



One and Done: Task 6

Your mission:

1. Read a bunch of movie reviews.
2. Identify what makes them so great.
3. Watch the movie.
4. Write a review that imitates top quality reviews.

Note:

This piece needs to be the best writing you can do under pressure. The rubric does not measure your PROCESS, it measures your PRODUCT... because I believe that after a year of writing, you are ready to write a truly fabulous product. And I hope you'll prove me right.

Some Advice about How To Write a Top-Quality Review

1. I've given you examples from *The New York Times*, not Rotten Tomato or Roger Ebert. And I've done that for a reason. These are the top-flight, academic reviews. In short, the kind of writing I'm asking you to do in your review.
2. Good movie reviews SHOW rather than TELL what they're describing. I've given specific examples of this issue on the next page.
3. It may be tempting to stick to plot. Don't. Two strategies for addressing this:
 - a. Make the DIRECTOR the main noun in most of your sentences rather than the characters or the movie.
 - b. Look at the topics of each paragraph in the sample movie reviews. Note that some have to do with the script, some have to do with the director, some have to do with plot (but very few), some have to do with social impact, etc. Use those as a guide to your structure/organization.



The information below is likely **ONLY** useful in the sections of the review focused on plot/character. A review that looks entirely like either of these “after” examples is just a plot summary.

Before	After – positive review	After – negative review
<p>The film did a great job of delivering the emotional aspect of the massacre. He shows the cruelty and racism of the Interahamwe in scenes where Rusesabagina has to resort to bribery and deceit to keep his family alive. He shows the brutality of the Hutu supremacists when they go around beating up the Tutsis and gathering them in concentration camps. He shows how, in all of these acts of inhumanity, the rest of the world stood silently by and did nothing to intervene, adding to our outrage at the genocide. He leaves the violence off screen, but shows the aftermath of it, which leaves us to think how...</p>	<p>Despite the boxes of machetes being distributed around him, Paul buys the supplies he needs and returns to the hotel by way of the road his supplier suggested. When the jeep begins to struggle, Paul gets out to examine the road and finds it strewn with the bodies of his Tutsi neighbors. Paul says nothing to the driver and returns to the hotel. Once there, he collapses, weeping on the bathroom floor even as he struggles to make sure his tie is immaculately straightened. In that moment, we know as clearly as he does that the Rwanda Paul has known up until that moment has been utterly destroyed.</p>	<p>With boxes of machetes being distributed around him, Paul buys the fine Brandy he needs for his richest customer and returns to the hotel by way of the road his supplier suggested. When the jeep begins to jiggle up and down as if it is riding over potholes, Paul climbs out to examine the road and then acts all surprised when he finds it strewn with piles of bodies. When he arrives back at his hotel, he cries and moans in the bathroom before straightening his tie and getting back to his luxurious work.</p>
<p>Some problems with this “before” example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applies adjectives to the movie (“great”). 2. Adjectives are the only way that the readers know the critic’s opinion. 3. Tells ABOUT the various “scenes of violence” rather than offering us a taste of one or two of them. 	<p>Solutions in these “after” examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They describe the SCENE and allow the reader to see what the reviewer saw. The reader knows Paul is afraid; that's obvious from the description. The reader also knows that the supplier has it in for Paul, again, that's obvious b/c he sends him down that road. 2. The reader knows that the first reviewer found the moment powerful because of the tone of the language. The reviewer did not have to call the scene "brilliant" or "powerful," or “great” because we can SEE that s/he experienced it that. Likewise, the reader knows that the second reviewer found the scene ridiculous. Our understanding is based on HOW she talks about it. 3. It describes the scene using active verbs and concrete nouns (distributed, buys, returns, struggle, examine, strewn, says, collapses, weeping, struggles, machetes, supplies, road, jeep, bodies, neighbors, floor, tie). 4. All the adverbs & adjectives--and there are very few--describe a THING that is in the scene, not the movie itself.¹ 	

In the rubric below, note the meaning of these terms:

- **Literary** – Plot/pacing, symbol, story structure, compare with other films, genre/franchise analysis example:
 - When Buttercup jumps into the sea with the eels, it’s her baptism into the adventure.
 - The movie functions as a parody of the fairy tale genre because...
- **Performance Quality** – which actors are especially excellent, comedic, or memorable?
- **Cinematic (visual, effects, direction, etc.)** – Lighting, music, sets, costumes, camera angles, etc.

