

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

Reviews are usually written for newspapers, magazines, newsletters, etc, and their style (formal or semi-formal) depends on how serious the publication is. The purpose of a review is to inform the reader about a book / film / play / CD / etc. and give your opinion about it.

Reviews usually present a combination of the following:

description (e.g. of the characters in a play, the scenery, the costumes, etc.);

narration (e.g. of the plot of a film/play, etc);

explanation (e.g. why you think the book / play was (not) successful);

comparison (e.g. two characters / two films / two CDs / etc).

A **theatrical review** usually gives a short account of the plot, describes the flaws and assets of the production, contains critical commentaries (about what should be done to make it better) and a conclusion where the reviewer states if the performance is worth visiting.

A review should contain:

- An introduction in which you give the main details (e.g. names of film / book, writer / director, main stars / characters, etc).
- A main body which focuses on the details requested by the rubric (e.g. description, narration, analysis, etc).
- A conclusion which can contain a summary of the main body and / or a positive/negative opinion. The conclusion usually contains a recommendation.

Present tenses are usually used for reviews (e.g. The action ***takes place*** in a small cottage in the country).

Past tenses can be used if you are writing a personal account of a performance you have attended, etc. (e.g. We ***arrived*** just before the curtain ***went*** up but it ***was*** obvious that the audience ***were*** already restless; I ***thought*** the first act was spectacular.)

When writing reviews, you need to use a variety of adjectives (e.g. *a marvellous performance, an interesting plot*, etc). To add emphasis, you can use adverbs such as ***extremely, completely, absolutely*** etc. (e.g. *The performance was absolutely marvellous.*)

Model Review

On a recent visit to the US, I was lucky enough to catch a performance of Eduardo de Filippo's "Saturday, Sunday, Monday", at the Angus Bowmer Theatre in Ashland, Oregon. This comedy, which was written in Italian but has been translated into English, provides a valuable insight into the life of an Italian family.

The play is set in the family home of Rosa, who is the mother, and the events take place over a weekend, with the action based either in the kitchen or around the dining table. As the plot evolves, we learn about the things that matter to a group of ordinary but very diverse characters.

What is striking about this production is the way the script makes us feel that we are actually present at a traditional family gathering. The use of a real cooker on the set fills the theatre with the unmistakable smells of Italian cooking. This somehow intensifies the experience as you begin to sense the atmosphere from the moment you enter the theatre.

I would say that the portrayal of the details of Italian home life was extremely realistic. The importance of family meals comes across clearly, as does the fact that Italian people are hospitable – traditions which we, as a nation, hold very dear. The everyday problems of relationships are also brought into focus in a way which is totally believable.

I would thoroughly recommend this play to anyone, regardless of their nationality. If nothing else, it will prepare you for what to expect if you ever visit Italy!