

Task 1

Read Peter Bradshaw's review of *The Golden Compass* published in *The Guardian* on Tuesday 27 November 2007. You can find the review at:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2007/nov/27/nicolekidman.danielcraig>

While you read, notice how the review is constructed and which areas of interest it covers. Work with a partner and try to give each section of the review a title, describing its function. Then, using the review as a template, discuss what the component parts of any review should be and give an example of each from *The Golden Compass* review.

Task 2

As preparation for your own review, while you watch the film, make notes under the following headings so you can write about the film later:

- the basic story, its strengths and weaknesses
- the actors and their performances
 - ▶ Dakota Blue Richards as Lyra
 - ▶ Nicole Kidman, as Mrs Coulter
 - ▶ Lord Asriel played by Daniel Craig
 - ▶ Iorek Byrnison, voiced by Ian McKellen
- special moments and special effects
 - ▶ opening sequence
 - ▶ Lyra's relationships
 - ▶ daemons
 - ▶ bear fight
 - ▶ ending
- your opinion of the film (with reasons)
- who would enjoy the film and why.

Task 3

Now that you have watched the film, re-read Bradshaw's review and decide which points you agree with and where your opinion differs. You could use two different colours to highlight these on your copy of the review. Write a formal letter responding to his review. You could begin:

'I read your review of *The Golden Compass* published in *The Guardian* (Tuesday 27 November 2007) in my English lesson and then watched the film myself. For me, the film was ...'

Remember to address your letter to 'Mr Bradshaw' and to give it a subject line.

Task 4

Using the notes you made on Bradshaw's original review and those you made while watching the film write your own review outlining your opinion of *the Golden Compass*. You should make sure you cover the following things:

- your opinion of the film
- a brief outline of the plot
- who, in your opinion, gave the best performance (and what stood out about it)
- discuss some of the highlights of the film
- who you think the film would appeal to and why.

Task 5

Swap your review with a partner. Now, pretend you are Peter Bradshaw and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the review. Refer back to your notes on Bradshaw's own review to help you. You could write up your response as a letter or use the email template provided.



Film review

Use your notes to help you review *The Golden Compass*.

This movie version of *Northern Lights*, the opening episode of Philip Pullman's fantasy series *His Dark Materials*, is

Give your opinion.

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Briefly outline the story.

As far as the characterisation is concerned, the best performances came from

Pick out the best actors and say what you thought was best about their acting.

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A very memorable scene is a fight between the aggressive polar bear Iorek Byrnison and the usurper of his royal status. It's such a violent scene incidentally, that it almost rules out the film for a younger audience. Another

Discuss some highlights of the film and give your opinion.

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The Golden Compass is the perfect film if you are looking for

Summarise who would enjoy this film.

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Rating: ☆☆☆☆☆

Film review

Imagine you are Peter Bradshaw and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of your partner's review.

'The Golden Compass' review - Message

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help

Type a question for

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Send Accounts Options... HTML

To... student@english

Cc...

Subject: 'The Golden Compass' review

Dear

Thanks for your review - I can see you'll be a fine reviewer one day! I particularly liked the way you

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If I can offer you a bit of advice, it would be to suggest that you

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I'm sure that will make a huge improvement. Remember: practice makes perfect, so keep reading reviews and writing your own.

Happy reviewing ;-)

Peter Bradshaw, aka

Film review

Note to the teacher:

The first task here is to uncover what is included in a real review so that this information can be used as a template for students' own reviews. A link to *The Guardian's* review of *The Golden Compass* has been given; unfortunately we can't publish the review with the resource due to copyright restrictions.

Support lower ability students with task 1 by giving them colours which they could use to mark the features of the review. You could also direct them to 'look out' for parts telling the story, information and comments on the actors, highlights or specific moments that are discussed and the reviewer's own opinion.

Extend the task for more able students by asking them to find reviews in newspapers and magazines for homework, read a few and then analyse Bradshaw's review. This will give them a wider selection to draw from and more possible areas to cover.

Making notes while watching is a useful skill, particularly the selective element of note making. You may have to pause the film after Lyra walks through the college gate and discuss what to write about the opening, giving them time to jot down key words before proceeding.

The response to Bradshaw's review aims to help students develop a critical stance, engage with other opinions and to develop the ability to substantiate their opinions; especially when they disagree with one given by someone else. These skills are challenging, especially for weaker students, so this task could be turned into a class discussion before they start on the letter.

Most students should be able to use their notes to help them structure their review and should integrate the areas covered as Bradshaw does. However, weaker students may find this more difficult and may prefer to use the basic review sheet provided. They could be further supported with a whole class discussion of key words and useful phrases, this list could be written on the board to remind them to use some of the ideas in their own writing.

The e-mail peer assessment slip is merely to inject a bit of fun into reading each other's reviews. Sometimes pretending to be someone else allows students to be more honest as they don't have to flatter friends. Again, this is aimed at weaker students, although the more able may enjoy the fantasy element.