

# BBC Learning English

## Talk about English

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### About this script

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**Callum:** Hello, I'm Callum Robertson

**Jackie:** I'm Jackie Dalton

**Callum:** and this is Talk about English, live from London.

**Jackie:** In the programme today we're talking about film

**Callum:** And we're also looking at how to review a film.

### MARK KERMODE

Absolutely idiotic script, it's awful!

**Callum:** Which film is being described there? Keep on listening to find out!

**Jackie:** Also in this programme we have our latest competition and we'll be finding out what you've been writing on the topic of film.

**Callum:** And I'm pleased to say that our guest today helping us with this topic is World Service Arts reporter Vincent Dowd. Hello Vincent.

**Vincent:** (hello)

**Callum:** Can you tell us a little bit about what you do in your job?

**Vincent:** (brief outline of job)

**Callum:** And we'll be talking to Vincent throughout today's programme.

**Jackie:** We're currently running a vote on films on the webcast page; if you're listening live to this programme you'll see it there. We're doing a quick survey on which is your favourite film genre.

**Callum:** The choices are: Action, Horror, Comedy, Romance, Science Fiction, Thriller or Other!

**Jackie:** To choose your favourite, just click it.

**Callum:** Jackie, do you have a favourite kind of movie?

(All discuss genre likes and dislikes)

**Callum:** Many years ago, when I was living in Japan I was always desperate to see films that were set in London – the famous sights such as the red busses, the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben gave me a taste of home when I was so far away. Now I live in London and these sights are around me every day and often walking through London is like walking through a film set – so many places that you see in the films you can see just by stepping out of the office.

The same was true when I visited New York a few years ago. It looked just like one big film set.

Big cities are often the backdrop to films but also the countryside too and if someone wants to make a film in this country, in Britain, then there is an organisation that helps. Our colleague Jo Reffin found out more.

**Jo:** I'm Jo Reffin and on today's programme on [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com), we're talking to someone who works in the film business.

### **Samantha Perahia**

My name's Samantha Perahia – I work for the UK Film Council, we are a government funded organisation who are responsible for all aspects of filmmaking in the UK. It is my responsibility to help anybody who wants to film in the UK – to help with locations, crew, facilities.

**Jo:** The UK Film Council is a government funded organisation. So the politicians running the UK, the government, give money to pay for this organisation to exist. The Film Council looks after all aspects, all parts of film making in this country. So Samantha can help with crew – and the film crew are the group of people who work together on the film – the crew. Then there's the location, the place where the film is filmed and finally Samantha talks about facilities – so any equipment or services needed when the films are made like food or parking for example.

Part of Samantha's job is to get filmmakers to come and make their films in the UK. So how does she do that?

### **Samantha Perahia**

There are many many countries around the world that have film industries that are important to their economy and the UK is one of the largest film making industries in the world, second only to the US so there's a lot of competition for countries that want to draw international films to their countries, so we have to make it economically attractive first and foremost.

**Jo:** The film industry is another way of saying the film business. The UK has one of the biggest filmmaking industries in the world, second only to the US, America. So second only to the US means the US is the largest and the UK is the second largest. Samantha says each country is trying to be the most successful – there's a lot of competition for countries who want to draw or attract international films to be filmed in their country. To attract people to make films in the UK, it has to be economically attractive first and foremost. The most important thing is the UK is a cheaper place to make films.

You're listening to [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com) and we're talking about making films in the UK. Now how does the UK Film Council help to make the UK economically attractive to filmmakers?

### **Samantha Perahia**

The way we do that is we have thankfully a film-friendly government who have devised a tax credit which is to be honest the main reason why people first come to the UK to film second only to the fact that we have the best facilities, crew and talent around the world.

**Jo:** Samantha is pleased, thankful, that the UK has a film-friendly government – the UK government wants films to be made in the UK. They have devised, they have created a tax credit. Now, Samantha will explain tax credit in a moment. But this tax credit is the one of the main reasons people come to the UK to make films and she used that expression 'second only' again. So people come to make films in the UK because of the tax credit. Samantha says that reason is second only to the fact that the UK has the best facilities, crew and talent for making films.

So Samantha, please explain to us what this tax credit actually is? First, here's some language to help you. Sufficient means enough. A budget is the amount

of money you have to spend on something. A significant amount is an important, fairly large amount and expenditure means money that you spend.

### **Samantha Perahia**

Films which spend a sufficient amount of their budgets in the UK will be able to get a significant amount of their expenditure back.

