

## Critical Reception

Nothing makes the anticipation of waiting for the reviews of movie critics. So, when I was told to swap my work with someone for the first time, I conveniently forgot how to speak. My writing was my baby; it was my greatest creation, and although I had confidence in it, I was not very fond of sending it out into the world for people to scrutinize. It was a silly mentality to have at the time, but since then, at first, as I gradually watched my writing flourish from the criticism I received, I became more honest in my peer reviews. I was no longer scared of hurting feelings because I was aware of how much of a difference I could make with my words.

For my peer review exhibit, I decided to display the review I did of my classmate Paul. Because I was already so excited for my own essay to be reviewed, I tried my best to approach his paper with an open mind. I wanted to help him improve because I had already seen how my writing evolved after being critiqued. This peer review reflects how I learned to embrace criticism and view it as a chance to develop my writing into something with more depth, and while I may not have made the grade I wanted to receive on this assignment, I hope my advice helped Paul shape his ideas in some way.

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Reviews & Ratings for

**Southpaw** [More at IMDbPro](#) »

14 out of 17 people found the following review useful:

Draft 2 Paper 3

In a year that filled theaters and box offices with astounding films, one film that stood above the rest was the release of *Southpaw* in late July. Directed by Antoine Fuqua, this emotion-packed redemption drama attracts attention of all ages with its incorporation of action in the form of brutal boxing, the love story of a father and his daughter, and even the acts of criminal injustice. Actor Jake Gyllenhaal stars as boxer Billy Hope in this motivational redemption drama that could inspire even the weakest of hearts. A life filled with fame and glory, a loving wife, and a daughter to cherish: all lost in the blink of an eye. <sup>1</sup> This bit seems kind of unnecessary, like filler sort of. Through utter despair and self-destruction, Billy Hope (Gyllenhaal) gives it his all to redeem himself to his daughter, the world, and ultimately himself by changing his life and positioning himself to become the fighter he once was praised for. This act of redemption, along with the character types, the love shared between Hope and his daughter, and the goals in desire to achieve, all serve to show how the film successfully conformed to the genre type of a redemption drama.<sup>2</sup> This is a 3-part thesis it seems, so you may run into some trouble and end up limiting yourself to just these 3 ideals rather than actively developing your argument.

Billy Hope (Gyllenhaal) stars as the undefeated light weight champion of the world, and it appears that nothing could strip him of his glory. During a celebration to glorify Hope, opposing boxer, Miguel Gomez, decided to call out Hope and downgrade his fighting skills. "You've never been hit by a real man." Stated Gomez. These words between Hope and Gomez soon turned to fists flying and managers of both fighters in an all-out brawl. It wasn't until the gun shot sounded, and Hope's wife, Maureen (Rachel McAdams), is left motionless on the floor, that Hope's actions began to change. <sup>3</sup> This must be a huge shift in the movie. You should expand on this part a little more and connect it back to your thesis. It seems like Hope's character changed after this event; you can relate this to character development. From that moment on, everything within the film changes. Hope (Gyllenhaal) loses match after match until he goes overboard with his temper and strikes a referee, therefore becoming suspended from boxing. Being outside of the ring, no money coming in, no wife to tell him everything will be fine, Hope slowly loses all sense of desire to live, and with his fearful daughter, Leila, played by Oona Laurence, under his protection, things inevitably fall apart. He turns to alcohol and drugs and ultimately loses everything. From his house to his championship belts, it isn't until he loses custody of his daughter to child protective services that he realizes it is time for a change.

