Evaluation or Review: Would You Recommend It?

7



FIGURE 7.1 One of the most common types of reviews are film reviews. With their wide appeal, films are reviewed by professional critics and everyday people alike. The influential critics Gene Siskel (1946–1999) and Roger Ebert (1942–2013) would give "two thumbs up" to a film they both recommended, and the website Rotten Tomatoes takes the reviews of moviegoers to label a film "rotten" for bad or "fresh" for good. (credit: "Game Design Expo 2011 Open House" by Vancouver Film School/ flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION You have likely visited an unfamiliar city or neighborhood. When you aren't in familiar surroundings, what do you do if you want to find something to eat or do for fun? You probably open your phone and search on *Yelp*, *TripAdvisor*, *Google*, or another app or website dedicated to providing **film reviews**, or critical appraisals. Even when closer to home, many people, whether looking for a unique local restaurant, a new hiking trail, or an auto mechanic, may base their decisions on online reviews.

You may even have written a review of a product or service and posted it online yourself. In your review, you

shared your **evaluation**—your overall thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses—of the customer service, atmosphere, prices, quality, and so on. You decided on a set of **criteria**, or characteristics that determine a positive experience, and made your evaluation of the business according to those criteria and your experiences with similar products or services. Ultimately, you used the evidence you gathered from your interaction with the product or service to make an evaluation, or judgment. Maybe you used a rating system to give five stars or used the phrase "would not recommend" to make your negative judgment clear.

In performing these tasks, you engaged in the **review genre**, or form of writing, used to evaluate businesses, products, and art forms—including restaurants, health care, cell phones, cars, video games, books, films, and more. Throughout this chapter, you will learn about the characteristics of reviews and how to write them.

7.1 Thumbs Up or Down?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of the review genre in personal, professional, and academic contexts.
- Articulate what differentiates the review genre from other genres.

Developing evaluation skills can help you in everyday life. Just about anything you buy or use will require you to evaluate a range of choices based on criteria that are important to you. For example, writing a good paper or making a good presentation necessitates locating and evaluating sources. See Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for more information. You also may be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of your courses at the end of the semester. Or you may be asked to evaluate the work of your peers to help them revise their compositions. In the professional world, you may be asked to evaluate solutions to problems, employees you supervise, and in some cases, even yourself. Evaluating effectively makes you not only a better consumer but also a better student, employee, and possible supervisor.

Using Evidence to Make a Judgment

When you review or evaluate something, the end result is your judgment about it. *Should your readers see the film? Are the food and service good at the restaurant? Should you use this source in your essay? Does your employee deserve a raise?* Making a clear judgment about the subject of your evaluation provides guidance for the actions that audience members may take on the basis of the information you provide.

Ultimately, your judgment is your opinion. For example, it is expected that some people will love *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) and others will not. In fact, because some people may disagree with you, reviews provide a perfect opportunity to use evidence to defend your judgment. You are probably familiar with some ways in which reviewers present their judgments about their subjects. Reviews on *Facebook*, *Google*, and *Yelp* have a star rating system (the more stars the better). The film review site *Rotten Tomatoes* shows the percentage of reviewers that recommend the film. The review site *The AV Club* rates films and TV episodes by using an A-to-F grading scale.

While it is important to present your overall judgment in a review, a simple "I liked it" or "I didn't like it" is not enough to help your audience make their own judgments. It is also important to explain *why* you arrived at the judgment you did. Think about some of the titles of reviews you have seen online. One might simply read "DIRTY!" about an experience staying in a hotel. Other reviews might present a **thesis**, or debatable main idea, as a title, such as *Slate* culture critic Willa Paskin's "In Its Immensely Satisfying Season Finale, *Game of Thrones* Became the Show It Had Always Tried Not to Be." In both examples, the title provides an overall reason for the author's judgment.

Although a simple rating might be effective when reviewing a business, reviews of creative works such as films, TV shows, visual arts, and books are more complex. Critics —professional writers who review creative works—like Willa Paskin try to review their subjects and at the same time analyze their subjects' cultural significance. In addition to providing an overall judgment, critics guide audiences on how to view and

understand a work within a larger cultural context. Critics provide this guidance by answering questions such as these:

- In what genre would I place this work? Why?
- What has this work contributed to its genre that other works have not?
- How does the creator (or creators) of this work show they understand the culture (audience) that will view the work?
- How does this work reflect the time in which it was created?

People look to critics not only to judge the overall quality of a work but also to gain insights about it.

Other writing genres feature characteristics similar to the review genre, using criteria and evidence to analyze and sometimes evaluate the effectiveness of written or visual text: Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric, Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read, and Image Analysis: Writing About What You See.



7.2 Trailblazer

Review Trailblazer: Michiko Kakutani

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, and critical thinking.
- Make judgments about the role of credibility and bias in the review genre.
- Identify characteristics of review writing, including evaluation criteria and attention to historical context.



FIGURE 7.2 Michiko Kakutani (https://openstax.org/r/MichikoKakutani) is the former New York Times chief book critic. (credit: "New York Times" by mike/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

"Think about [reviewing] as a form of reporting . . . with the addition of your . . . carefully considered opinion."

Consistently Objective

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, Michiko Kakutani (b. 1955) is an American author and a literary critic. She graduated from Yale University in 1976 and began her career with *The Washington Post* as a reporter. She moved to *Time* magazine in 1977, then in 1979 began working for *The New York Times*, first as a reporter and then as a literary critic. She is probably best known for the position she held as chief book critic at *The New*

York Times until her retirement in 2017. Highly respected—and often feared—as a critic, Kakutani won a Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1998. Her book reviews for *The New York Times* were highly influential, with some reviews creating as much discussion and debate as the book being reviewed. American authors Jonathan Franzen (https://openstax.org/r/JonathanFranzen) (b. 1959) and Norman Mailer (https://openstax.org/r/NormanMailer) (1923–2007), for instance, feuded publicly with Kakutani after she published negative reviews of their works.

Kakutani is also known as an author, having published two books since her retirement: *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* (2018) and *Ex Libris: 100+ Books to Read and Reread* (2020)—a collection of essays about books that have been influential and illuminating.

One reason for Kakutani's effectiveness as a reviewer might be the air of mystery she maintained in the eyes of authors and publishers. Unafraid to say exactly what she thought about a literary work—and seemingly undaunted by the reactions of angry writers—she would praise an author for one book and pan the author's next one. Shunning industry events, she curried neither access nor favor with authors and publishers and rarely gave interviews. Her refusal to get too close to authors and publishers added to her credibility and objectivity, possibly allowing her more freedom to review books honestly.

Instead of a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down, Kakutani would make her evaluations clear in more subtle and comprehensive ways. For example, she referred to former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) James Comey (https://openstax.org/r/JamesComey)'s (b. 1960) book *A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* (2018) as "absorbing" and the characters in Jamaican author Marlon James (https://openstax.org/r/MarlonJames)'s (b. 1970) book *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* (2019) as "compelling." Instead of a formula or template, Kakutani sought to read books as a reader, rather than a critic, would read and understand them. She tended to pick examples of what she liked and disliked and what she found notable about the book, without preconceived notions of what it "should" be. It might be fair to say that Kakutani's evaluation criteria were never clear-cut; more often they were implied rather than explicit. However, decades of experience imbued Kakutani with historical knowledge and genre expertise that have provided the backbone of her reviews.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Michiko Kakutani establish her credibility as a reviewer? In what ways does she demonstrate her knowledge of the subject she is reviewing?
2. What evaluation criteria does Michiko Kakutani use to review a work?
3. How does Michiko Kakutani avoid appearing biased? Do you think she is successful in her attempts?
4. How would you respond to a writer who thought you reviewed their work unfairly?

7.3 Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, Evaluation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and define common characteristics, mediums, key terms, and features of the review genre.
- Identify criteria and evidence to support reviews of different primary sources.