**Jo:** Everyone has to pay tax to the government - so if you think of money from your salary or any goods that you buy, some of it will go to the government in what is called tax. So the tax credit means if filmmakers spend a certain amount of their budget in the UK, then the UK government will give the filmmakers some money back.

### **Samantha Perahia**

Films which spend a sufficient amount of their budgets in the UK will be able to get a significant amount of their expenditure back.

**Jackie:** That was Jo Reffin with Samantha Preahia from the UK film council.

**Callum:** All this week on the website we've been asking you to write in on the topic of films and we've had lots of interesting comments come in.

**Jackie:** Yes, a lot of people wrote in about the emotions that films bring out in them  
  
Grace from Taiwan said: I like the feeling of being inspired and touched by a film.

Being inspired and touched, that's a lovely phrase. If you are touched by something you find it moving and emotional.

**Callum:** Ana Paul from Brazil says that: "The cinema has the magic to bring life to our dreams". I liked the way she expressed that – to bring life to our dreams.

She goes on to say:

"There are so many films that are unforgettable in my life. I love all the Hitchcock and Frank Capra films, I collect their films, and their films always make me cry and laugh"

Films seem to be a way of reaching our emotions. And she brought up an interesting point there about collecting films. This is something that's relatively new – collecting films in the same way we collect music.

(All discuss – DVD / Video collections – do we have them – favourite films to watch again and again or just to own)

**Callum:** Another of our contributors, Koorosh from Iran wrote in with an interesting comment. He said that he doesn't like watching drama or tragedy as in everyday life "we have a lot of depressing and sad news" And he went on to use a lovely expression. He says

"humans are very emotional , we all like to cry or laugh. I sometimes like to go to sad movies where my heart strings can be tugged"

That's a great expression to tug at the heart strings. Well earlier on I spoke to Koroosh in Iran

### **KOROOSH PHONE CALL**

Films as escape from stress of life

When depressed watching sad films helps

Likes comedy and romance, action

Favourite film Gone With the Wind, seen it 5 times

**Callum:** This is Talk about English, live from London. I'm Callum Robertson and with me is Jackie Dalton and our guest today Vincent Dowd, BBC World Service Arts Reporter. Today we're talking about films.

Vincent, in your job do you have to interview directors/actors?

**Vincent:** (Replies)

**Discuss – Interviewing experiences, difficult interviewees and interviewing someone about a film when the film is not very good.**

**Callum:** It must be difficult sometimes when people involved in a movie have to promote it, try to sell it when it's not been very well accepted by the critics or reviewers.

**Jackie:** A recent film where this happened was the Lady in the Water by M. Night Shyamalan.

**Callum:** In 1999 the film The Sixth Sense brought the name of M. Night Shyamalan to the attention of the international cinema audience. He was hailed as the new Spielberg and became known for films which have magical and supernatural elements as well as surprising twists.

M. Night Shyamalan's latest film, Lady in the Water, is described a modern day fairy tale. It began as a bedtime story he used to tell his children and he's adapted it to become a movie.

**Jackie:** However the process of turning the story into a film wasn't an easy one. A film written down is called a screenplay or script and usually every script gets re-written a number of times – things are changed, corrections are made, problems fixed and so on. Each different version of the script is known as a draft. How many drafts did it take M. Night before he was finished and what does he think of the completed script?

### **M. Night Shyamalan**

It took a lot of drafts, it took 13 drafts, which is obviously a sign that I was in the wrong direction at first. But by the time we got to thirteen drafts we had one of those very special kind of things that could exist all by itself without even shooting a movie, it could exist and you could put it in front of somebody and they would read it and become enchanted by it, it had it's own language, you know.

**Callum:** It took 13 drafts before the final script was finished but he was very happy with the end result. He said that people would be enchanted by the script alone, they would find it magical, interesting and enjoyable. Enchanted. And what does he think of the finished movie?

### **M. Night Shyamalan**

I love the movie, I love the movie. The cast and crew love the movie, the studio loves the movie and there's a great deal of audience that loves the movie, standing ovations and stuff like that.

**Callum:** He is very pleased with the movie, he loves it. But that's not all. He says that the cast and crew love the movie. The cast and crew is a useful expression for the people who act in and are involved in the making of the movie, the cast and crew. He also said that the studio – the company that gave him the money to make the film – loves it and that audiences have loved it, giving it a 'standing

ovation'. A standing ovation is when the audience stand up at the end and cheer and clap.

