

Research Paper/Documented Essay

Introduction

A research paper (or documented essay) is a paper that relies on sources written by other people to back up its main ideas. When material from these outside sources is included in the paper, it must be documented so your reader can see where you found your information. The reason you use this outside material is to prove that the ideas you present are valid.

Topic

For this paper, you will choose a film to evaluate, and you will use critic reviews to support your evaluation. Remember, every point you make needs to be supported by your research (outside sources), so you need to find critic reviews that offer a thorough analysis of the film.

When choosing a film, use the following guidelines:

- **DON'T CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE**
If the critics don't like your movie, then that's what you'll have to report. Remember, this is not an opinion paper. Whatever you say in your paper has to be supported by the critics.
- **CHOOSE A RECENT FILM**
You'll likely find more sources if your movie was released within the last 5 to 10 years.
- **AVOID SILLY AND SHALLOW MOVIES**
Slapstick comedies, mindless action movies, and ultra-violent horror movies usually follow a basic formula, and critics tend to ignore them. It doesn't matter if you thought Dumb and Dumber was a funny movie; critics will not have much to say about it. This often includes children's and/or animated movies.
- **CHOOSE AWARD NOMINEES OR WINNERS**
Critics often respond to movies nominated for Academy or Golden Globe awards; but you want to focus on nominees for Best Picture, Best Director, or Best Cinematography. Nominations for awards like Best Music or Best Special Effects (sometimes even Best Actor or Actress) don't necessarily point to movies that were good as a whole.

Sources

For this paper, when I mention research or outside sources, I mean the critic reviews that you found. You will have to **USE** 5-6 sources in your paper. You need to **FIND** at least 8 sources. **USING** a source means you have paraphrased or quoted that review at least once in your paper. The reason you need extra sources is for backup. As you start writing your paper, sometimes you will discover that a source you thought would be helpful really isn't. You need to be able to throw out a source knowing that you have other sources to take its place.

There are **three TYPES of sources** you can use:

- **WEBPAGE** (you must **USE** at least one of these)
Any review from an online newspaper, magazine, or news program counts as a webpage source.
- **PRINT** (you must **USE** at least one of these)
Any review printed in a magazine, newspaper, or book counts as a print source. This does not include online magazines or newspapers. Also, if you find a PDF of a review in a database, and it looks like a photocopy straight out of the magazine, it counts as a print source.
- **DATABASE** (you must **USE** at least one of these—but no more than two)
A database source includes any review you found in a database like The Tennessee Electronic Library. It consists of an article or news report that was previously printed elsewhere, but the text has been copied into the database with thousands of other articles.

Finding Sources

Webpage Source (you must USE at least one of these)

These are the easiest to find. Most of you know how to use a search engine like *Google*; however, you must be careful to use **reliable** websites. You must keep in mind that anyone can host a website, whether that person is an expert or not; so, make sure you use reviews only from websites that appear to be owned and operated by a legitimate media or entertainment corporation. For this information, look at the copyright (usually at the bottom of the webpage).

Two search engines that are particularly useful for this paper are *IMDb* and *Rotten Tomatoes*. Go to either of these sites and type in a search for the movie you are interested in. You should then be able to find the links to critic reviews of your movie.

BE CAREFUL! Do **NOT** use any **USER REVIEWS**. Anyone may post a user review, so these reviews are not reliable—stick to the critic reviews. Also, be sure not to use these sites as sources. They are only search engines that you are using to link to the actual reviews.

When printing a webpage, be sure to look for a small printer icon or a “Print-Friendly” link at the top or bottom of your review. This will take you to a page without large ads or banners, so it will take fewer pages to print your review.

Print Source (you must USE at least one of these)

If you have or find an actual magazine or newspaper that has a review of your movie, you can make a photocopy of the page it is on, and this will count as a print source.

You can also use the **GALE database PowerSearch** to help you get a print source. You can get to this site by going to Central Magnet School library website and clicking on **TEL** (Tennessee Electronic Library), then “Research” (under “TEL Shortcuts”), and then **GALE PowerSearch**.

When you get to the **GALE PowerSearch page**, take the following steps:

1. Click on the “**Advanced**” search button in the top menu bar.
2. In the one of the keyword search boxes, type your movie in quotation marks. For example: “cinderella man”
3. Under “More Options,” be sure that the box next to “Full Text Documents” is selected.
4. Look for the pull down menu under “**by document type:**” under the “More Options” heading. Select “Movie review” from the menu. Then click “Search.”
5. If you end up with too many results, it may help to pick a narrower date range. You could also include the director’s or main actor’s name in a keyword box. This helps with movie titles with general words like *The Help*.
6. As you scroll down through the reviews, look for any that have a link that says, “**PDF page.**” When you click on that, a window will pop up (or a file will download) that shows the actual page from the magazine the review was printed in. This will count as a print source. Just be sure to print the PDF (or save to your OneDrive to print later).

Database Source (you must USE at least one of these—but no more than two)

When you follow the steps above to look up sources in the Tennessee Electronic Library, there will be many sources that have the full text of a review, but no PDF. You can still use these sources, but they will not count as your required webpage or print source. Just be sure that any source you use includes the **full text** of the review. Also, to print, use the “Print Preview” link to take you to a cleaner page that will print the review more efficiently.