Reviews vary in style and content according to the subject, the writer, and the medium. The following are characteristics most frequently found in reviews:

- **Focused subject:** The subject of the review is specific and focuses on one item or idea. For example, a review of all Marvel Cinematic Universe movies could not be contained in the scope of a single essay or published review not only because of length but also because of the differences among them. Choosing one specific item to review—a single film or single topic across films, for instance—will allow you to provide a thorough evaluation of the subject.

- **Judgment or evaluation:** Reviewers need to deliver a clear judgment or evaluation to share with readers their thoughts on the subject and why they would or would not recommend it. An evaluation can be direct and explicit, or it can be indirect and subtle.
- **Specific evidence:** All reviews need specific evidence to support the evaluation. Typically, this evidence comes in the form of quotations and vivid descriptions from the primary source, or subject of the review. Reviewers often use **secondary sources**—works about the primary source— to support their claims or provide context.
- **Context:** Reviewers provide context, such as relevant historical or cultural background, current events, or short biographical sketches, that help readers understand both the primary source and the review.
- **Tone:** Writers of effective reviews tend to maintain a professional, unbiased tone—attitude toward the subject. Although many reviewers try to avoid sarcasm and dismissiveness, you will find these elements present in professional reviews, especially those in which critics pan the primary source.

Key Terms

These are some key terms to know and use when writing a review:

- **Analysis:** detailed examination of the parts of a whole or of the whole itself.
- **Connotation:** implied feelings or thoughts associated with a word. Connotations can be positive or negative. Reviewers often use words with strong positive or negative connotations that support their praise or criticism. For example, a writer may refer to a small space positively as "cozy" instead of negatively as "cramped."
- **Criteria:** standards by which something is judged. Reviewers generally make their evaluation criteria clear by listing and explaining what they are basing their review on. Each type of primary source has its set of standards, some or all of which reviewers address.
- **Critics:** professional reviewer who typically publishes reviews in well-known publications.
- **Denotation:** the literal or dictionary definition of a word.
- **Evaluation:** judgment based on analysis.
- **Fandom:** community of admirers who follow their favorite works and discuss them online as a group.
- **Genre:** broad category of artistic compositions that share similar characteristics such as form, subject matter, or style. For example, horror, suspense, and drama are common film and literary genres. Hip hop and reggae are common music genres.
- **Medium:** way in which a work is created or delivered (DVD, streaming, book, vinyl, etc.). Works can appear in more than one medium.
- **Mode:** sensory method through which a person interacts with a work. Modes include linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural.
- **Primary Sources:** in the context of reviewing, the original work or item being reviewed, whether a film, book, performance, business, or product. In the context of research, primary sources are items of firsthand, or original, evidence, such as interviews, court records, diaries, letters, surveys, or photographs.
- **Recap:** summary of an individual episode of a television series.
- **Review:** genre that evaluates performances, exhibitions, works of art (books, movies, visual arts), services, and products
- **Secondary source:** source that contains the analysis or synthesis of someone else, such as opinion pieces, newspaper and magazine articles, and academic journal articles.
- **Subgenre:** category within a genre. For example, subgenres of drama include various types of drama: courtroom drama, historical/costume drama, and family drama.

Establishing Criteria

All reviewers and readers alike rely on evidence to support an evaluation. When you review a primary source, the evidence you use depends on the subject of your evaluation, your audience, and how your audience will use your evaluation. You will need to determine the criteria on which to base your evaluation. In some cases, you

will also need to consider the genre and subgenre of your subject to determine evaluation criteria. In your review, you will need to clarify your evaluation criteria and the way in which specific evidence related to those criteria have led you to your judgment. Table 7.1 illustrates evaluation criteria in four different primary source types.

Smartphone	Academic Source	Film	Employment
Camera quality	Author's credentials	Writing/script	Punctuality
Battery life	Publication's reputation	Acting	Ability to meet goals
Screen resolution	Sources cited	Special effects	Ability to work on a team
Screen size	Timeliness of research (up to date)	Sound/music	Communication skills
Durability	Relevance to subject	Directing	Professional development
Phone reception	Quality of writing	Subject	Competence in subject area

TABLE 7.1 Evaluation criteria across subjects

Even within the same subject, however, evaluation criteria may differ according to the genre and subgenre of the film. Audiences have different expectations for a horror movie than they do for a romantic comedy, for example. For your subject, select the evaluation criteria on the basis of your knowledge of audience expectations. Table 7.2 shows how the evaluation criteria might be different in film reviews of different genres.

Horror	Action	Romantic Comedy	Drama
Makeup	Special effects	Jokes	Script/writing
Cinematography	Stunt work	Conflict/resolution	Acting
Type of horror depicted (jump scares, gore, etc.)	Pace of story	Chemistry between main characters	Accuracy/believability of plot
Music	Relatability of "hero"	Satisfaction/happy ending	Scenery/setting/ costumes

TABLE 7.2 Evaluation criteria across film genres

Providing Objective Evidence

You will use your established evaluation criteria to gather specific evidence to support your judgment. Remember, too, that criteria are fluid; no reviewer will always use the same criteria for all works, even those in the same genre or subgenre.

Whether or not the criteria are unique to the particular task, a reviewer must look closely at the subject and note specific details from the primary source or sources. If you are evaluating a product, look at the product specifications and evaluate product performance according to them, noting details as evidence. When evaluating a film, select either quotations from the dialogue or detailed, vivid descriptions of scenes. If you are evaluating an employee's performance, observe the employee performing their job and take notes. These are examples of primary source evidence: raw information you have gathered and will analyze to make a judgment.

Gathering evidence is a process that requires you to look closely at your subject. If you are reviewing a film, you certainly will have to view the film several times, focusing on only one or two elements of the evaluation criteria at a time. If you are evaluating an employee, you might have to observe that employee on several occasions and in a variety of situations to gather enough evidence to complete your evaluation. If you are evaluating a written argument, you might have to reread the text several times and annotate or highlight key evidence. It is better to gather more evidence than you think you need and choose the best examples rather than try to base your evaluation on insufficient or irrelevant evidence.

Modes of Reviews



Not all reviews have to be written; sometimes a video or an audio review can be more engaging than a written review. *YouTube* has become a popular destination for project reviews, creating minor celebrities out of popular reviewers. However, a written review of a movie might work well because the reviewer can provide just enough information to avoid spoiling the movie, whereas some reviews require more visual interaction to understand.

Take reviewer Doug DeMuro (https://openstax.org/r/DougDeMuro)'s popular *YouTube* channel. DeMuro reviews cars—everything from sports cars to sedans to vintage cars. Car buyers need to interact with a car to want to buy it, and *YouTube* provides the next best thing by giving viewers an up-close look.

Technology is another popular type of review on *YouTube*. YouTube creators like Marques Brownlee (https://openstax.org/r/MarquesBrownlee) discuss rumors about the next Apple iPhone or Samsung Galaxy and provide unboxing videos to record their reactions to the latest phones and laptops. Like DeMuro's viewers, Brownlee's audience can get up close to the product. Seeing a phone in Brownlee's hands helps audience members imagine it in their hands.

On the other hand, reviews don't always need to be about products you can touch, as Paul Lucas (https://openstax.org/r/PaulLucas) demonstrates on his *YouTube* channel "Wingin' It!" Lucas reviews travel experiences (mainly airlines and sometimes trains), evaluating the service of airlines around the world and in various ticket classes.

What do these reviews have in common? First, they are all in the video medium. *YouTube*'s medium is video; a podcast's medium is audio. They also share a mode. *YouTube*'s mode is viewing or watching; a podcast's mode is listening.

These examples all use the genre conventions of reviews discussed in this chapter. The reviewers present a clear evaluation: *should you buy this car, phone, or airline ticket?* They base their evaluation on evidence that fits a set of evaluation criteria. Doug DeMuro might evaluate a family sedan on the basis of seating, trunk storage, and ride comfort. Marques Brownlee might judge a phone on the basis of battery life, design, and camera quality. Paul Lucas might grade an airline on service, schedules, and seat comfort. While the product or service being reviewed might be different, all three reviewers use similar frameworks.

