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 the reader can see where the writer found the information. The reason for using this outside material is to prove that the ideas presented in the paper 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 you will have to report that the movie is bad. Remember, this is not an opinion paper. Whatever you say in your paper has to be supported by the critics.

- **CHOOSE A FAIRLY 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 mainstream 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 many children's and/or animated movies (unless they are Disney, Pixar, or other highly publicized movies).

- **CHOOSE AWARD NOMINEES OR WINNERS**
  Critics often respond to movies nominated for Academy or Golden Globe awards; however, 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** at least 5 sources in your paper. You need to **FIND** at least 8 sources. "**USING** a source" means you **paraphrase** or **quote** that review at least once in your paper. The reason you need extra sources is for backup. As you start writing your paper, you may discover that a source you thought would be helpful really isn't, so you will need to have other sources to use as backups. There is no limit on the number of sources you can use in your paper.

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

- **WEBPAGE** (you must USE at least two of these)
  Any review from an online newspaper, magazine, or news program counts as a webpage source. However, you **must** make sure it is a valid source of information.

- **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. When you download a PDF of a review in the database, if 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)
  A database source includes any review you found in an official database (like the Gale databases in 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.

Finding Sources

Webpage Source (you must USE at least two 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 information (usually located 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 *IMDb* or *Rotten Tomatoes* as sources. They are only search engines that you are using to link to the actual reviews.

When printing a webpage, be aware of extra "fluff" at the end of your document: advertisements, user comments, etc. You can control which pages you print in the print interface. Be sure to choose only those pages that include the actual review. You will also need to print pages that have the website name and the copyright (usually on the the first and last page of the printout).

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 **"Databases"** and then **"GALE PowerSearch."** It is also posted in the sidebar of my website.
When you get to the **GALE PowerSearch page**, take the following steps:

1. Click on the **"Advanced Search"** link under the search box at the top.
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 "Documents with Full Text" is selected.
4. Look for the pull down menu under "**by document type.**" 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 especially helps with movie titles with general keywords like *The Help* or *Get Out*.
6. Click on an article to read it. When it comes up, look at the links at the top right of the article, above the title. One of them is a "download" button. When you click on that button, a PDF file will download to the downloads folder on your computer. Open the PDF. If the file looks like an actual page from a magazine, then this PDF will count as a print source. See my website for examples.

Database Source (you must USE at least one of these)
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, and you can download a PDF, but not one that looks like a print source. You can still use these sources, but they will work as a database source, not as your required webpage or print source. Just be sure that any source you use includes the **full text** of the review.