

Writing

You may have to write a **review**. This could be a review of a book, a film, a play or a place open to the public such as restaurant or a hotel. The review will usually include some kind of evaluation and may also involve discussion of wider issues related to the topic.

1)

1 Read the following writing task.

TASK

You are a student on a film studies course and have recently seen a remake of an old film. You saw the original film earlier in the course. Write a review of the new film for your college journal, saying what you think the problems might be in successful such remakes can be.

(300-350 words)

2 here is a possible structure for a film review.

- Introduction of topic
- Description of film
- Evaluation of wider issues
- Conclusion

2) Read the first part of the review below, which describes *Psycho*, a film originally made in 1960 by Alfred Hitchcock and remade in 1998.

1 Underline an example of a participle clause.

2 What is the purpose of the second paragraph?

Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller *Psycho*, originally shot in black and white, created a sensation when it was first shown in cinemas; its simple plot was filmed with consummate skill. Has the remake added anything to the original?

The story itself is still straightforward and little has been changed to script or plot. Marion, the victim, steals money from her employer. Driving away, she runs into bad weather and books into the Bates Motel. She is murdered in the shower. The Bates family secret is exposed and the murderer is revealed. Remaking the film was costly for the film studios - and was it worth it?

3) Read the list of ideas below. Choose those you might expect to be included in the second part of the review, which assesses the problems or remaking old films for modern audiences.

- values or historical perspective of original film possibly out of date
- original script possibly old-fashioned
- difficulties for directors on finding a new approach
- audience expectation of graphic special effects
- colour versus black and white

Discuss what problems these ideas might cause for film-makers and audiences. What examples would you choose to include to support your ideas? Would you add any other ideas to the list?

4) Read the second part of the review. Were any of your ideas included?

Remakes are actually quite popular, perhaps because studios can make money by cashing in on previous successes, or because remakes allow older audiences to wallow in nostalgia. However, they are not always successful and the new *Psycho* is a case in point. It is more colourful and more high-tech than the original – yet it has lost its impact. To me the original film seemed much fresher. Why is this? It may be that because the original film is more than thirty as theft and even murder have changed. The new version did not move me. Then, old films are not always suitable vehicles for the sophisticated special effects demanded by modern audiences. *Psycho* is a clear example of this. The original shower scene was terrifying, yet the only effect used was a shadow on the shower curtain. Could that simple shadow be bettered by more graphic effects? Clearly not – as the disappointing remake shows. Sadly, the expectations of modern audiences blind them to the value of simple story-telling and they overlook the subtleties of older films. This is not to say that films should never be remade, but watching the original *Psycho*, my eyes were opened to the craft of older films and the limitations of special effects.

Personally I doubt whether Hitchcock's version can ever be improved. After forty years, Hitchcock's *Psycho* remains absolutely terrifying. It is as perfect a film as one could want.

5) Read the whole review again, and answer the following questions.

- 1 What is the main point of each paragraph? Does the review match the structure suggested above? Justify your answer.
- 2 What two reasons does the writer give for old films being remade?
- 3 What problems does the writer suggest there might be in remaking old films?
- 4 What evidence does he provide from *Psycho* to support his ideas?

6)

- 1 What technique does the writer use in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 to involve the reader and introduce new issues?
- 2 Underline two words or phrases used by the writer to introduce his own opinion.
- 3 Is the writer in favour of remakes of films in general? Discuss his ideas in relation to any films that you have seen. Do you agree with him?

7)

- 1 Read the following writing task.

TASK

You have recently seen a film that depended very much on the use of technology and special effects for its impact. Write a review of the film, evaluating the use of technology and special effects in films in general and this film in particular, and giving your opinion about this type of development.

(300-350 words)

2 To start you thinking about the topic, discuss the following questions.

1 What film will you write about?

2 What types of special effects are used in modern films? Think about some of the following:

- setting
- costumes and make-up
- computer animation
- music and sound effects
- special filming techniques.

How effectively were they used in the film you saw and how much did they actually contribute to the film?

3 What is your overall opinion of the use of such technology in films? Who does it appeal to? Does it improve the quality of films?

8) Using the structure suggested in Exercise 1, write your review. Remember to include:

- a brief overview of the film you have chosen
- a description and evaluation of the way in which technology and special effects contribute to modern films, giving examples from the film you saw
- your own opinion on the use of these developments.