7.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Black Representation in Film" by Caelia Marshall

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Recognize key terms and features of review writing.
- Explain how conventions of the review genre are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in written texts.

Introduction

In her essay "The Black Experience: What We See and Hear in Film," Caelia Marshall reviews *Rear Window* (1954), *Number 37* (2018), and *Black Panther* (2018), looking at them through the context of representation of

Black people in film. She uses some traditional film-review criteria but focuses primarily on the films' social and historical contexts. Marshall presents her judgment and provides specific evidence from primary and secondary sources.

LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

What We See and What We Hear

The global film industry, worth nearly $50 billion dollars (Watson), is a powerhouse of social influence, affecting people's perceptions, ideologies, values, and language on both conscious and subconscious levels. Phrases such as "Winter is coming" infiltrate the modern lexicon in areas of public life ranging from advertising to politics. Problematically, however, highly popular and influential shows like the HBO series *Game of Thrones* lack diversity, unapologetically perpetuating the dominant White cultural narrative. For the most part, audiences catapult shows that portray such skewed narratives to popularity, failing to notice or care about the lack of diversity. Through both production and consumption, the lack of diversity that exists in the entertainment industry works as an arm of oppression, complicit in keeping Black characters and Black stories hidden from view. This lack of representation of Black people and culture in film and television is more dangerous than the stereotypical racist representations of mammies, servants, and criminals in the past because it allows audiences to dismiss Black experiences entirely, making these audience members less empathetic to diverse points of view.

Purpose. *Marshall achieves two important objectives for the opening paragraph of her essay: getting her audience's attention and presenting her thesis. Marshall begins with an important statistic (the film industry is worth nearly $50 billion globally) and uses a specific example of a popular expression from a television show with which the audience is likely familiar ("Winter is coming" from the HBO series Game of Thrones) to illustrate the power and widespread influence of film and TV on American culture.*

Thesis. *Marshall then points out the lack of diversity in Game of Thrones and in film and TV more generally that leads to her thesis: This lack of diversity is harmful to society ("This lack of representation of Black people and culture . . . diverse points of view.").*

> Like many movies of the early and mid-20th century, director Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954) lacks authentic Black characters.

Criteria. *Marshall elaborates on her evaluation criteria: the lack of authentic Black characters.*

> In *Rear Window,* the Black experience is evident only when the presumably White female babysitter character talks for a few brief seconds to the police chief, whose children she watches, from an off-screen position using slurred, stereotypical southern Black dialect, with incorrect grammar. Dr. James Ivy calls this interjection the "audio version of blackface."

> Blackface is an American theatrical minstrel practice that dates to the mid to late 1800s, in which White traveling musicians painted their faces black and for comic effect mimicked the singing and dancing of slaves.

Definition of Terms. *Marshall clarifies the terms she uses; "audio version of blackface" is taken from a secondary source, whereas "mammy" reflects Marshall's own interpretation.*

> In this scene, the babysitter responds to her White male employer in the voice of the stereotypical mammy—a Black nursemaid who took care of White children, particularly in the south. Hitchcock appears to offer the scene as comic relief, expecting audiences to laugh during a tense confrontation between protagonist L. B. Jefferies and the police chief. The fact that Hitchcock calls upon this stereotypical minstrel tradition to create a moment of comedy illustrates the inherent racism of a script that uses the Black experience as a punch line rather than attempts to reflect the Black experience as it is. Somehow, Hitchcock manages both to exclude Black people from his film and to make use of Black stereotypes. However, as insidious as Hitchcock's choice to call upon this stereotype for comic effect may be, it is not as dangerous as his exclusion of Black characters. This exclusion has the effect of erasing the authentic Black experience altogether, making it meaningless within the discourse of popular culture. Yet Hitchcock himself was rewarded for his efforts, earning critical praise and Academy Award nominations for his masterful ability to create suspense in this film, regardless of his shoddy characterization of racial issues in 1950s America.

Evidence. *In this paragraph, Marshall highlights another specific example of the lack of diversity in film. With this example, she goes into more detail to illustrate the harmful stereotyping and exclusion of Black characters.*

> While some may argue that as a White filmmaker Hitchcock does not have a responsibility to reflect the Black experience accurately in his films, their argument falls apart with Hitchcock's use of "audio blackface." Hitchcock accepts the responsibility of including the Black perspective, but he fails in his presentation, and the film suffers for it when Hitchcock goes for a laugh at the expense of the Black community. Instead of elevating Black culture and experiences through his use of Black characters, he portrays their point of view as invalid and perpetuates their oppression. Hitchcock doesn't just ignore the existence of Black people, he uses them to promote a racist agenda.

Addressing a Counterclaim. *Marshall admits some people might argue that Hitchcock is not writing a social drama and thus accept his exclusion of Black characters. But she then counters this opinion.*

> This moral failure becomes clear when *Rear Window* is contrasted with its counterpart *Number 37*, a remake of the original as envisioned by South African writer and director Nosipho Dumisa. In *Number 37*, the disabled spectator, Randal, is confined to his apartment in a notoriously dangerous area of post-apartheid South Africa when he notices a criminal murder a cop. He descends into a voyeuristic frenzy as he uses the crime to figure out how to resolve his debt to a former gang mate. By adding layers of violence, an African setting, and the inclusion of a paralyzed Black protagonist, Dumisa creates a film that transcends the plot to comment on the social narrative of poor Black people following the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Thesis. *This paragraph introduces the film Number 37 to illustrate the thesis that underrepresentation of Black people in film is harmful to society.*

Evidence. *Marshall briefly summarizes plot events so that readers unfamiliar with the film know something about the plot and how it differs from Hitchcock's Rear Window. She also provides information about the main character and setting but indicates that these are not her focus, as she mentions that the film "transcends" plot. The implication is that it transcends certain other film criteria as well.*

> While both Hitchcock's Jefferies and Dumisa's Randal make light of a murder, Randal's response is mired in his social situation as a Black man in South Africa, whereas Jefferies's response is mired in his social situation as a privileged White man in America. Dumisa's film reflects a cultural depth that Hitchcock compromises for a joke. She understands that "you can entertain while still teaching the audience something" (Obenson).

Structure. *Marshall uses this paragraph to contrast the original Rear Window with a remake of the film. Comparing and contrasting similar works is an effective technique for illustrating a point when the purpose is to evaluate a work.*

Criteria. *As criteria for comparison, she chooses characters, plot elements, and most important here, social context. In her comparison, she uses a relevant secondary source, as she does in the paragraph that follows and introduces*

Black Panther.

> Malian writer, filmmaker, and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara describes the "manner in which black spectators may . . . resist the persuasive elements of Hollywood narrative" as a "challenge to . . . spectatorship and the aesthetics of Afro-American independent cinema" (845). The 2018 movie *Black Panther* may be understood as an answer to Diawara's challenge. Skillfully directed by African American screenwriter Ryan Coogler, *Black Panther* is an example of the aesthetic beauty and financial success that art can achieve when not only are Black characters cast but also when Black storylines are expressed by the people who have had firsthand experiences.

Criteria. *Using a genre criterion of directing, Marshall notes director Coogler's "skill."*

Criteria. *Marshall praises the performance of American actor Chadwick Boseman (1976–2020).*

Social Context. *She also quotes from a secondary source as an opportunity to respond to and engage with the scholar quoted.*

> *Black Panther* chronicles the origin of the Marvel superhero Black Panther—played compellingly by Chadwick Boseman—who is descended from a line of black panthers living in the fictional African region of Wakanda. Wakanda is technologically advanced because of its rich store of a fictional metal called Vibranium. While the Wakandans have benefited from Vibranium, they have kept it from the outside world by cloaking their society in the stereotypical poverty expected of Africans by Western nations. In *Black Panther*, this reversal of the roles of the advanced and the underprivileged serves as a critique of the historical actions of Western nations.

