

Writing a Play Review*

Remember: The point of a play review is to critique a play, not just to describe it! If you simply describe the plot, then you will not receive a very good grade. Thus, you need to have an overall thesis, just like in a regular essay. In this case, your thesis will be related to whether you thought the play was a good interpretation or well-executed version of the play. You then need to provide points throughout the review to support your thesis.

Be sure to obtain a program. Use it to correctly identify the play, authors, characters, etc.

The following questions will allow you to think about some elements of the play that you can critique:

Basic Information

- **In what theatre is the play being performed?**
- **What date and time did you see the play?**
- **What play did you see?**
- **Who was the author?**

Script: Try to identify the following:

- **What was the major conflict, dramatic question, or unifying theme?**
- **What was the dominant tone of the play? Serious? Comic? Ironic? Explain.**

Directing: Try to comment on the following:

- **Was there an identifiable production concept, unifying metaphor, or interpretational approach? If so, what was it and how was it manifested in the production?**
- **Were all of the elements of the production compatible and coordinated? Explain.**
- **If not, what seemed out of place or inadequately integrated with the rest?**

Acting: Choose at least two actors (male or female) to comment on in some depth:
Please spell actors' and characters' names correctly.

- **Were the roles appropriately cast?**
- **Were some actors inadequate to their roles? In what ways?**
- **Were some actors especially effective? If so, how and with what effect?**
- **Were the actors audible? Understandable?**
- **Were there any special skills (such as dancing, singing, fencing, playing a musical instrument) required of any of the actors? If so, how effectively were the demands met?**

* Slightly adapted from Martinez-Vidal, Elena. "How to Write a Play Review." 2007. Midlands Technical College. 08 Nov. 2007 <http://classes.midlandstech.edu/the101/THE101/how_to_write_a_play_review.htm>.

Scenic Design: Try to comment on the following:

- In what type of performance space was the production staged?
- What characteristics did the scenery embody? What did the scenery convey about the play?
- How did the scenery contribute (or fail to contribute) to the total production? What would have been lost if the scenery had been eliminated?

Costume Design and Makeup: Try to comment on the following:

- Were there any special costume needs? (historical, fantasy? etc.) If so, how well were they handled?
- Were there any special makeup needs? (Same as above) If so, how well were they handled?
- Overall, how did costumes and makeup contribute (or fail to contribute) to the total production?

Lighting Design and Sound: Try to comment on the following:

- Were there any special lighting or sound needs? If so how well was it executed?
- Overall, how did lighting and sound contribute (or fail to contribute) to the production concept and the total production?

Final Thoughts

- What was your overall impression of the performance?
- What was your overall impression of the experience?
- Any final thoughts?