a range of examples, including those of previous Young Film Critics of the Year which are included on the competition's homepage: <http://www.youngfilmcritic.org>. You will also find some exemplar filmed reviews produced in house which give students an indication of what this format can look like.

Entries MUST be received by 16 December 2011, and may be submitted in the following ways:

- word document — maximum 200-250 words
- imovie/wmv/quicktime file — 1.5-2 minutes in length – maximum 250 words
- mp3 file or CD submission — 1.5-2 minutes in length— maximum 250 words

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CURRICULUM RELEVANCE

ENGLISH

A film review has a natural place in English at Key Stages 3–5. For example, the AQA English GCSE makes specific reference to creative writing linked to moving image texts. A traditional film review can represent a range of writing purposes although the main focus is usually to develop the skills of writing to persuade, inform and describe. The Times Educational Supplement offer some very helpful materials to support this specification at

<http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6078616>

FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

Film criticism also has a prominent place in Film and Media Studies at Key Stages 4–5. As well as fostering students' critical engagement with film, honing their aesthetic appreciation plays an important part in developing their own filmmaking. Film reviews are a key constituent of film marketing and can be used in the classroom to examine the cross-media impact of certain texts. New media such as blogs, community forums and online review sites provide an excellent source of different types of film reviews. By comparing and analysing the wide range of different styles and formats of these reviews, students can develop an appreciation of form, style and purpose when drafting their own critical responses to what they have watched.



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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

THE BRIEF

To enter the Young Film Critic competition, you need to write an original review of a film you have seen at the cinema in the last twelve months, either on a school trip or independently.

Your review should be no more than 250 words and can be presented in writing or as a filmed or audio-recorded version of a written piece. As well as engaging your reader and informing them about the film, you should aim to include some of the conventions of film reviews, so you will need to do some research to find out what these are.

Entries may be submitted in the following ways:

- word document — maximum 200-250 words
- imovie/wmv/quicktime file — 1.5-2 minutes in length – maximum 250 words
- mp3 file or CD submission — 1.5-2 minutes in length— maximum 250 words

A range of example from previous Young Film Critics of the Year is included on the competition's homepage: <http://www.youngfilmcritic.org>. You will also find some example filmed reviews produced by our team to give you an idea of what a filmed piece can look like.

You must enter in one of two age categories either 11–14 or 15–19. There are also separate categories for students with sensory impairments; that is, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or blind or partially sighted. Make sure your entry is in the correct category.

All entries must be received by 16 December 2011

SUBMITTING YOUR ENTRY

Send entries by post to:

**Young Film Critic Competition 2011
Film Education
91 Berwick Street
London
W1F 0BP**

Or email scanned versions of pupils' work, along with a completed entry form to:

yfc@filmeducation.org

Or submit scanned files online at:

<http://www.filmeducation.org/competitions/upload.php>



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GETTING STARTED: RESEARCHING REVIEWS

Before you start drafting your own review about a film, it is a good idea to see how other people have approached it. These websites include lots of examples of reviews. Browse through the sites and read or watch some of the reviews for films you have seen.

Weblinks:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/gateways/genre/family/index.shtml>

<http://www.cbbfc.co.uk/archiveDetail.asp?filmID=1707&reviewID=1001>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_9370000/newsid_9376100/9376119.stm

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/5live/films/genres/family/>

<http://www.empireonline.com/reviews/cinema/>

<http://www.timeout.com/film/>

<http://www.totalfilm.com/reviews>

Download three of your favourite examples so you can keep them to refer to later.

- Why are these your favourites?
- Which of these reviews do you think is the most engaging? Why?
- What do you think are the most important points to consider when planning your own original film review?

CHOOSING A FILM AND PLANNING YOUR REVIEW

The film you review for this competition must be one you have seen in the cinema, either on a school visit or independently, during the last twelve months. So how do you choose what film to write about?

Be adventurous! If you choose to write about a holiday blockbuster then be aware that you will be competing with lots of other entrants who have gone for the same option. Believe it or not it is much harder to write interestingly about a spectacular CGI movie than a film dealing with character-led events or set in a different period or country. This is why reviewing a film featured in National Schools Film Week is a good idea. Think about your motive for choosing the film. Is it because you love it? Or hate it? A strong opinion is a good place to start!

ENTERING THE COMPETITION: TOP TIPS

- Reel in the reader quickly. Spend lots of time on your first paragraph – readers are going to scan that first to decide whether or not to read further, so make it original and interesting. Choose your vocabulary carefully.
- Write in the present tense. For example: ‘The main character of the film is called...’ or ‘When the film starts we see...’



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- Your review should be original and not based on what anyone else has said about the film: let your voice, viewpoint and ideas be heard in the review. Make sure that what you say is expressed clearly.
- Check the word count for print reviews and the time allocation for video or audio files. Make sure you do not go over!
- When you think you have finished, show it to a friend or family member and try to work out if there is anything you could improve upon. Is it really your final version?

You can read previous year's winning reviews at <http://www.youngfilmcritic.org>

Good luck!



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PLANNING YOUR REVIEW

To help you get started, it is a good idea to make some notes about the film and the impression it makes on you. Use the following chart to help you organise your ideas:

KEY POINTS	EVIDENCE FROM FILM	YOUR OPINION
DIRECTOR – who is it and what else have they directed that you have heard of?		
MAIN STARS – who are they? Will people be familiar with them already? What are they known for?		
PLOT – what is the film about?		
CHARACTERS – who are the main ones and which actors play them? Comment on the quality of the acting.		
GENRE – what type of film is it? Does it fit your expectations for this type of film? How would you describe the mood?		
SOUNDTRACK – did you notice/like/dislike it? How did it create atmosphere?		
AUDIENCE – who is it aimed at and do you recommend it? Why?		

- Now choose three adjectives that you think sum up the film for you. Make a note of these words to use later in your review.