

## **MOVIE REVIEW TEMPLATE**

Note: DON'T FORGET that movie titles are written within "quotation marks!"

**HEADLINE:** Include the title of the movie (try to use a pun!)

**PARAGRAPH #1:** Introduce the movie by stating that you've just seen this movie and would like to give an opinion about it. Mention a couple of details that might help the reader understand what type of movie you are talking about.

**PARAGRAPH #2:** Summarize the plot (story). Where and when did it take place? Who are the main characters? What is the story about? Remember, do NOT include spoilers and do not tell how the story ends!

**PARAGRAPH #3:** Talk about the actors/actresses and discuss who did a good job and who didn't.

**PARAGRAPH #4:** Talk about what you liked about the movie and what you didn't like. Be sure to include specific details and scenes.

**PARAGRAPH #5:** What lessons did you learn from this story (theme/moral)? What do you think others will learn from it?

**PARAGRAPH #6:** What group of people would like this movie? Who would you recommend it to? Who would you not recommend it to? What's the MPAA rating of the movie (G, PG, PG-13). What is your final word on the film: Is it excellent or rotten?

**RATING SYSTEM:** Give the movie a score. You can do grades (A,B,C,D,F+ or -), stars (\*\* out of \*\*\*\*\*), numbers (3 out of 5) or something totally original... just don't use "thumbs up" or "thumbs down."

## MOVIE REVIEW EXAMPLE

TITLE: **“My Dog Skip” will have you skipping to the theater**

By Coop Cooper, A.K.A. “The Small Town Critic”

Everyone remembers their childhood dogs and the impact they’ve had on their life. Perhaps one dog in particular sticks out in your mind... a special dog that was there for you in the toughest or best years of your life. That is what this screen adaptation of Willie Morris’ “My Dog Skip” conveys in a fun, nostalgic and heartbreaking kind of way. Morris recounts the autobiographical memoir of his childhood in Yazoo City, Mississippi and the four-legged friend that accompanied him on his journey into manhood.

Set in the backdrop of the war-torn world of the 1940’s, young Willie (Frankie Muniz) is on the verge of his ninth birthday. His only real friend, neighbor and high school sports hero Dink Jenkins (Luke Wilson) goes off and fight in WWII, leaving Willie feeling alone in the world. To lift Willie’s spirits, his mother (Diane Lane) decides to defy the wishes of his stern father (Kevin Bacon) and buy Willie a Jack Russell terrier puppy. The unusually smart and charismatic dog Skip quickly becomes a local institution and helps Willie gain respect, make friends and even win over his first girlfriend.

The young Morris is outstandingly played by Frankie Muniz, now a household name due to his success on TV’s “Malcolm in the Middle.” His acting is very mature and shows shades of emotions very effectively. Both Kevin Bacon and Diane Lane do decent jobs of portraying caring and concerned parents. Luke Wilson exceeds his normal comedy boundaries and pulls off the disgraced town hero with surprising effectiveness. However it’s the dog that steals the show... or should I say dogs. “Moose” (Eddie from TV’s Frasier) and his son “Enzo” play the older and younger Skip respectively. Look for them in more movies, commercials and TV shows to come. I guarantee you’ll see them.

Kevin Bacon and Diane Lane’s characters were strong, but didn’t get enough screen time to fully develop. Willie’s friendship with a young black boy was never given a chance to develop either, probably in an effort by the filmmakers to avoid focusing on the segregation issues of the time period. The issue is addressed, but I feel that the African-American characters should have had bigger, more substantial parts. Also, I didn’t get the whole subplot with the evil moonshine dealers and why they tormented little Willie and Skip. It seemed like a fictional part that was slapped on to cause more conflict. Despite these objections, the entire production was shot so effectively that it seemed that it genuinely conveyed feeling of growing up in rural Mississippi. The attention to detail and the accuracy of the time period are phenomenal. I felt completely immersed in this world and felt the full effect of this moving story. Even the southern accents were much better than average.

The message of this film is very clear and invokes plenty of nostalgia to anyone who can identify growing up in a rural town. It's about passing into adulthood, remembering old friends long gone, and the desire to remember or relive happy moments in our lives that may be fading from our memory. Morris is certainly a master at preserving his own memories by writing it down for others to enjoy. I truly believe that this story is his gift, not only to the people of Mississippi, but to all who want to remember their past, and the friends they left behind.

This movie is PG, a rating which might run off some of the older crowd, but it's truly a movie for everyone. Most films geared for children these days depend on lame, pop-culture references and gas-passing jokes in a patronizing attempt to entertain the younger masses. This movie rises above all of that to become one of the most watchable non-Disney film for children since 1993's "Searching for Bobby Fischer." Your date might resist going, but try to talk them into it. They won't regret it and neither will you.

**Scale of 1-5:**

**4 ½**