

Books, Films and Plays

For each of the sentences below, circle the words/phrases which could be used to fill in the gaps. Then suggest how you would use the words/phrases you have not circled.

1. It is definitely one of the most _____ ghost stories I have ever read.
 - compelling
 - humourless
 - chilling
 - spine-tingling
 - entertaining
2. Most critics agree that this play is _____ .
 - underrated
 - well-received
 - slow-mowing
 - depressing
 - hilarious
3. When listening to this CD, one of the things that instantly grabs your attention is the _____ music.
 - moving
 - rousing
 - stirring
 - haunting
 - unimaginative
4. If you get the chance, go; you are unlikely to see a more _____ film this year.
 - thought-provoking
 - overcomplicated
 - spectacular
 - marvellous
 - action-packed

character(s)	shallow, unconvincing, likeable, convincing, believable
plot	overcomplicated, predictable, plausible, absorbing, gripping, riveting, suspense-filled
special effects	cheap, laughable, stunning, staggering, astounding
photography	poor, amateurish, breathtaking, incredible, impressive
acting/performance	wooden, appalling, natural, powerful, spectacular
writing/script	contrived, confusing, realistic, thought-provoking, compelling, boring, mundane

Adverbs to add emphasis:

incredibly, extremely, exceptionally, absolutely, totally, completely, entirely, particularly, remarkably

The performance arts: reviews and critiques

A Useful adjectives for describing works and performances

adjective	meaning	example
overrated	not as good as people say	It's an overrated film/play.
hackneyed	done so often it is boring	The plot was so hackneyed!
impenetrable	complex and impossible to understand	His films are impenetrable.
disjointed	unconnected and not in a clear order	The play was disjointed and difficult to follow.
far-fetched	impossible to believe	The film <i>Green Aliens from Mars</i> was a bit far-fetched.
risqué /rɪ'skeɪ/	slightly immoral and likely to shock some people	The play was a bit risqué, and some religious leaders criticised it.
gripping	exciting and keeping your attention the whole time	It was a gripping film from start to finish.
harrowing	extremely upsetting	It was a harrowing documentary about war and refugee camps.
moving	making you feel strong emotion, especially pity or sadness	It's a moving story about a child whose mother dies.
memorable	you remember it long after	That was a memorable performance.
understated	done or expressed in a simple but attractive style	The whole ballet is really understated.

B Success and failure

His latest opera was **panned** [very negatively criticised] by the critics, which is strange, since all his previous works have been universally **lauded** [highly praised].

The play **bombed** in London's West End, but was more successful in New York. [was a failure]

Her latest CD has won three **awards**. [prizes/honours, e.g. 'Best CD of the Year']

Anthony O'Donnell won the award for 'Best **up-and-coming** actor' of 2001. [likely to become very famous or successful]

The critics generally agree that her new symphony is a **masterpiece**. [very great work of art]

Novak was definitely **miscast** as the father in that film. [was the wrong person for the role]

She has become **typecast** as a middle-aged mother. [always associated with that type of role]

He was given several **encores** for his performance of the violin concerto. [/'ɒŋkɔːz/ calls from the audience to repeat it]

She got a **standing ovation** for her performance of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. [the audience stood up and applauded]

C Nouns relating to performing

I liked her **interpretation** of the song 'Yesterday'. [way of understanding and performing it]

I prefer the original **version** by the Beatles. [one of several performances that exist]

He gave an excellent **rendition** of Hamlet's speech. [performance on a specific occasion]

The actor's **portrayal** of the mother in the film was very tender. [the picture she created]

Exercises

25.1 From memory, give an adjective from A which is *opposite* in meaning to the following words.

- 1 credible/believable
- 2 original/novel
- 3 underrated
- 4 exaggerated
- 5 coherent/smooth-flowing

25.2 Now use other adjectives from A instead of the underlined words in these sentences. Make any other changes that are necessary to produce a correct sentence.

- 1 The musical shocked some people because they thought it was immoral and was attacked by several politicians and religious figures.
- 2 Her performance was one of those you will never forget, simply marvellous.
- 3 I can't remember the last time I saw such a film that keeps you in suspense and totally absorbed all the time.
- 4 It was a play that aroused very deep emotions in me.
- 5 It's a film that is difficult to watch without getting very upset.
- 6 Some of his films are absolutely impossible to understand because they are so dense and obscure.

25.3 Answer these questions.

- 1 Would you like to go to a play that was universally lauded by all the critics? Why / Why not?
- 2 Good performers deserve an encore. True? Would you give one?
- 3 Would you like to see a film that was panned by the cinema critics? Why / Why not?
- 4 What are the top Hollywood awards for films normally called? What is their more correct name?
- 5 Do most actors like to become typecast? Why / Why not?
- 6 A standing ovation shows that the audience disliked the performance. True? Why / Why not?

25.4 Read the text and underline the words or phrases that match the eight definitions. Use a dictionary if necessary.



- 1 the way an actor creates a picture of a person
- 2 he/she is the wrong actor for that part
- 3 a film/book/play that keeps you in suspense
- 4 keep you in suspense / constantly excited
- 5 up-and-coming
- 6 a film which huge numbers of people will go and see
- 7 a police or crime theme
- 8 a very great work of art

Cliffhanger not to be missed

In this latest blockbuster cops-and-robbers movie from the Holdart Studios, budding Hollywood star Florida Packline plays country-boy Ricky Smart, who gets involved with a gang of criminals intent upon stealing ten million dollars from a Chicago bank. However, their plans are spoilt by the discovery of a dead body in the tunnel they are digging through to the bank. Who is the mystery dead woman? Is she a stranger, or someone from Ricky's own past? Packline's portrayal of the confused boy from a small town caught up in big city crime is convincing, but Julia Fischer as his long-lost sister is somewhat miscast. Not a masterpiece, but it will certainly keep you on the edge of your seat.