

Writing | Part 2

A review

- 1 Read the writing task below and underline the key points you must deal with.

You have seen this announcement in an international magazine.

We receive a lot of letters from readers asking us to recommend novels to read. We believe that they should read novels that they will find interesting and we'd like to publish reviews of novels which other readers have particularly enjoyed. Send us a review which describes the novel, says what you liked about it and explains why you recommend it.

Write your review.

- 2 Work in pairs. Decide which of these elements you should include in your review.
- a biographical information about the author
 - b a summary of the whole plot
 - c a general synopsis of the plot and characters and why they're interesting
 - d a description of the type of book, the setting and what it's about
 - e a mention of things you particularly like
 - f a recommendation for your readers and reasons for it
 - g a criticism of things you didn't like
 - h suggestions for other books that you think your readers would enjoy
- 3 Read the review of *Cold Mountain* without paying attention to the highlighting. Complete the paragraph plan for this review.

Plan

Para 1: type of novel, setting, outline of story

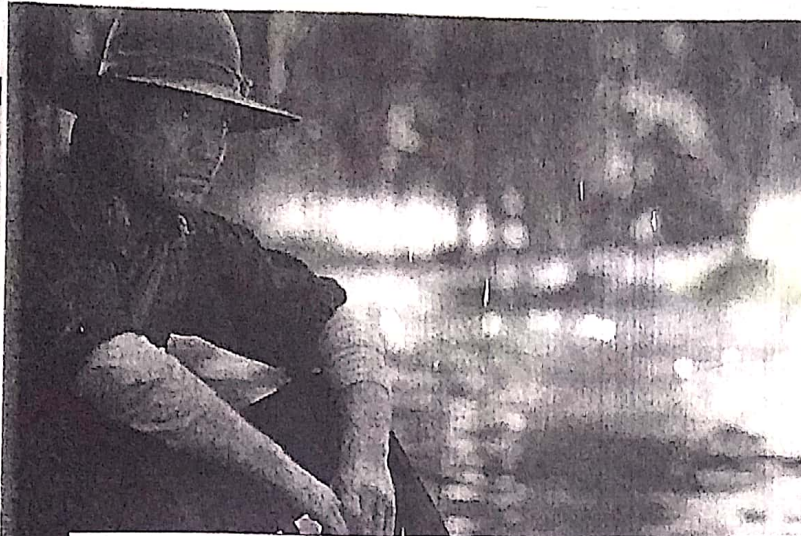
Para 2: character - writing style - plot

Para 3: Overall assessment of the book (whether it is good or bad), what you liked about it and a recommendation

- 4 Does the review give you a clear idea of what *Cold Mountain* is about? Having read the review, do you think you would enjoy the novel? Why (not)?

with justification

4



Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier

.....

Cold Mountain is a historical novel set in North Carolina during the American Civil War. It tells the story of the main characters, Inman and Ada. Inman is a deserter from the army who makes a hazardous journey across the country to join Ada, the woman he loves. The novel switches between Inman's journey and Ada's life on her farm, where she struggles to survive after her father's death.

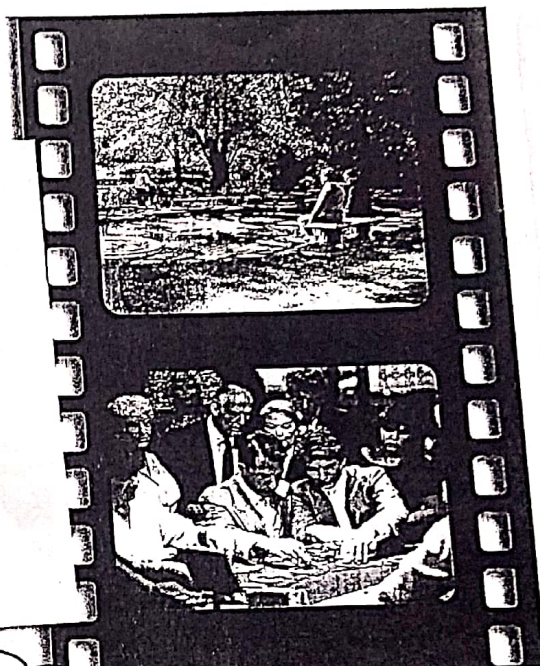
The novel contains a gallery of interesting characters. Inman is the thoughtful, observant hero who is desperate to escape the war and stay alive. He is motivated by love, but also capable of extreme violence. Ada, the heroine, comes from a well-off, sheltered background and at first seems incapable of surviving in harsh conditions, but as the novel progresses she becomes self-sufficient and decisive. She is helped by Ruby, a tough but lovable country girl. Also, during his journey, Inman meets many extraordinary minor characters who are trying to stay alive in unusual ways in wild, remote places.