Social Context. *In the paragraph above and the one that follows, the author focuses on social context. She wants readers to see the possibilities in Black Panther when Black people's authentic stories are shown to a wider audience.*

> Although mythological and thus fictional, the movie features many references to African American history and the African American experience: slavery and the slave trade, colonization, the exploitation of Africa, civil rights, Black militancy, systemic poverty, and the loss of Black men—especially fathers—to violence and incarceration. These topics are usually whitewashed or ignored in popular cinema because of their graphic and racially charged nature.

Comparison to Other Films. *Marshall broadens the scope of her statement by bringing in the problem as it relates to other films.*

> However, because diverse audiences viewed and welcomed this film, the movie registered as valuable not only for the people it reflected but for non-Black people as well. This effect supports Dumisa's argument that Black art has the power both to entertain and to instruct when representation is not only present but authentic.

> The film reinvents the representation of Black people in American cinema through its characterization of Black superheroes. Although the villain of *Black Panther,* Erik Killmonger, is Black, the character is not the stereotypical Black criminal of movies past. Despite his last name and the negative connotation of *monger*, this intense and angry antihero, played by Michael B. Jordan, captures the sympathy of viewers.

Connotation. *Marshall explains Killmonger's name. Monger, meaning "vendor," has a negative connotation, implying dealing aggressively in an undesirable product.*

> While young, Killmonger loses his Black militant father who was living in the United States as a Wakandan emissary. Killmonger's anger and his fight against Wakanda represent an effort to take back what he views as his father's loss—the ability to arm poor Black people throughout the world in a fight for civil rights. Although his anger may be misguided, viewers are able to understand its source and empathize. If the Killmonger villain were purely evil or unintelligent, he would have embodied the criminal stereotype who has appeared in a lot of movies. In this film, however, he becomes someone who cannot find a positive outlet for his Black rage, something that is relatable to many Black people today.

Evidence Based on Criteria. *Using specific details from the film, Marshall illustrates how Black Panther "reinvents the representation of Black people in American cinema." She describes Killmonger in detail and connects those traits to her point that the character represents a villain whose motivations are relatable to the audience.*

> When the Black Panther, T'Challa, reclaims Wakanda from Killmonger at the end of the movie, he shows his cousin Killmonger grace by inviting him back into the Wakandan community, an ideal that is characteristic of the Black communal experience. T'Challa offers Killmonger a place in their society, which Killmonger rejects, lamenting, "Just bury me in the ocean with my ancestors who jumped ships, 'cause they knew death was better than bondage." Killmonger's frustration mirrors the modern-day frustration with the exploitation and degradation of Black people in all aspects of life. The incarceration of Black citizens, primarily men, is the simple answer to the complex problem that crime is often the manifestation of poverty, social oppression, and systemic racism, and even Wakanda is not immune from this problem. In this sense, Wakanda is not a utopia, but a working model of purposeful Black agency within the international community.

Evidence. *Marshall continues her analysis with more specific examples, this time quoting from her primary sources to illustrate her point.*

> A systematic form of racism is perpetuated by producers and filmmakers intentionally distorting or excluding the Black experience from art. These racist intentions have the effect of teaching, or brainwashing, audiences to dismiss Black perspectives, thus contributing further to the racist structure of the film industry. When films leave out Black characters, they create a narrative reality in which Black people are not essential. This situation translates into a physical reality where Black experiences and stories are not seen as profitable or valid by the public.

Connotation and denotation*. Marshall uses words with strong connotations: short-sighted and narrow, when used in certain contexts (relating to a vision problem and to width). These words take on negative connotations when placed in a cultural context. So do words like brainwashing, which has negative connotations as opposed to a more positive or neutral word like teaching or instilling. Diverse, however, has positive connotations in this same context, despite its neutral denotation of "varied."*

> However, when the short-sighted and narrowly representative *Rear Window* is contrasted with the diverse and highly successful *Black Panther*, the act of dismissing Black characters appears outdated and not economically necessary. Yet the practice of exclusion continues in many high-budget films because Hollywood is still controlled largely by the White male point of view. These male executives have a stake in producing films that support and facilitate the status quo of the perpetuation of a narrative that they can relate to. They have no reason to emphasize story lines that compete with or threaten their authority unless audiences become critically aware of the power of media to legitimize and delegitimize social groups. Audiences must "resist the persuasive elements of Hollywood narrative" (Diawara 845) with their pocketbooks.

Conclusion. *Marshall ends with a rewording of her thesis, as well as a summary of her evidence. She issues a call to action through a quotation from one of her secondary sources.*

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Citation: *Marshall uses MLA style to document her sources.*

Discussion Questions

1. What criteria does Caelia Marshall use to evaluate the films she reviews in her essay?
2. How does Marshall provide background and context behind the films *Rear Window and Black Panther*?
3. Why has Marshall chosen to focus on criteria other than those listed in Figure 7.3? Do you think her choice is effective? Why or why not?
4. How does Marshall's use of secondary sources help support or hinder her review of the films she discusses?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of films with characters to whom the audience can or cannot relate? Which do you prefer? Why?

7.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Entertainment

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Compose a review based on a thesis supported by analysis and evaluation.
- Demonstrate the steps of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Participate in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.

Throughout this chapter, you have learned about the review genre. You have learned that reviews evaluate a variety of items. In addition to books, films, and TV shows, people look to reviews to buy cars, choose restaurants, hire plumbers, and more. In this section, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the review genre by composing your own review.

Summary of Assignment: Review of Primary Media Source

Write a review of a specific film, book, TV series, podcast, play, or video game that you think contributes something significant to the genre and to the culture at large. Show how the subject—the primary source—of your review illustrates something compelling or exceptional about a particular idea or theme common to the genre. For example, the CW series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) is a romantic comedy that eschews and even satirizes traditional romantic comedy tropes such as the "grand gesture," doing something out of love for someone. Use specific evidence from your primary source to support a central idea, or thesis. In an essay of about 1,200 to 1,500 words, provide an overall judgment about your subject and support it with evidence from the primary source and from secondary sources if applicable. In addition, explore how your specific source has contributed something significant to its genre. In other words, *why is this subject interesting, different, or worthy of analysis?* Be sure to demonstrate awareness of your source's cultural and historical context as well. For example, if your review is about a romantic comedy, provide relevant information about the history, conventions, or expectations of that genre. Think about and explain the ways your topic adheres to or breaks from audience expectations.

Another Lens 1. Create a three-to-five-minute podcast review of a specific film (https://openstax.org/r/film),

book (https://openstax.org/r/book), TV series, album (https://openstax.org/r/album), podcast, play, or video game. *How does the subject of your review illustrate something interesting or unique about a particular idea or theme common to the genre?* Integrate specific evidence from the primary source and secondary sources, if applicable, to support a main idea, or thesis.

To record your podcast review, use either a simple recording method, such as the voice memo app on your smartphone, or something more sophisticated, such as *Garage Band* or *iMovie.* To become more familiar with this genre of reviewing, listen to one or two of the examples linked above. Note how this genre is somewhat different from an academic essay. For example, the speaker's voice is more conversational and engages the audience auditorily by stressing particular words or syllables. In your review podcast, take advantage of the opportunity to present a more informal tone than you might use in an academic essay. Podcast hosts are often successful because of their personality and ability to connect with their audience. Draft a script for your review podcast that reflects your personality and use of language, rather than formal language. For example, use contractions, first- or second-person pronouns, and appropriate slang.

Finally, to maximize the effect of your podcast, consider incorporating short clips from the subject of your review. Upload your podcast review to SoundCloud (https://openstax.org/r/SoundCloud) and share your review with the class. For more direction on public speaking, consult Scripting for the Public Forum: Writing to Speak.