¹ If you’re using adjectives to describe the acting or the movie or the scene, you’re writing a “customer review.” A real review uses adjectives only insofar as they work to evoke the work of the filmmaker—in other words, only when they are a part of SHOWING rather than telling...

Task 6 Movie Review Rubric (One and Done Version)

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic
Ideas – Plot Synopsis	A thorough synopsis (approx. 100 words) sets up the premise of the film, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plot developments • key characters • genre of film • cultural influences • details (key scenes) • connection to patterns and/or • basic cultural archetypes 	A detailed synopsis sets up the premise of the film, but some information may be missing or the storyline of the film may not be evident to the reader who has not viewed the film.	Some details from the film are included in the review, but the synopsis is too vague or not long enough to clearly convey the story to the reader.	A synopsis is not evident or so poorly written that it detracts from the overall review.
Ideas – Analysis	The majority of the review focuses on a detailed analysis of advanced devices, including two from each of the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literary • Performance • Cinematic <p>The reviewer’s opinion of the film is clear from the lead.</p>	Analysis focuses on two devices from each category, but reviewer may select only the most basic devices or one category may not be as developed as the others.	One category (literary, dramatic, cinematic) may be missing from the Analysis.	Analysis may be very surface-level or film review may only consist of a synopsis.
Ideas – Purpose	The purpose of the film is connected to social, political, economic, artistic, or mythological issues that the reviewer explains in depth. In the case of <i>The Princess Bride</i> , you’re exploring whether you think the film intends to PARODY fairytales or SATIRIZE them.	The reviewer may include an assertion about the purpose of the film but fail to provide evidence that supports the claim.	The purpose of the film is mentioned but may be vague. The reviewer may not be able to determine the audience.	The purpose of the film is omitted or so vague as to be unclear to the reader.
Conventions— Showing vs. Telling	Detailed descriptions of scenes are used as textual evidence. These descriptions show rather than tell readers what happened in the scene as well as implying the reviewer’s opinion.	The reviewer occasionally provides scenes as textual evidence, and attempts to show rather than tell, but both efforts are less developed than “A” reviews.	The reviewer may not provide enough description as textual evidence, or may simply tell about specific scenes and his/her opinion rather than endeavoring to show these elements.	The reviewer provides few or no detailed descriptions of scenes, and relies on generic adjectives to describe the movie.
Organization (structure)	Review is strongly organized with clear transitions and logical connections between paragraphs that each have a clear and distinct topic. Only 1 or 2 paragraphs focus on plot summary.	Review is organized and most topics, transitions are clear, however overall, the review may seem choppy and/or abrupt. Plot summary is contained to one section of the review.	Review lacks strong organization; jumps around too much or lacks effective transitions. Topics of paragraphs are indistinct from one another. Plot summary spills into multiple sections of the review.	Review is choppy or Incohesive, and paragraphs are uncontrolled, have no distinct topics or are all simply focused on plot summary.
Agility with Language	Review demonstrates strong voice, sentence fluency and inspired word choice. The review has been carefully proofread.	Review demonstrates voice, competent word choice and sentence fluency. The review contains a few mechanical errors.	The review demonstrates a lack of distinct voice, awkward word choices and sentence structures, and has several mechanical errors.	The voice, word choice and sentence structure of the review is so weak that it makes reading difficult. OR The paper has not been proofread very carefully, and contains so many errors as to be difficult to read.