Living on the streets, he begins searching for a job to simply get by, when he stumbles upon a gym run by retired boxer, Tick Wills (Forest Whitaker). Soon, that relationship turns to a partnership between the two, and Willis promises Hope the chance to train in his gym as well as the chance to earn his life back. Frequent visits to child protective services to see, Leila, Hope's daughter played by Oona Laurence, becomes a hopeless encounter as Leila has lost all hope in her father ever changing and ever winning her back. Countless hours of hard work and sacrifice between training, sobering up, and becoming a stronger man, the time came for the match of the century. Hope earned the chance to fight Miguel Gomez for a chance at the world light weight championship, and nothing was going to stop this determined father from reclaiming the glory he deserves. A gruesome battle between the two, with glorifying action shots of battle that related to such scenes from celebrated movies like Rocky and Cinderella Man, with spit flying, blood dripping, and fans cheering. <sup>4</sup> The comparison and the imagery used in this sentence is great! Maybe give a little brief background on what makes those movies so popular. Countless rounds having passed, the bell tired of ringing, Billy Hope gains what little strength he has left, finds an opening, and takes the punch, knocking out Gomez with a style and brute power rarely witnessed-in the ring. Billy Hope, now champion of the world, daughter Leila back in his arms, and life back to where it should be Billy Hope is the ultimate comeback kid.

A great redemption drama is one that places emphasis on the comeback story of the protagonist. It's a genre of film where failure and loss are a normality in life, and in order for the main character to be happy with him or herself, a change within the character must occur. Character dramas such as this always possess the same character types. There's the protagonist, who at the beginning of the film seems invincible and possesses everything he or she could have ever wanted, but then falls short of something and loses all. Just as Billy Hope lost everything, from his wife, his home, to even his daughter. There is the woman character, or the love interest, in this case Hope's daughter Leila.<sup>5</sup> Really good connection to the themes present in character dramas. Maybe talk about how unconventional it is that the "romantic interest" or the "object of the protagonist's affections" is his daughter Leila. In most character dramas the love interest is a person of similar age in which intimate feelings are shared between the two. However in *Southpaw*, Leila serves as the girl who has infatuated Billy Hope into changing his everyday life for the reclaiming of her love. There is also the bad guy, epitomized by foe boxer Miguel Gomez alongside two-timing manager, Jordan Mains, played by 50 Cent. Each character plays a major role in how the main character feels about himself, life, and how successful he is in accomplishing his goal of redeeming his name and all that he once was. <sup>6</sup>With this statement, you could delve into the relationship between Hope, the antagonist, and other supporting characters.

Alongside character types, another characteristic of the redemption drama are the conflicts that could potentially prevent the character from achieving his or her goal. The biggest factor, or theme revealed in this genre is man versus himself. <sup>7</sup> Really important sentence! I think after this bit, you should go into how Hope epitomizes that "man vs. self" conflict. It is ultimately up to the character to decide how important their goals are and to do whatever need be to accomplish them. There's always that temptation to backslide into who they were before from other characters and people's action around them. In this case, the media plays a huge role in Hope's potential to backslide, due to their negative comments on him and his livelihood. The story line rests on this idea that a man has all the glory, messes up, loses all his glory, and then comes back in the end to redeem himself and reclaim his glory. The backbone of a genre is not to be changed simply to entertain the audience in some new way. The audience wants a boxing movie that appeals to the emotions of the viewer while also exciting them with scenes of brutal fighting, love, and relatable aspects of life that can connect the audience to the film in its entirety. <sup>8</sup> What are the emotional scenes like? This film was a success to me, and was definitely a success by its accordance with the overlaying aspects of what a redemption drama should be.

The redemption drama epitomizes the "Comeback kid" idea. <sup>9</sup> Try to give a little background on the "Comeback kid" theme. Great fighting movies such as *The Karate Kid*, *Rocky*, and *The Fighter* are all wonderful examples of this drama in the way that they each share similar characteristics that define them. From the character types, to situations such as death and crime, to the introduction of a love interest, to the goal of achieving glory, fame, respect, or love, to finally the ending scene of the protagonist achieving their goal, all negatives turn positive, and a happy ending to leave the audience motivated and happy. *Southpaw* is more than a cliched boxing movie. It's a heart-pounding, soul-wrenching, nail-biting story that will leave audiences on the edge of their seats with the inspiration that life is theirs for the taking.

I think you've got a lot of strength in your arguments to describe how the film conforms to the genre, but it may serve you well to provide a genre characteristic and then an example from the film that fits that characteristic. I can see where everything belongs. It just needs to be ordered well, and you'll have a winning argument! :)