Another Lens 2. Instead of a straightforward review of a single primary source, review several sources in the same genre, as Caelia Marshall has done in her essay. Or compare a film to the book on which it is based and evaluate it. Select your sources from films, books, television programs, video games, or any other form of entertainment, focusing your review essay on a single area, such as social context, character development, or screenplay vs. original text. Choose other genre-specific evaluation criteria as well, and address them in your essay, as Marshall does. Use specific evidence from your primary sources and secondary sources, as needed, to support your main idea, or thesis. In other words, *why is this source interesting, different, or worthy of analysis?*

Quick Launch: Developing Evaluative Criteria

To write an effective review, you need clear and relevant evaluation criteria. To help you establish your review criteria, fill in a table similar to Table 7.3 by following these steps:

1. Write the name of your primary source.
2. In the left-hand column, write the genre category to which your topic belongs (horror, action, biography, etc.).
3. Under the genre, brainstorm as many characteristics of the genre as you can.
4. In the right-hand column, write "Examples."
5. Brainstorm as much evidence from your primary source as you can think of.
6. Create a second table called "Subgenre." For example, if your topic is a horror film, some possible subgenres might be "ghost horror," "monster horror," or "slasher horror." Add a colon after *Subgenre*, and write the subgenre type.
7. Label the left-hand column "Subgenre Elements" and the right-hand column "How to Evaluate."
8. In the Subgenre Elements column, brainstorm for as many characteristics of the subgenre as you can. You can use some relevant characteristics from step 3, but try to focus on unique characteristics of the subgenre. For example, what makes a horror film about a ghost, such as *The Grudge* (2020), different from a slasher horror film, such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003)?
9. In the right-hand column, develop questions to assess characteristics.
10. Select three to five genre characteristics with the most evidence, and focus on them as you look closely at your primary sources. Take notes and gather evidence to support your evaluation.

Primary Source: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003 Film)	
Genre Characteristics: Horror	**Examples**
Script/plot: Scary story	Presented as a "true" story, scary ending
Characters: "Monster" or "thing" that kills	Leatherface, a masked killer who wields a chainsaw
Characters: Victims, usually multiple	Young people stranded on a road trip
Setting: Rural Texas	Creepy locations with potential for violence
Special effects: (gore, jump scares, etc.)	Gore: blood and guts
Sound effects: Screaming	Many victims and screaming from road trippers
Cinematography: "Gross" or "creepy" images	Meat plant, creepy house
Subgenre: Slasher Horror	
Subgenre Elements	**How to Evaluate**
One deranged killer	Is the killer believable in the moment? Does the killer scare me?
One weapon characteristic to the killer	Is the weapon creative? Does it fit the killer's character?
Killer with a backstory	Does the backstory tell me why the killer is deranged? Does it convince me it's the reason they kill?
Killer hunts the victims	Victims' terror should be convincing: realistic screaming, fear, etc.
Creepy images: setting, props, etc. need to be realistic	Are they realistic? How? How do the images add to the sense of fear?

TABLE 7.3 Genre and subgenre evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*:

The Killer (Leatherface): How effective is he at scaring the audience? How does he scare the audience (backstory, appearance, weapon, etc.)?

Images/Setting: How do the filmmakers create a creepy setting? How does the setting add to the fear?

The Victims: How do they project fear (screaming, etc.)? How effective or convincing is their fear?

Drafting: Thesis Statement, Analysis, and Supporting Examples

After you have selected a topic and decided on the evaluation criteria, spend some time looking closely at your primary source (the film, TV show, book, etc. you have chosen to review). With these criteria in mind, view/read/listen to your primary source. Take notes on how your selected evaluation criteria apply to your source. When you come across strong and relevant examples, write down vivid, detailed descriptions of the scene and quote applicable dialogue. By looking closely at your primary source and taking notes now, you will have solid and specific examples to illustrate your points later when you draft your review.

Also, while you are looking closely at your primary source, think about the features that appeal to you. *Is there*

a character that is particularly interesting? Do you see an interesting viewpoint on a theme or idea? Is the writing or the use of language interesting, different, or clever? How does it keep your attention or provide something unexpected? The answers to these questions can lead you to your overall evaluation and thesis.

Thesis

Use a graphic organizer like Table 7.4 to plan your draft. Then, you will use the notes you took earlier to help you brainstorm for the main points that support the thesis and provide specific, concrete evidence.

Primary Source	Title of work(s) being reviewed
Angle of Analysis	Overall way you will organize your review: aspects of the source you will analyze or criteria on which you plan to focus. Example: female romantic-comedy leads.
Filters	Ways to narrow your focus, such as time, place, cultural context, comparison to similar sources. Examples: the female lead in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* versus other female romantic comedy leads or how the 1961 film version of *A Raisin in the Sun* depicts Lena Younger as a "tyrant."
Main Argument	The idea you'll use to draft a working thesis; must be a debatable point about your topic. Example: Rebecca Bunch, the female lead in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, is flawed and not virtuous. Her shortcomings make her character more engaging than traditional romantic-comedy female leads.
Thesis	One sentence (sometimes two) that clearly states your argument. Example: Although most romantic-comedy female leads are virtuous and have admirable character traits, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend's* Rebecca Bunch is flawed and sometimes unsympathetic; however, the audience still roots for her to find love.

TABLE 7.4 Preliminary drafting plan sample

Planning the Main Points and Body Paragraphs

Your main points should be your topic sentences, expressed as one sentence at the beginning of each paragraph. Preview these main points by adding *because* to your thesis statement as illustrated below.

Examples

- Because romantic comedies such as *Knocked Up* (2007) depict their leads as unquestionably "good" people . . .
- Because Rebecca Bunch is sometimes selfish . . .
- Because Rebecca Bunch is sometimes promiscuous . . .
- Because despite these flaws, men still seek her attention . . .
- Because the audience sees Rebecca as realistic, they root for her . . .

Now complete a graphic organizer like Table 7.5 by adding your main points from your primary source.

Point 1. Because . . .	Explanation: Example:
Point 2. Because . . .	Explanation: Example:
Point 3. Because . . .	Explanation: Example:
Point 4. Because . . .	Explanation: Example:

TABLE 7.5 Main points organizer

As you continue to plan your review, consider these questions: *Depending upon your audience, how much background or context should you provide about your topic? Are they likely or unlikely to have knowledge about the topic? Do you need to summarize anything about your primary source? Do you need to provide historical or cultural context?* Use the notes you took earlier as your draft your essay. Remember, you can change things! It is up to you to decide how to organize your argument and where to present specific evidence.

Your review will contain both summary/observation (objectivity) and evaluation/analysis (subjectivity). Practice determining whether statements are summary or observation as opposed to evaluation or analysis.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/7-5-writing-process-thinking-critically-about-entertainment)

Secondary Source Evidence

Once you form your own opinions, you may want to look for additional sources to support your review. Secondary sources, or sources that contain the opinions and analyses of others, are frequently used in academic writing to help writers support a point or provide background and context. Scholarly, peer-reviewed secondary sources give your review greater credibility because the articles are written by experts in their fields. Use your college library's databases, or ask a librarian whether your college provides access to journals that publish articles on movies, television, and culture. Most colleges have access to JSTOR, a database search engine focused on the humanities. In addition, the MLA International Bibliography is a common database of journals related to culture. Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources provide more information about finding sources.

Another, less academic, place to look for secondary sources is in **Recap**. In recent years, recapping has become a popular way to join the conversation about TV shows, with sites such as *The AV Club, The Huffington Post*, *Slate* (https://openstax.org/r/slate), *The Verge* (https://openstax.org/r/theverge), and *Vox* (https://openstax.org/r/vox) dedicating staff to summarizing and discussing popular shows. Fans engage with each other and recap writers by commenting on and sharing the articles.

