

Writing 8

TOPIC
DEVELOPMENT
Favourite films and books

WRITING SKILLS
Using verbs in the present simple to tell a story, writing in a semi-formal style, using informative or interesting adjectives

MAIN TASK TYPE
Writing a film or book review

KEY LANGUAGE
colourful, compelling, dark thriller, dazzling/dull prose, fresh/tired descriptions intricate/weak plot, light/charming comedy, memorable, moving/striking/wooden performance, unforgettable

PREPARATION
One copy of Worksheets 1 and 2 for each student

TIME
50–60 minutes + 30–40 minutes for writing

Narratives

Unforgettable!

Thinking and speaking

- A Ask students to tell each other the name of the last film they saw at the cinema and the last novel they read. Do a short class survey to find out if there is any consensus. Hand out **Worksheet 1** and ask students to complete the table.
- B Students compare notes and tell each other briefly about their films and books.

Reading and speaking

- C Tell students to read the two reviews quickly. If they know the book or the film, ask them to decide if they agree or disagree with the reviewers. If they do not know them, ask them to decide whether they would like to read the book and see the film.
- D Ask students to compare their ideas in pairs or groups.

Language development

- A Hand out **Worksheet 2** and ask students to read the reviews again, this time more thoroughly, looking at the language used by the reviewers. Get students to work in different pairs and ask them to work through the three language questions, discussing their ideas with their partners. Check answers.

Answer key

1

Factual language

(This is) a murder mystery story told by ...
(It) makes (fascinating) observations about ...
(It) comes in two editions.
(It's) a (charming) comedy.
The plot is based on ...

Opinion language

I absolutely loved this ...
(The style is) a real breath of fresh air.
It's easy to read ...
I would strongly recommend the book.
I found it impossible to put down.
I certainly enjoyed this film.
It follows a repetitive pattern.
The film-makers have made a good job of ...
This is a 'nice' film ...
I'd recommend you to ...

Adjectives

interesting/gripping (novel)
original (storyline)
fascinating (observations)
charming / predictable (comedy)
colourful (characters)

- 2 The verbs which tell the story are in the present simple.
- 3 The style is 'semi-formal'. It is not conversational, but neither is it formal. The reviewers openly express their likes and dislikes, frequently using the pronouns 'I' and 'we', and addressing the reader. The style avoids slang expressions, but includes verb contractions. It avoids passive verbs but includes phrasal verbs.

Writing

- B Ask students to read through the task. Notice that the task itself suggests an appropriate structure for students to follow.
- C Ask students to plan their review, taking account of the reminder about paragraphing and stylistic features.
- D Set the writing task, which can be done in class, if time permits, or for homework. Encourage students to use the language in the table they completed in A.
Note No additional sample review is provided here as students have already read reviews on Worksheet 1.

Worksheet 1

Unforgettable!

Writing 8

A What is your favourite novel and your favourite film?

Make notes in this table, including comments on what you like and don't like about the novel and film.

Title and author/ director and stars	Type (genre) of novel/film	Brief outline of plot (including main characters)	Opinions (why you like this novel/film and things you don't like about it)
Novel			
Film			

Note Genres could include: comedy, action, thriller, historical, romance, detective, musical, fantasy, horror.

- B Compare your answers in pairs. If your partner does not know your novel or film, briefly tell them the plot.
- C Read the reviews and decide whether you would like to read the book or see the film. If you already know them, decide if you agree with the reviewers' opinions or not.

1

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This is a murder mystery story, told by someone with a different view of life. Christopher Boone finds his neighbour's dog murdered, and decides that this is a mystery which needs solving. But Christopher is autistic, and this means that he doesn't understand or relate to other people the way most of us do.

I absolutely loved this interesting and gripping novel, which gives us insights into Christopher's condition with an original storyline and makes fascinating observations about life in general. Although I know very few people who actually suffer from this terrible condition, I can easily understand the inconvenience and frustration shown throughout this book.

The style is a real breath of fresh air: it's easy to read and understand, and comes in two editions: one for adults and the other for children.

I would strongly recommend the book to anyone who wants to experience something different. Once I had started it, I found it impossible to put down.

2

Bend It Like Beckham

Bend It Like Beckham is a charming comedy about an Indian girl, Jesminder, who lives in England and who, against her parents' wishes, wants to play football. The plot is based on familiar formulas: in particular the sports story, the growing-up-teenager story, and the absorption-of-a-family-into-the-culture-of-their-new-country story.

I certainly enjoyed this film, despite the fact that it follows a repetitive pattern and becomes increasingly predictable: Jesminder plays football, her parents find out and disapprove; then she plays some more, and her parents find out and disapprove again. Watching

it, we wonder whether her parents will eventually give in and let her follow her dream. Eventually, of course, they do!

The film-makers have made a good job of portraying the parents as staunch traditionalists, but not such a good one at other relationships: especially the one between Jesminder and her best friend Juliet, the English girl who first encourages her to play for the local team. Jesminder's relationship with the team coach adds an interesting twist to the storyline.

This is a 'nice' film which leaves you with a warm feeling. We laugh at and sympathise with all the characters, from the central threesome to the odd supporting cast of concerned parents and colourful characters from the wider community.

I'd recommend you to go and see it.

D Compare your ideas in pairs or groups.

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Worksheet 2

Language development

A Work in pairs.

- 1 Read the reviews on Worksheet 1 again. Circle any language which seems to be special ‘review language’, and underline any opinions (positive or negative) expressed by the reviewer and any adjectives the reviewer uses to describe the book or film. Then complete the Useful language box with the expressions you found.

Useful language		
Factual language This book/film is about ... The acting / camera work / special effects is/are ... The style is ... The main character is	Opinion language It’s the best book/film I’ve ever read/seen. You really must read / go and see it. I really recommend this book/film. My only criticism is	Adjectives compelling dark (thriller) dazzling/dull (prose) fresh/tired (descriptions) intricate/weak (plot) light (comedy) moving/striking/wooden (performance) unforgettable (scene)

- 2 What do you notice about the verbs in the parts of the reviews which tell the story?
- 3 How would you describe the style (formal, semi-formal, informal) of the two reviews?

B Read the task carefully.

Writing Task

An international magazine has invited readers to send in reviews, of 150–250 words, of their favourite film or book. You decide to write a review.

- 1 Say what type of story it is and give a brief summary of the plot.
- 2 Say what you like about the film or book you have chosen.
- 3 Say what (if anything) you dislike about the film or book.
- 4 End with a recommendation. Should readers read the book or see the film?

C Plan your review, using one of the two reviews you have read as a model.

- 1 Include paragraphs on each of the main points mentioned in the task.
- 2 Incorporate these stylistic features: present simple verbs to tell the story, a semi-formal style, informative or interesting adjectives (both positive and negative).

D Write your review, making sure you deal with all the points mentioned in the task and use some of the Useful language in the lists above.