Phrases for writing a film review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of film (genre)</th>
<th>drama</th>
<th>action film</th>
<th>thriller</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>produced by ...</th>
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<tr>
<th>Director</th>
<th>a film directed by ...</th>
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<tr>
<th>Screenplay/script</th>
<th>... from a screenplay by ...</th>
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<tr>
<th>Setting/atmosphere</th>
<th>is set in ...</th>
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<tr>
<th>Actors/characters</th>
<th>exceptional performance</th>
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<tr>
<th>Plot/story</th>
<th>amusing, boring, clichéd, confusing, entertaining, exciting, melodramatic, thrilling, unbelievable</th>
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<tr>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>melodramatic</th>
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- to develop a story
- well-directed
- expertly directed.

- multi-layered script
- screenwriter ...
- The script was written by ...
- ... co-writes ...
- ...’s writing is astonishing/plausible/witty
- tightly written
- give characters the opportunity to ...

- The story unfolds in ...
- ... provides the setting for ...
- create a certain atmosphere/mood

- exceptional performance
- fervently performed, well acted
- ... does a very good job as ...
- The performances in ... are excellent.
- ... gives the part much personality
- ... adds a lot to the film
- ... is absolutely remarkable/especially memorable as ...
- ... is very/less convincing ...
- The most complex/incredibly played character is that of ...
- newcomer
- a film full of wonderful characters
- appealing, fascinating, funny, stereotypical, two-dimensional, warm-hearted

- amusing, boring, clichéd, confusing, entertaining, exciting, melodramatic, thrilling, unbelievable
- arouse curiosity
- full of tension
- build up to/reach a climax
- develop a story
- interlocking stories/fragmented narrative/non-linear narrative
- unexpected plot twists
- One of the most surprising moments in the film occurs when ...

- melodramatic
- (un)convincing
- realistic
### Music/soundtrack
- The music conveys a sad/happy/melancholy atmosphere
- The music underlines a mood/evokes feelings/shows a character’s emotions/connects scenes
- The music and the lyrics support the plot.

### Miscellaneous
- The film contains a few funny bits.
- ... full of humorous moments
- The film gets extremely dramatic in places.
- One of the most poignant scenes of the movie ...
- powerful scenes
- final scene
- The film is close to reality.

### Evaluation
- a must-see/a smash hit
- a box-office success/failure
- an audience pleaser
- well worth seeing
- not to be missed
- a moving production/an emotionally strong film
- a truly great piece of filmmaking
- a skilful piece of filmmaking
- an impressive debut
- a very moving portrayal
- I definitely recommend this film to everybody ...
- The film is a worthwhile watch.
- On a scale from zero to five, I give this film a five.
- The film literally brought tears to my eyes.
- I highly/strongly/definitely recommend the film.
- If you like ..., this is the film for you.
- If you found films like ... or ... compelling then be sure to give ... your full attention.
- I certainly wouldn’t recommend the film, because ...
- I’m afraid ... is a complete waste of time and money.
- It’s a film that will change the way you think about ...
- I was impressed by ...

### Adjectives you could use
- action-packed, amusing, badly acted, balanced, beautiful, (extremely) boring, breathtaking, captivating, compelling, complex, (totally/slightly) confusing, contrived, disappointing, enigmatic, enjoyable, entertaining, exciting, fantastic, (totally/rather) far-fetched, (truly) fascinating, funny, gripping, hilarious, humorous, inspiring, lousy, manipulative, masterful, perfect, poignant, powerful, (un)realistic, ridiculous, romantic, overacted, overrated, overwhelming, (im)perfect, predictable, provocative, silly, stupid, surprising, super, tense, unbelievable, unoriginal, (highly) uplifting

- *When writing a film review, use words and phrases from the list.*
- *You can add expressions from film reviews you have read.*
The film
- is the dramatic/thought-provoking story of ...
- has a circular structure, beginning with ... and ending with ...

The director ...
- aims to achieve a certain effect by ...
- uses ... to underline/emphasise sth.
- draws the viewer's attention to sth.
- tries to convey a certain impression
- creates a mood
- provides information about ...

Narrative structure
- non-linear/fragmented narrative
- ensemble film
- plot structure
- The plot contains several cleverly woven together

The opening sequence
- shows/presents/mirrors/reveals ...
- captures the atmosphere
- conveys the setting
- portrays the characters

Camera operations ...
- describe characters indirectly
- show a character's emotions
- draw attention to sth.
- describe the setting
- evoke a certain atmosphere

The camera
- is at a great distance from .../is very close to ...
- shoots from a high/low angle.
- pulls back
- moves in/closes in on ...
- cranes up over ...
- fades in on .../fades out from ...
- pans from left to right
- tilts up/down
- zooms in on/zooms out from ...
- cuts from ... to ...

Camera distance and camera perspective
- The director uses a long shot of the setting.
- The ... shot establishes where the action is about to take place.
- The close-up is used to focus attention on .../reveals the character's feelings/makes the situation more intimate.
- ... uses a lot of close-ups.
- ... is shown in a close-up so we can see the reaction in her face when ...
There are many brief shots.

The director uses a high-angle shot of …/a helicopter shot of …

We see a low-angle shot/high-angle shot of the characters.

… are presented in a low-angle shot/high-angle shot.

This shot is taken from a bird’s eye view/worm’s eye view.

… is/are filmed from above/below.

