

## The SRV JOURNAL

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### **Basic guidelines on writing a movie review for The SRV Journal**

Some contributors to this journal have asked for advice on writing movie reviews. In response, we put together the following basic elements, and we hope that you find them helpful. Not all of the elements listed below may be applicable to all movies. These guidelines are meant to be suggestions, they are not meant to be followed slavishly nor are they meant to be exhaustive. For example, we would like a movie review to address the six general points described below, but not all of the questions included in points three to five necessarily have to be discussed. There may also be additional questions or points of interest which you might want to cover.

*A format note:* a movie review for this journal should run one to three pages (font Times New Roman, size 12, single space; or roughly 500 to 1500 words) at most. Please contact the editor with any other questions. Thank you.

**1) Heading:** Include information about the movie, such as:

Name of the movie being reviewed  
Director  
Country in which the movie was produced  
Year it was produced  
Runtime (if known)

Sample:

Schindler's List  
Directed by Steven Spielberg  
USA, 1993, 195 minutes

**2) Reviewer information:** Name and title (if any) of reviewer

Sample:

Reviewed by Ann Taylor  
Professor, Holy Cross College, Worcester, MA (USA)

Reviewed by Tina Carpenter  
Parent, Vancouver, BC (CANADA)

**3) Background information about the movie, its director and main actors:** Include information that might be helpful for readers to know, such as:

What topic, theme or problem(s) does the movie address?

What type of movie is it (e.g., documentary, biography, comedy, drama, action, romance, musical, etc.)?

Was it based on a book?

Who wrote it, directed it, and acted in it? What else have they done or been in? Are any of the actors socially devalued people?

Who is the intended audience of this movie (e.g., children, teenagers, adults; human service professionals, the general public)?

As relevant, what was the context (e.g., historic, political, societal) in which the movie was produced and shown?

Has it won any awards?

Is it similar to another movie?

**4) Description of the movie:** Summarize the story told in the movie; or if it is a documentary, the main information it tries to convey. Things you might include here are: time and place of the story; main characters; basic plot of the movie; special features being used (e.g., music, photography, interviews, etc.); the mood which the movie tries to convey; major points it tries to make; is it appropriate for children; is there violence, foul language, and/or sex?

If you want people to watch the movie, make sure that you do not give away the ending, or any other information that takes the tension or fun out of it.

This part of the movie review should not be evaluative, but as descriptive as possible, and attempt to give readers a clear overview of what the movie is about.

**5) Evaluation of the movie:** This is the section in which you should share your relevant personal opinion(s) about the movie, but make sure they are distinguishable from your description (point 4). Describe your criteria or perspective for judging the movie, then state your evaluation of it. The following issues might be discussed here:

In what ways is the movie relevant to Social Role Valorization?

What are the movie's major strengths and weaknesses?

Does the film reinforce or counter any negative stereotypes about devalued people?

What was the particular idea behind the movie, a key moment of the movie, an impressive character in the movie, or any other feature of the movie that fascinated you?

Do you agree or disagree with the message the movie conveys?

Did the screenplay author, the director, and the actors do a good job?

How could the movie be improved?

Who would benefit from watching this movie?

What is the major lesson to learn from this movie?

How does it compare to, or distinguish itself from, similar movies?

How did the movie affect you?

Would you recommend seeing this film?

**6) Conclusion:** Tie together any issues raised in the review, and end with a concise comment on the movie.