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Spider-Man 2 Movie Review

Now this is what a superhero movie should be. It's not camp and it's not nostalgia, it's not wall-to-wall special effects and it's not pickled in angst. It's simply and poignantly a realization that being Spider-Man is a burden that Peter Parker is not entirely willing to bear.

The movie demonstrates what's wrong with a lot of other superhero epics: They focus on the superpowers, and short-change the humans behind them.

"Spider-Man 2" is the best superhero movie since the modern genre was launched. It succeeds by being true to the insight that allowed Marvel Comics to upturn decades of comic-book tradition: Readers could identify more completely with heroes like themselves than with remote godlike paragons. Peter Parker was an insecure high school student, in grade trouble, inarticulate in love, unready to assume the responsibilities that came with his unexpected superpowers. It wasn't that Spider-Man could swing from skyscrapers that won over his readers (it was that he fretted about personal problems).

Parker is in college now, more helplessly in love than ever with Mary Jane Watson. He's on the edge of a breakdown: He's lost his job as a pizza deliveryman, Aunt May faces foreclosure on her mortgage, he's missing classes, the colors run together when he washes his Spider-Man suit at the Laundromat, and after his web-spinning ability inexplicably seems to fade, he throws away his beloved uniform in despair.

"Spider-Man 2" gives Spider-Man an enemy with a good nature that is overcome by evil. To handle the dangerous materials of his experiments, Dr. Otto Octavius devises four powerful

tentacles that are fused to his spine and have a cyber-intelligence of their own; a chip at the top of his spine prevents them from overriding his orders, but when the chip is destroyed, the gentle scientist is transformed into Doc Ock, a fearsome fusion of man and machine, who can climb skyscraper walls by driving his tentacles through concrete and bricks. We hear him coming, hammering his way toward us like the drums of hell.

Peter Parker, meanwhile, has vowed that he cannot allow himself to love Mary Jane, because her life would be in danger from Spider-Man's enemies. She has finally given up on Peter, who is always standing her up; she announces her engagement to no less than an astronaut.

Watching the director and his writers cut between the story threads, I savored classical workmanship: The film gives full weight to all of its elements, keeps them alive, is constructed with such skill that we care all the way through. In a lesser movie from this genre, we usually perk up for the action scenes but wade grimly through the dialogue. Here both stay alive, and the dialogue is more about emotion, love and values, less about long-winded explanations of the inexplicable (it's kind of neat that Spider-Man never does find out why his web-throwing ability sometimes fails him).

There are moviegoers who make a point of missing superhero movies, and I can't blame them, although I confess to a weakness for the genre. "Spider-Man 2" is in another category: It's a real movie, full-blooded and smart. It's a superhero movie for people who don't go to superhero movies, and for those who do, it's the one they've been yearning for.

Adapted from "Spider-Man 2" by Roger Ebert, in *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 30, 2004.

STOP

1) What is the correct punctuation for the underlined sentence in lines 24–27?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Remove the parentheses.
- C. Remove the parentheses and insert a comma.
- D. Remove the parentheses and insert a semicolon.

2) If the author eliminated the underlined portion of the fourth paragraph (lines 30–38), what would the reader lose?

- A. An explanation of why Mary Jane no longer likes Peter
- B. An understanding of why Peter Parker feels overwhelmed
- C. Details that clarify the author's opinion about the movie's plot
- D. The clearest statement of the author's attitude toward superhero movies

3) Which sentence is least relevant to the central idea of the passage?

- A. They focus on the superpowers, and short-change the humans behind them (lines 9–11).
- B. Readers could identify more completely with heroes like themselves than with remote godlike paragons (lines 17–19).
- C. "Spider-Man 2" gives Spider-Man an enemy with a good nature that is overcome by evil (lines 39–41).
- D. In a lesser movie from this genre, we usually perk up for the action scenes but wade grimly through the dialogue (lines 68–71).

- 4) The author is considering revising the fifth paragraph (lines 39–54) to make it more effective. What change, if any, would improve the fifth paragraph?
- A. NO CHANGE because the paragraph builds on the information in the topic sentence
 - B. Moving the last sentence, placing it after the first sentence of the paragraph in order to clarify which character the author is describing
 - C. Rewriting the last sentence to eliminate the figurative language because the tone it suggests does not match the paragraph's topic
 - D. Adding a sentence describing Spider-Man's good nature in order to establish the contrast between Spider-Man and Doc Ock
- 5) How do the underlined words in lines 71–73 contribute to the passage?
- A. By creating a pattern of cause and effect
 - B. By distinguishing between fact and opinion
 - C. By organizing and developing the argument
 - D. By establishing and maintaining an informal tone
- 6) Which statement best explains the function of the sentence in parentheses in lines 75–77?
- A. It separates the author's opinions from established facts.
 - B. It provides evidence to support the general statement that precedes it.
 - C. It includes a detail the author should have provided earlier in the passage.
 - D. It reinforces the author's fascination with Spider-Man's web-throwing ability.
- 7) When does the author first state his positive opinion of the movie?
- A. Opening paragraph (lines 1–7)
 - B. Third paragraph (lines 12–27)
 - C. Seventh paragraph (lines 63–77)
 - D. Final paragraph (lines 78–86)

8) Which statement best expresses an important part of the author's thesis?

- A.** Superhero movies are correctly regarded as inferior by most moviegoers.
- B.** Superhero movies are often superficial, but the author likes them anyway.
- C.** Superhero movies focus too little attention on superpowers, but "Spider-Man 2" is an exception.
- D.** Superhero movies usually fail to capture the action of the comic books on which they are based.

9) Why is the first paragraph an effective opening to the passage?

- A.** It avoids identifying the qualities that make superhero movies unsuccessful.
- B.** It establishes a formal tone appropriate for the passage.
- C.** It creates a predictable organizational pattern for the passage to follow.
- D.** It provides a specific claim that explains the movie's success.

10) What audience does the last paragraph address?

- A.** Readers who already agree with the author's opinion of "Spider-Man 2"
- B.** People who do not understand superhero movies
- C.** Anyone who enjoys superhero comic books
- D.** Everyone who goes to see movies

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]