**Jackie:** In the film someone or some 'thing' appears in the swimming pool of an apartment complex. This character is not a human character but is a fantasy character from a fantasy land who has to return to her own world. We've heard that the author of story and director of the film, M. Night Shyamalan thinks it's an enchanting story but what do the critics think?

**Callum:** Mark Kermode is a reviewer who never hides his true feelings about the movies he sees. This is what he thought about the Lady in the Water.

### **Mark Kermode**

Absolutely idiotic script that nobody in their right mind would turn into a movie. It's awful, a whole career going down in flames in the sheer awfulness of it all. It is absolute self-indulgent waffle.

**Callum:** Oh dear. Not one of Mark's favourite films. The script that M Night Shyamalan describes as 'enchanting', Mark describes as 'idiotic'. He actually likes his other films but this one he thinks is so bad it is like a plane crash for M. Night's career. He describes it as being self-indulgent waffle. Waffle is a noun and a verb for when people talk or write a lot but without giving any important. By using the adjective self-indulgent Mark shows that he believes the writer allows himself to do exactly what he wants even if that is not necessarily the best thing. Listen again to Mark Kermode's comments.

### **Mark Kermode**

Absolutely idiotic script that nobody in their right mind would turn into a movie. It's awful, a whole career going down in flames in the sheer awfulness of it all. It is absolute self-indulgent waffle.

**Callum:** Well if you've seen this film I wonder what you think – is it enchanting or idiotic! Jackie, Vincent, have either of you seen this film?

**Jackie / Vincent reply**

**Callum:** How much notice of reviewers and critics do you take in choosing what you go and see, do you think the critics can make or break a film?

**All discuss**

**Callum:** To get another view on this I spoke to another one of our listeners, Susanna from Italy

**SUSANNA PHONE CALL**

Reads reviews and critics but doesn't change her mind

Likes English actors

Favourite film Out of Africa

Films are important for the mind and emotions – help escape from stress of life.

**Callum:** That was Susana from Italy. If you would like to talk to us in future programmes about any of the topics we discuss then send us an email to:

**Jackie:** [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk), that's [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk)

**Callum:** It was interesting what Susanna was saying there .....

(Brief discussion of Susanna's point about the ability of films to take us away from everyday lives)

**Callum:** You're listening to Talk about English, live from London. I'm Callum Robertson

**Jackie:** I'm Jackie Dalton

**Callum:** And still with us is BBC Arts Reporter Vincent Dowd. Vincent in this part of the programme we're going to be talking about how to write a review of a film. I wonder if you could pass on any tips for what you think are the important things to go into a review.

**Vincent:**

- **Who is the audience? Keep in mind who the review is for.**
- **Review has elements of fact and also personal opinion**
- **Factual information about the film e.g. genre, cast, director, can mention what else they've done that might be well known to audience**
- **Outline of the plot – without giving anything away**
- **Personal opinion about the film – quality of acting, direction, script etc. what you liked/didn't like**
- **Maybe recommendation or not.**

**Callum:** Well to help understand this more fully we're going to look at an example now. There is a new film Children of Men which has recently been reviewed across the BBC. Here's Mark Coles from World Service programme 'The Ticket' talking about it. Which part of the review is this and is he giving factual information or personal opinion about the film.

## **REVIEW PART 1**

New Movie Children of Men is a thriller set in the year 2027 and the planet is in a right mess. The human race dying out. Global infertility means that no babies have been born for 18 years

and to make matters worse the world's youngest citizen has just died. Mankind now facing the likelihood of its own extinction.

**Jackie:** In this part of the review we hear about the genre, it's a thriller and also about the plot. It's set in the future.

**Callum:** This is a useful expression when talking about movies- it's set – we use it to talk about where or when the action of a film takes place. Here we heard that the film is set in 2027. And it's exactly the same when using it for places. The film is set in London, the action of the film happens in London.

**Jackie:** There is also a brief introduction to the plot. The human race is dying out because of global infertility; no one can have children any more.

**Callum:** The information we've heard so far is fact about the film. Listen to the next part of the review, what do we learn here?

## **REVIEW PART 2**

The film follows Theo, a disillusioned bureaucrat played by Clive Owen who reluctantly finds himself coming to the planet's rescue. A lone pregnant woman is discovered, the human race's last remaining hope and it's Theo's job to keep her alive.

