

Writing an academic Documentary and Movie Review

The following steps and question shall be a guide for you what you COULD look out for and not a manual where you need to give an answer to all of these questions. The most important thing is that your review flows nicely and interests the reader in watching the documentary/movie. As it is an academic review, you can reveal spoilers (the big difference to a film review).

Step 1 Give details of the documentary/movie

- Title of the documentary/movie
- Intended audience



Step 2 Explain the purpose of the documentary/movie

- What is the purpose of the documentary? What type of movie is this?
- What is the main message the director wants to get across to the audience?



Step 3 State your prior knowledge of the subject

- Did you know anything about the subject before you watched the documentary/movie?
- What did you expect to see?
- What questions did you have about the subject?



Step 4 Summarise the documentary / movie

- Who / What is the subject of the documentary/movie?
- What is the documentary/movie about? What are the main events (if any)?
- Where was it filmed?
- For a documentary: did the producers invite experts? If so from which field?



Step 5 Talk about the sound effects, camera work, interviews and special effects

(Bear in mind, you look at it from the disciplinary angle of the module, not as a student of film studies! Therefore include what you know and what you think is important for an academic understanding / reception of the documentary/review)

- Do you like the sound effects?
- Are the images sharp?
- How is the filming? What camera angles were used?
- Are there any special effects?
- If it is a documentary with expert interviews: Do you like the interviews? What have you learned from the interviews?



Step 6 Give personal comments and recommendation

- Which part of the documentary do you like most?
- What have you learned from it?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- What are the drawbacks of the documentary?
- Would you recommend this documentary to your friends?