Note, too, that well-known publications, such as *The New York Times* (https://openstax.org/r/thenewyorktimes), review not only movies and TV shows but also products such as those you may have chosen to write your review about. In addition, *Consumer Reports* (https://openstax.org/r/consumerreports) is one of the longest-running magazines dedicated to reviewing products of all kinds. Many websites, as well, review

video games and consoles.

Drafting the Introduction

The **introduction** should interest readers in your topic and make them eager to learn more about it. If you were proposing this idea to a company, *what would your "elevator pitch" be? What might you say to quickly pique audience interest?* You might describe the part that convinced you it was good. You might explain why your audience would find the topic relatable.

Be sure readers know by the end of the introduction what specifically you are reviewing. Provide the title and necessary background/context: when it was made, the medium (film, book, podcast), the genre, and how to find it (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu). Include your overall evaluation: *Did you like it or not, and why overall?*

Then present your thesis at the end of your introduction.

> ***Introduction example.*** Many people love romantic comedies, but what happens when real life isn't like the movies? We are conditioned to believe there is one person we are destined to be with. Disney movies, TV shows like *The Office*, Hallmark Channel Christmas movies, and traditional romantic comedies reinforce the notion that for the believer, true love is right around the corner. But everyone knows the pain of rejection or of pining for a person who doesn't seem to notice them. The CW series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* shows what it's like when love is more complicated than what we see in the movies. The show follows Rebecca Bunch, a successful but unhappy—and far from virtuous or admirable—New York lawyer who instantly abandons her life to move to West Covina, California, to pursue Josh Chan, her summer-camp crush from long ago. Rebecca cooks up crazy, desperate schemes to get the attention of the aloof and clueless Josh. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* masterfully taps into our inner crazy ex by making good comedy out of Instagram stalking, relationship sabotage, and infatuation.

Now, write your introduction:

General statement: _____

Background or context: _____

Brief summary: _____

Evaluation: _____

Thesis: _____

Drafting the Body

For the body of the review, provide more background and context wherever you think such information is necessary. Because the purpose of this part of the review is to present the main points that support the thesis, be sure to show how these points explain the criteria on which you have based your evaluation. Back up the main points with specific, concrete evidence from your primary source. At this point, return to your early notes and use the descriptions and quotations you gathered. You will likely have collected more evidence as well. Use a graphic organizer like Table 7.6 to create your draft. Main points 1 and 2 should be your topic sentences.

Main point 1	Explanation: Evidence: Examples: Quotations: Secondary source evidence (if needed):
Main point 2	Explanation: Evidence: Examples: Quotations: Secondary source evidence (if needed):
Main point 3	Explanation: Evidence: Examples: Quotations: Secondary source evidence (if needed):
Main point 4	Explanation: Evidence: Examples: Quotations: Secondary source evidence (if needed):
Main point 5	Explanation: Evidence: Examples: Quotations: Secondary source evidence (if needed):

TABLE 7.6 Drafting the body

Drafting the Conclusion

For the conclusion, summarize briefly how the criteria you used led you to your evaluation, rephrase or validate your thesis, and make a recommendation.

> ***Conclusion example.*** *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend is a refreshing take on the romantic comedy genre. It elevates comedy by using catchy, original songs to accompany clever dialogue. Though Rebecca is intense and extreme, her situation is relatable, and she comes across as more sympathetic than not, proving that people don't have to be perfect to be deserving of love. The departures from the romantic comedy playbook leave the audience guessing what will happen next, ensuring the show never feels tired or stale. What comes after the grand gesture and big kiss? That's a question this show tries to answer, and sooner than you might expect. If you're looking for a new binge-worthy show, clear your calendar for the next week and give Crazy Ex-Girlfriend a try.*

Now, write your conclusion.

Brief summary of criteria and evaluation: _____

Restate or validate thesis: _____

Make a recommendation: _____

Peer Review: Conferencing with a Partner

After you finish your draft, receiving feedback from a peer will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses in your review. Because writers sometimes find it hard to review their work from the perspective of their audience, peer feedback will help you see your writing in ways not obvious to you. As a peer reviewer yourself, try to offer suggestions to make the essay more like something you would want to read.

To give and receive the most effective feedback, use the following guidelines:

1. On your own draft, note the areas you are unsure about and where you especially want feedback. It's a good idea to have specific questions so that your peer can focus on what you think will help you.
2. When you are assigned a peer, read their essay at least once without commenting, just to get a sense of what the essay is about.
3. Read the essay a second time. In the margins, add any comments or reactions to the essay.
4. Focus on the introduction and comment on its effectiveness.
    1. In what ways are the first few sentences engaging?
    2. Would you want to keep reading to learn more? Why or why not?
    3. In what ways does the introduction clearly establish what is being reviewed? Does it provide sufficient background information? In what ways does the thesis make a judgment or an evaluation with a reason that leads to the judgment or evaluation?
    4. Mark what you think the thesis is. If you find no clear thesis, mark something for the writer to focus on to arrive at a thesis.
    5. Jot down one or two prodding, open-ended questions to help the writer develop or revise the thesis.
5. Next, focus on the body paragraphs.
    1. Is enough background provided, either in the introduction or early in the body, to give you a complete sense of what the writer is evaluating?
    2. If there is not enough background, jot down a few questions that could be answered with additional background and context.
    3. What is the main point of each body paragraph?
    4. In what ways do the main points support the thesis (my thesis is true because . . .)?
    5. Do the body paragraphs contain specific, concrete details from the primary source to support the main points?
    6. If the body needs more specific details, mark places where the writer can add more detail.
6. Next, focus on the conclusion.
    1. Does the conclusion clearly tie up the main points?
    2. If not, how might the writer revise the conclusion?

7. Although your task is not to edit the essay or mark every error, point out any consistent patterns of grammatical errors.
8. When you have finished, summarize your comments at the end of the review by writing three things on which your peer can focus when revising.

As you work, be detailed and specific in your comments so that your peer can use them to make revisions:

- What specifically is working or not working?
- Why is it working or not working?
- What can the writer do specifically to revise?

If you are having trouble finding something to comment on, remember that you can make comments about what the writer does well. Be sure to explain in detail why you think it's working. Be sure to consult Evaluation: Effect on Audience as well.

Revising: Maintaining Ownership

When you receive your reviewed essay, look over the comments. Remember that they are merely suggestions; your revisions are ultimately up to you. For example, a sentence fragment, while technically incorrect, could be an effective way to emphasize a point. It is your call to decide whether your use of language is appropriate for your audience and purpose. With that said, however, it's possible your peer pointed out something you did not notice.

As you revise, keep in mind the following success criteria. Ensure your essay has them:

- **Specific topic:** The essay is about a specific TV show, film, book, podcast, video game, or other primary source(s).
- **Interesting lead:** You show your audience why this topic interests you and try to capture their attention.
- **Thesis:** You present a clear, debatable, and specific thesis about your topic.
- **Body:** The body supports the thesis with clear main points. Summary is used effectively to provide background and context.
- **Specific details:** You support your main points with relevant and ample details (in the form of quotations, paraphrases, vivid descriptions, etc.) from the primary source or sources as well as secondary sources, if you have used them.
- **Citation:** Sources are cited correctly in the text.

7.6 Editing Focus: Quotations

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role direct quotations play in writing.
- Select and integrate direct quotations into your writing.

Direct quotation, or someone's exact words, provide specific, concrete evidence from your primary and secondary sources. When reviewing a film or book, for example, you are likely to incorporate a number of direct quotations into your writing. Quotations are effective when they are used appropriately and correctly. For example, a general statement of observation such as "The candidate for senate gave a disastrous interview on TV last night" should be backed up with concrete evidence from the interview. To demonstrate how and why the interview was "disastrous," you might give examples such as these: "When asked whether she supported ethics reform, Ms. Simpson did not give a direct answer. She stated, 'I think ethics are important, and I hold myself to a high ethical standard.'"