I was fascinated by the vivid descriptions of American rural life at the time. I was also caught up in the suspense of each dangerous situation that Inman and Ada encounter during the story. If you enjoy historical novels, you will really love this book with its wonderful dialogues and its detailed observations and descriptions of life in nineteenth-century America. You will be transported into a world where love and kindness contrast with horror and cruelty to create a novel which is unlike any novel you have ever read before.

C. Reviews

- 1 You will hear part of a programme in which critics discuss films appearing on TV. Look at the table below, then listen to the cassette and fill in the missing information. Finally, using the information, describe the film.

Name of film:	Rain 1)
Set in:	2)
Type of film:	human 3)
Story theme:	a brother who finds out he's got an autistic brother after he inherits money
Star(s):	Hoffman and Cruise
Acting:	superb
Script:	4)
Characters:	very 5)
Recommendation:	don't 6) it



A review is a special type of article written for publication in a magazine, newspaper, etc, giving a brief description and evaluation of a film, book, play, TV/radio programme, etc. It may be formal or semi-formal in style, depending on its intended readership, and is usually written using present tenses.

A successful review should consist of:

- an **introduction** which mentions the title, the type of book/play/film/etc, the setting (when/where), the theme, the main characters, etc.;
- a **main body** of two or more paragraphs containing the main points of the plot (without revealing the ending), and evaluating such features as the acting, writing style, direction, characters, etc.; and
- a **conclusion** which includes an overall assessment of the work and/or a recommendation, usually with justification.

You may also be asked to give reasons why someone should see the film/play or read the book, how it has influenced you, etc. Note that the number and length of paragraphs varies depending on the topic.

Useful Language

To begin reviews:

This well-written/informative/fascinating/thought-provoking book is ...
The film/book/play/etc. is set in .../tells the story of .../is based on ...
The film/play stars .../is directed by .../is the sequel to ...

To end reviews:

You should definitely see/read .../Don't miss it/You might enjoy ...
All in all, it is well worth seeing/reading, since ...
On the whole, I wouldn't recommend it, in view of the fact that ...
It is a classic of its kind/It is sure to be a hit/best-seller ...

Introduction

Paragraph 1

background — type of story, setting, theme, main characters

Main Body

Paragraph 2

main points of the plot

Paragraph 3

comments on various features e.g. acting, plot, characters, etc

Paragraphs 4-5*

explanation, reason/example

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

overall assessment of work/recommendation

* The exact number and division of paragraphs will depend on the specific requirements of each writing task.

Read

Useful Language

- To explain the plot:

The plot revolves around .../involves .../focuses on .../has an unexpected twist.

The story begins with .../unfolds/reaches a dramatic climax when ...

- Evaluating various features:

The play/film/series has a strong/star-studded/mediocre cast.

The acting is moving/powerful/excellent/weak/disappointing/unconvincing.

The plot is | gripping/dramatic/fascinating/suspense-filled/fast-moving.
| far-fetched/predictable/confusing/dull/unimaginative.

The script/dialogue is touching/witty/hilarious/boring/mundane.

It is beautifully/brilliantly/sensitively written/directed.

recently which would be of interest to their fellow students. Write your review.

b) Write a review of a book you have read which has strongly influenced your views on life. Briefly describe what the book is about and in what ways it has influenced you.

- What is the title, type, setting, etc of the film/book?
- Who are the main characters?
- What information would you include about the plot?
- What other points would you include in the review (author, director, sound-track, etc)?
- Could you write an unfavourable review of the film/book? Why (not)?
- In which order would you present the information/comments to be included?
- What useful expressions could you use in the introductory and final paragraphs, and to comment on various features of the film/book?

Review
Points
to
include.

7 Choose ONE of the writing tasks