The scene is shot from …’s point of view/… is seen from the perspective of …

The over-the-shoulder shots include the viewers in the action.

The POV shots make the audience experience the (emotional) perspective of a character.

There is a tracking shot as the camera follows …

… uses a fade-in …

The hand-held camera underlines …/gives the scene an unsteady quality/aims at authenticity

Mise-en-scène

The person living in this room is characterized by the items shown by …

A visual symbol …

• stands for sth.
• takes on a deeper meaning
• signals/symbolises/visualises sth.

Sound/music

• The … suggests that …
• The rhythmic/…/… background music contributes to the atmosphere of …
• The lyrics suggest …
• The effect of this scene is enhanced by the music.
• The scene is accompanied by soft/alarming/melancholic music.
• There is a voice-over.
• The soundtrack contributes to the mood/atmosphere of the scene.
• The sound / the music provides an extra feeling of tension/adds to the atmosphere.
• The sound sets the scene/builds tension/acts as cue/finishes the scene/…
• The soundtrack provides an atmosphere of …/contributes to the somber atmosphere/…
• The sound of … can be heard.
• Continuous background music bridges …
• Music can be upbeat/gloomy/aggressive/slow/fast-paced/ …

Lighting

• low-key lighting
• shot into light
• backlighting
• bright light
• … makes the scene seem (un)realistic, …
• gives the scene a … quality
• Lighting in the scene of……is used to enhance the sense of …

Editing

• The pace of the film is slowed down/accelerated by …
• slow motion
• cross-cuttings
• match cuts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>affirmative action</td>
<td>refers to concrete steps that are taken to eliminate discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barry Gibb dude</td>
<td>refers to Conklin's resemblance to singer and songwriter Barry Gibb (Bee Gees).</td>
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<tr>
<td>black vote</td>
<td>African-American voters</td>
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<tr>
<td>cookie jar</td>
<td>jar in which cookies are kept (and sometimes money is hidden); a person who has his hands in the cookie jar is doing something illegal or dishonest; Flanagan implies that Lewis is corrupt and a drug dealer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cosby Show</td>
<td>American situation comedy, in the 80s the number-one show in America.</td>
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<tr>
<td>cracker (sl.)</td>
<td>abusive or slang term for a white person</td>
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<tr>
<td>D.A.</td>
<td>District Attorney, a United States Attorney or County Attorney</td>
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<tr>
<td>dawg (sl.)</td>
<td>slang term for friend, a salutation teenage boys use with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery Channel</td>
<td>cable and satellite TV channel that provides non-fiction programmes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lucien probably refers to <em>The FBI Files</em>, a docudrama series that describes actual FBI cases, with dramatic re-enactments and interviews with forensic scientists.</td>
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<td>equestrian team</td>
<td>Cameron insults Christine for being on her high school's exclusively white and privileged equestrian team; allusion to Christine's WASP background.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>Health Maintenance Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>homies (sl.)</td>
<td>good friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honkies (sl.)</td>
<td>whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Fred Hampton</td>
<td>African-American activists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Affairs</td>
<td>investigates incidents and suspicions of lawbreaking and professional misconduct by police officers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>jihad</td>
<td>‘Holy Struggle’, one of the ‘ten practices’ of the Islam. The term can refer to striving to live a virtuous life, to spreading and defending Islam, and to fighting injustice and oppression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>law-and-order vote</td>
<td>conservative voters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lincoln Navigator</td>
<td>a full-size luxury SUV produced by the Lincoln division of Ford Motor Company</td>
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</tbody>
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long colts, short colts, bull heads, flat nose, hollow points, wide cutters

expressions for different kinds of bullets, ammunition

minority-owned companies
cf. affirmative action

narc (sl.)
short for narcotics agent, sb. (as a government agent) who investigates narcotics violations

redneck
slang term for a member of the white rural working class; a white person regarded as having a provincial attitude; an unsophisticated country person

Shaniqua
stereotypical name used to describe an African-American woman from the inner city

shuck’n’jive
to manipulate sb.; slang term primarily used by African-Americans. It refers to the speech and behavioural mechanisms adopted in the presence of an authority figure. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuckin’_and_jivin’

Staples Center
sports arena in downtown Los Angeles, financed privately and named after the Staples office-supply company.

St. Christopher
patron saint of travellers

Three-strikes law
The exact application of the three-strikes law varies from state to state. In California, for example, the law applies to any third conviction and entails a sentence of 25 years in prison.

UCLA
University of California, Los Angeles, main campus is located in the Westwood neighbourhood of Los Angeles.

wetback
illegal Mexican immigrant

[ Places ]

Brentwood One of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, and one of the prominent districts of the Westside. Celebrities living there include California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Steven Spielberg, Jim Carrey.

Compton Suburb of Los Angeles, often labelled as an ‘inner-city’ community due to poverty, the elevated crime rate found in the city, and its location in South Los Angeles; Waters teaches basketball there.

Sherman Oaks A fairly affluent area, with several fashion boutiques and many upmarket houses and restaurants; other white neighbourhoods mentioned by Anthony: Burbank, Santa Monica, Toluca Lake.

Studio City A 4-square-mile district in the San Fernando Valley region of the City of Los Angeles.

Westwood Westwood Village is located in west Los Angeles.

Wilshire Region of the City of Los Angeles, a collection of wealthy middle- and working-class neighbourhoods.