**Jackie:** In this part we learn a little more about the plot, and we also find out about one of the characters, Theo and who he is played by.

**Callum:** 'Played by' is another useful expression when talking about films and it's the verb we use to talk about the character that the actors play. In this film the character of Theo is 'played by' the actor Clive Owen.

**Jackie:** And the character Theo finds himself trying to save the planet by protecting a woman who is found to be pregnant.

**Callum:** We now go on to learn some more about the film

### **REVIEW PART 3**

Children of Men is based on a novel by the British writer PD James. It also stars Michael Caine and Julianne Moore and was directed by the acclaimed Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón whose past films include *Y Tu Mama Tambien* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

**Jackie:** Now we learn a little more information, we hear about the director and what other films he has made, there's more about the cast – the film also stars Michael Caine and Julianne Moore – and we learn that the film is based on a novel – it's based on.

**Callum:** This expression means that the story for the film originally came from a novel – it's based on a novel.

**Jackie:** That's just about it for the start of the review, let's listen to that all together.

### **REVIEW PART 4**

New Movie Children of Men is a thriller set in the year 2027 and the planet is in a right mess. The human race dying out. Global infertility means that no babies have been born for 18 years and to make matters worse the world's youngest citizen has just died. Mankind now facing the likelihood of its own extinction.

The film follows Theo, a disillusioned bureaucrat played by Clive Owen who reluctantly finds himself coming to the planet's rescue. A lone pregnant woman is discovered, the human race's last remaining hope and it's Theo's job to keep her alive.

Children of Men is based on a novel by the British writer PD James. It also stars Michael Caine and Julianne Moore and was directed by the acclaimed Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón whose past films include Y Tu Mama Tambien and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

**Callum:** So that's the start of a review – the information we've heard is mostly factual, telling us about the plot, the cast and the director. But now it's time to hear something that has a bit more of a personal touch. Here is film critic Nigel Floyd. What do you think his opinion is, what tells you whether he likes or doesn't like the film?

### **REVIEW PART 5**

What keeps this film going and what keeps the audience on the edge of its seat is that it moves forward all the time. There are amazing hand held camera scenes where the camera sort of dives in through the front of a building, follows the characters up the stairs, through a series of rooms, down corridors, out the window, out into the garden and it all appears to be one continuous shot. It's almost as if the camera's become like another character in the film, sort of like a rather curious character that's following the action. That's sucks you in and then every now and then there's a setback and there are these plot switches which absolutely take your breath away?

**Callum:** Vincent, from that part of the review, do you think it's a positive or negative or neutral review?

**Vincent:** **Positive:**  
**Keeps the audience on the edge of seat**  
**Amazing hand held camera scenes**  
**Plot switches which take your breath away.**

**Callum:** Let's listen again

## **REVIEW PART 5 (REPEAT)**

What keeps this film going and what keeps the audience on the edge of its seat is that it moves forward all the time. There are amazing hand held camera scenes where the camera sort of dives in through the front of a building, follows the characters up the stairs, through a series of rooms, down corridors, out the window, out into the garden and it all appears to be one continuous shot. It's almost as if the camera's become like another character in the film, sort of like a rather curious character that's following the action. That's sucks you in and then every now and then there's a setback and there are these plot switches which absolutely take your breath away?

**Jackie:** Now one reason we've been talking about reviews today is that this is the theme of our new competition

**Callum:** Yes, if you would like to try and win a BBC Learning English mp3 player and have your work displayed on this site, then why not enter our competition. We want you to write a review of a film you have seen.

**Jackie:** Think of the different things that go into a review as we've talked about today. Tell us the facts about the film, who's in it and who directed it, what's it about.

**Callum:** Also tell us what you thought about it, what did you like or not like and would you recommend it. And don't forget useful expressions like 'set in' , 'based on' and played by

**Jackie:** Entries should be no more than 400 words long and should be sent to [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk) The closing date is Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October. For full details see the website.

**Callum:** And I'm pleased to say that on the phone right now we have the winner of our last competition, Asim from Pakistan

### **Callum in call with Asim**

### **VOTE RESULT**

**Jackie:** And quickly before we go, it's nearly the end of September which means we will soon be having a new Country of the Month! In October the country we are focussing on is .... England!

**Callum:** Yes, to learn all about England, ask and answer questions, see photos and much more visit the Your World section of the site.

That's all from this edition of Talk about English – thank you to our guest Vincent Dowd

### **ALL GOODBYES**