7.1 Review – describing and giving opinions

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 15 marks**

KEY WORDS review • decide • opinion • examples • recommendation

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **describing and giving opinions in a review** – telling a reader what something is like and what you think of it.

You must be able to:

- describe without retelling the whole plot
- give a clear opinion supported by a reason
- balance praise with at least one honest criticism

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Describe, do not retell

A review of a film is not a summary of the film. The reader may not have seen it, so you must not spoil it – and a plot summary is not an opinion.

- **Retelling:** *First he finds the letter, then he goes to the station, then he meets his sister and they argue…*
- **Describing:** *The first hour is almost silent, and the film asks you to be patient before it explains anything.*

Give enough to orient a reader: what kind of thing it is, roughly what it is about, who would like it.

■ An opinion needs a reason

- **Assertion:** *The acting was great.*
- **Opinion:** *The acting is the best thing in it – the lead says almost nothing for twenty minutes and you always know exactly what she is thinking.*

■ **Balance is persuasive**

A review that praises everything is not believed. Include at least one genuine criticism, stated plainly:

> *My one criticism is the ending, which resolves too neatly for a film that spent two hours refusing easy answers.*

That single sentence makes the praise credible.

2 Practice

2.1 Rewrite this retelling as description. [2]

> The book starts when the family moves house. Then the boy finds a box in the attic. Then he opens it and finds the letters.

2.2 Turn each assertion into an opinion with a reason. [2]

(a) "The restaurant was good."

(b) "The game is boring."

2.3 Write one honest criticism of something you like. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Write a review of a book, film or restaurant for your school website. Describe it, give your opinion with reasons, include one criticism, and say who would enjoy it. Write about 180 words. [8]

3.2 Explain why "I recommend this to everyone" is a weaker ending than "I recommend this to anyone who is willing to be patient". [2]

Solutions

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

- orient without retelling
- e.g. "The story begins with a house move and a box of letters in an attic, but the discovery matters far less than what the family decides to do about it, which is where the book actually lives."

2.2

(a)

- e.g. "The food was better than the room suggested – the noodles came in a broth that had clearly been cooking all day."

(b)

- e.g. "The game is repetitive: every level asks you to do the same three things in a different order."

2.3

- any specific, honest criticism
- a criticism that is really praise ("it was too exciting") does **not** count

3.1

- **content (4)**: description without spoiling, an opinion with reasons, at least one genuine criticism, and a targeted recommendation
- **language (4)**: appropriate register for a website, precise vocabulary, varied sentences, accurate writing

3.2

- "Everyone" says nothing about the thing being reviewed and cannot be true
- naming **who would enjoy it** (and who would not) gives the reader something to act on