While quotations are covered more extensively in Punctuation, this section will introduce you to using quotations in a review.

When to Use Quotations

Use quotations to support a point you are making. Avoid using them to *present* a point. Don't pepper your essay with randomly selected quotations because you think they make your essay look well researched. Instead, present your point, and back it up with a quotation.

Using a direct quotation is effective in the following instances:

- Because of its source, the quotation adds credibility to your point.
  - Wearing a mask is the easiest thing we can do as individuals to stop the spread of COVID-19. According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, "There should be universal wearing of masks." (Castillejo and Yang)

    Because Fauci is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), his statement on mask wearing is credible evidence that supports the point.
- Because the author makes a statement in a particular way, its meaning would be less effective if paraphrased.
  - In his review of the Microclimate Air Helmet, critic Drew Magary injects humor by quipping, "No one at the vape shop cared that I was dressed like I was in an old Moby video."

    Using a direct quotation from Magary's review illustrates his style of humor more effectively than a description or paraphrase of the joke.
- Because the quotation contains important information, it is more effective than a paraphrase.
  - Hurricane Harvey brought a record amount of flooding when it hit the Houston, Texas, area in 2017. Harvey's rainfall "dumped an estimated 27 trillion gallons of rain over Texas and Louisiana during a 6-day period." (Griggs)

    The direct quotation contains the exact statistics that show the record amount of flooding.
- Because the quotation adds variety to the language and voice of the essay, it makes the most impact on the audience in its original form. For example, quote directly from a person you are writing about so that the audience imagines them speaking.

A teacher may have suggested you use details to "show instead of tell." Quotations are one way to *show* your audience what you mean rather than *tell* them.

Practice finding quotations to illustrate the following point. You can search the web or your college library's article databases.

> Personal computing has evolved from a single desktop computer for the whole family to a truly "personal" relationship each individual has with their devices.

Hint: Look for information about how the size of personal computers has changed, how the industry has introduced new devices, how many Internet-connected devices an average person owns, and how many different people use an Internet-connected device on average.

Embedding Quotations

In reviews particularly, you may want to use dialogue or narration as evidence to support a point. Because a quotation should illustrate or support your point, be sure to state clearly and in your own words the point you are making. A properly formatted quotation will contain the following:

- **Quote in exact words:** Use ellipses (. . .) to omit irrelevant sections of a quotation or to shorten it. Use brackets ([]) to add information to a quotation to help it make sense.
  - Original Quotation: "Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses of all sizes. Every business from Fortune 500 companies to mom-and-pop stores has an obligation to protect customers' sensitive data. Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode trust." (Flynn)

    - Quotation using ellipses and brackets: “Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses . . . Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode [consumers’] trust [in the company].” (Flynn)

- **Correct punctuation:** Use quotation marks (“”) to show exactly where the quotation begins and ends. This punctuation helps separate the quotation from your words and ideas and helps you avoid plagiarism.
- **Signal phrase:** Simple attribution phrases like “Smith says” or “As Jones argues” are important to use with quotations so that the quotation is integrated into your own sentence. When quoting directly, set off the quoted material from the **signal phrase**, or speaker tag, with a comma, as in Example 1 below. When the quotation is broken up by a signal phrase, use quotation marks around the quotation and commas around the signal phrase. Place periods and commas that belong to the quotation inside the quotation marks.
    - Example 1: Smith shows us the importance of good time management skills when she says, “90% of A and B students begin their essays at least two weeks before they are due” (Flynn).
    - Example 2: “Many students,” Smith says, “leave insufficient time for writing assignments” (Flynn).
- **Parenthetical citation:** Cite the source of your quotation with a correct parenthetical citation. See the MLA Documentation and Format to learn more about citation.

Practice using a quotation you found in the previous exercise by introducing the quotation with a signal phrase, stating the quotation, and punctuating it correctly. Then introduce the signal phrase in the middle of the quotation, and punctuate it correctly.

7.7 Evaluation: Effect on Audience

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how your writing uses common elements of the review genre.
- Evaluate reviews for thesis, evidence, rhetorical choices, clarity, and language awareness by using a rubric.

Essays follow a structure that includes the introduction and thesis, body paragraphs with main points supported by relevant evidence, and a conclusion. In addition, academic essays are generally written with a formal tone, use precise wording, and are carefully edited. Essays should be written with a specific audience and purpose in mind and adhere to the conventions of the discipline’s formatting guide (MLA in this case). However, as you have worked to develop your writing voice during this course, you may have elected to challenge some of these conventions for rhetorical purposes. Beyond following the typical structure of an academic essay, a good review essay will demonstrate knowledge of the elements of the review genre, as discussed in Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, and Evaluation clear evaluation, specific criteria, and understanding of genre and context. The following rubric reflects the characteristics of an effective evaluation essay.

Rubric

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
5 **Skillful**	The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	All paragraphs are unified under a single, clear thesis and connected with appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is consistently clear and supports the thesis. Abundant and relevant supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, gives readers a sense of completeness. No major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered.	The writer fully engages the audience. Strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, and make them think about the topic. The writer consistently shows concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and shows appreciation for multiple perspectives. The writer demonstrates an understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing throughout demonstrates a sophisticated command of language.
4 **Accomplished**	The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	Most paragraphs are unified under a single, clear thesis and connected with appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is usually clear and supports the thesis. Relevant, if not always abundant (and vice versa), supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, gives readers a sense of completeness. No major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered.	The writer generally engages the audience. Some strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, and make them think about the topic. The writer generally shows concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and may acknowledge multiple perspectives. The writer often demonstrates understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing usually demonstrates a sophisticated command of the language.

TABLE 7.7

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
3 **Capable**	The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	Most paragraphs are fairly unified under a single thesis, though some may lack appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is usually clear; some or all of the paragraphs support the thesis. Relevant supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, may be lacking so that readers do not have a sense of completeness. One or two major questions from the assignment instructions may be unanswered.	The writer sometimes engages the audience. Occasional use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes may or may not succeed in drawing readers into the essay, keeping them interested, and making them think about the topic. The writer generally shows some concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic but may not acknowledge multiple perspectives. The writer sometimes demonstrates understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing demonstrates a fair command of the language in word choice and sentence structure.

TABLE 7.7

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
2 **Developing**	The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	Some paragraphs are fairly unified under a single thesis, but transitions are lacking or inappropriate. The topics of some paragraphs are clear, but not all support the thesis. Relevant and sufficient supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, is lacking so that readers do not have a sense of completeness. Major questions from the assignment instructions may be unanswered.	The writer occasionally engages the audience and makes little or no use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes. With such omissions, the writer does not draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, or make them think about the topic. The writer generally shows little or no concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and ignores multiple perspectives. The writer may demonstrate some understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing demonstrates little command of language in word choice and sentence structure.
1 **Beginning**	The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	Most paragraphs lack unity under a single thesis. Transitions are lacking or inappropriate. The topics of most paragraphs are unclear, and not all support the thesis. Relevant and sufficient supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, is lacking so that readers have no sense of completeness. Major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered or are addressed with little attention.	The writer rarely, if ever, engages the audience and makes little or no use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes. The writer does not draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, or make them think about the topic. There is little or no concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and little or no attention to multiple perspectives. The writer demonstrates little or no understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review and minimal command of language in word choice and sentence structure.

TABLE 7.7

7.8 Spotlight on … Language and Culture

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of sociohistorical context, including cultural and linguistic variations, in the review genre.
- Identify and act on opportunities to publish a review.

Reviewing, and evaluation and analysis more generally, often involves showing understanding of sociohistorical context. In other words, the work you are reviewing was created at a particular time for a specific audience. The film *Black Panther*, for example, was released in 2018 for a primarily American audience, but viewers and reviewers can delve further into this film's cultural context.

For one thing, this film can be placed in the context of other films from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The MCU features characters from Marvel comic books and began with the release of *Iron Man* in 2008. In addition to the *Avengers* films, the MCU includes character-specific "origin story" films of which *Black Panther* is a part. Characters from one film may appear as characters in other MCU films.

In addition, *Black Panther* is part of a touchstone cultural moment. Since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter (2013–present) movement, more attention has been called to the lack of Black representation in films and TV. The film's Black Panther, played by Chadwick Boseman, is a Black superhero who gives Black moviegoers a chance to see a superhero who looks like them. The film also comments on Black poverty and questions whether power and wealth should be shared or hoarded. The film also provides audiences of other backgrounds and ethnicities with the opportunity to witness characters who are developed beyond their stereotypes, as Caelia Marshall points out regarding the character of Killmonger in the Annotated Student Sample. These elements work to create empathy within a multicultural society.

Offensive Language: When Is It Offensive and When Is It Artful?

The question of language as a reflection of culture often surfaces in writing and reviewing dialogue, whether in film or books. *When is offensive language gratuitous, and when does it serve an artistic purpose?* The answer is never clear-cut in such areas, but as a reviewer you can ask yourself certain questions to determine whether you think it enhances the work. The basic, if simplified, question is this: *Does the work lose its strength, honesty, sense of reality, or characterization if offensive language is removed?* If the answer is *yes,* then the language serves an artistic purpose. Imagine, for example, dramas dealing with criminals involved in organized crime. The offensive language seems natural and contributes to the drama's realism. Take away the language, and that realism is lost. Other films, however, would lose nothing in character depiction or realism if offensive language were omitted—not substituted for something less offensive.

Diversity in Hollywood

Recently, more attention is being paid to diversity in television and movies. The #OscarsSoWhite controversy began after the 2015 Oscars, following two consecutive years of all White nominees in the leading and supporting actor categories. The uproar brought awareness to the lack of diversity in Hollywood, and not just in terms of actors. Conversations about diversity behind the scenes began as well.

One criticism the #OscarsSoWhite controversy brought to light was about the stories Hollywood tells. *Whose stories get told, and who gets to tell those stories?* While a limited number of people of color have been nominated for and even won Oscars, traditionally they have been for movies about racism and slavery (written by White writers or directed by White directors) and stereotypical roles such as the "magic negro" (a Black character who helps a White character). Who gets to decide what stories are made into movies became a major subject of conversation, as the people who fund movies are also typically White.

The movie *Green Book* (2018) illustrates the backlash that can happen when movies fail to include enough diverse voices. The film is about a Black pianist (played by Mahershala Ali, b. 1974) and his White driver (played by Viggo Mortensen, b. 1958) traveling the country in 1962. The movie won the Oscar for Best Picture

that year, and Ali won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. However, criticism of the movie was aired both before and after the Oscars ceremony. The family of the real-life pianist, Don Shirley (1927–2013), said the filmmakers worked with them very little. Some criticized the movie for seeming to be more about the driver, Frank Vallelonga (1930–2013), than about Shirley. The movie's director, Peter Farrelly (b. 1956), is a White man better known for directing raunchy comedies than movies about the Civil Rights era.

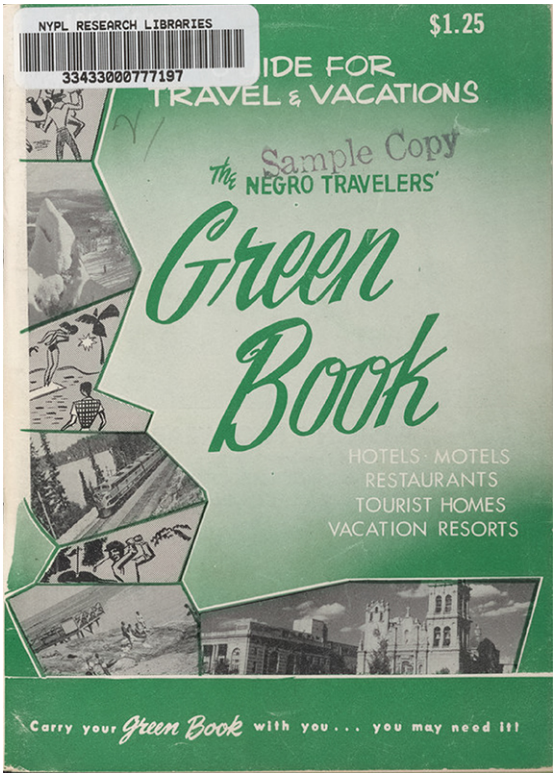


FIGURE 7.3 The film's title refers to The Green Book, a travel guide published from 1936 to 1966 that listed hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other places that welcomed Black travelers. This issue is from 1959. (credit: "The Negro Travelers' Green Book 1959" by Victor Hugo Green [1892–1960]/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

All of these points highlighted the importance of diversity not only on set, but among those who participate in the voting bodies of the Oscars and Golden Globe Awards. As a result, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which chooses the nominees and winners of the Oscars, and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which chooses the nominees and winners of the Golden Globe Awards, introduced measures to diversify their ranks. Despite promises to diversify, however, it was revealed in 2021 that the HFPA had no Black members. As a result, NBC decided to stop broadcasting the Golden Globe awards, and some prominent celebrities, such as Tom Cruise (b. 1962), sent their awards back.

Hollywood has been a White, male-dominated industry. Movie critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, were two of the most influential critics in film history. For most of Hollywood's history, White men have influenced how television and movies have been received. This situation has been changing, as the Internet and increased cultural awareness are helping to create more diversity. For example, National Public Radio Pop Culture Happy Hour (https://openstax.org/r/popculturehappyhour) regularly invites people of color, women, and LGBTQ people onto its panel. Their views on gender, race, and queerness in movies and television provide perspectives often missing from mainstream criticism.

Publish Your Work

After you have written and revised your essay, share it with the world. One easy way to share is to post a condensed version of your essay online. Here are some sites to consider, depending on the genre and medium of your review subject.

Books

- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/booksamazon)
- Good Reads (https://openstax.org/r/booksgoodreads)
- Barnes and Noble (https://openstax.org/r/bornesandnoble)

Films

- Rotten Tomatoes (https://openstax.org/r/rotentomatoes)
- Internet Movie Database (https://openstax.org/r/internetmoviedatabase)
- The AV Club (https://openstax.org/r/theavclub)
  - For *The AV Club*, consider participating in a conversation about the subject of your review by posting in the comments section of a review.

Video games

- GameStop (https://openstax.org/r/GameStop)
- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/videogameamazon)

Podcasts

- Google Podcasts (https://openstax.org/r/googlepodcasts)
- Stitcher (https://openstax.org/r/stitcher)

TV shows

- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/tvshowsamazon)
- The AV Club (https://openstax.org/r/theavclub)
- Internet Movie Database (https://openstax.org/r/internetmoviedatabase)

You can also seek out other opportunities to share your writing in local newspapers and magazines. Contact the editor of your college, alternative weekly, or daily newspaper and ask whether they accept freelance work.

7.9 Portfolio: What the Arts Say About You

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect in writing on the development of composing processes.
- Explain how those processes affect your work.

As you prepare to place this chapter's writing task in your portfolio, reflect on your review by answering the following questions.

- On what basis did you choose your topic? Did you choose it because of a long-standing interest in films, TV, books, or video games or because of something else?
- Did your evaluation and thesis seem obvious from the beginning, or did you have to think for a long time before settling on them?
- What made this topic personally appealing?
- What was easy about composing your essay? What was hard?
- What would you do differently if you could start over again?
- In what ways did you revise your essay between the first and final drafts?
- How did you get ideas for revision? Was it from peer feedback, your instructor, or a tutor?

Reflective Task

Now write a reflection for your portfolio, adding a section about your interest in the genre of the primary source you chose. Discuss your reflection with another student, noting areas of similarities and differences.

Further Reading

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