

APSU Writing Center
Writing a Play Review

Key Terms

- **Play:** The written script, including dialogue, stage directions, characters, and setting.
- **Production:** The entire process of bringing the play to life including directing, set and costume design, lighting, sound, and other technical elements.
- **Performance:** The actual live presentation of the show.

Things to Consider

- Before writing your review, think about:
 - Title, genre, and director
 - Time period and playwright biography
 - Language and dialogue style

Preparation:

- Read the play before watching it to understand its theme and tone.
- Take notes during the performance and identify moments that stand out.
- Write a brief plot summary to reference in your review.

Structure of a Play Review

Introduction

- Title of the play
- Director and venue
- **Thesis statement:** A preview of 2 or 3 major concepts you will analyze (acting, staging, theme)

Thematic Summary

- What is the central message or theme of the play?
- How effectively does the production convey it?

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Body

- Discuss the major concepts from your thesis. Common categories include:
 - **Technical Elements**
 - Costumes, make-up, props, lighting, music, sound, and set design
 - How do these create mood, setting, or atmosphere?
 - **Non-Technical Elements**
 - Acting, directing, script, emotion, audience engagement
 - Were characters well-developed and convincingly portrayed?
 - Did the pacing, blocking, and direction enhance the story?
 - **Evaluation and Analysis**
 - How did the elements work together to create impact or tension?
 - Did any scenes, lines, or moments stand out?
 - Consider both strengths and weaknesses of the production.

Conclusion

- Restate your thesis
- Summarize key points and arguments
- Offer personal opinions and takeaways
- Make a recommendation (or not) to potential audience members

Questions to Guide Your Review

- What five or six words, images, or moments stood out, and why?
- What is the central theme, and how well was it conveyed?
- Did the plot engage the audience?
- How were the characters and performances? Any standouts?
- Were technical elements effective in creating atmosphere?
- Did the director emphasize the critical passages well?
- What is your overall reaction? Would you recommend it?

Example Phrases

- **Introduction**

- “In [play title], the stages come alive with...”
- “As the curtain rises on [play title], I was immediately captivated by...”

- **Plot and Story**

- “The narrative unfolds with a perfect blend of...”
- “The plot is rich with unexpected twists and...”

- **Characters and Performances**

- “Each character in the play is well-crafted and...”
- “The cast of [play title] delivers exceptional performances, particularly [actor name], who...”

- **Stage Design and Set**

- “The use of lighting and props creates a sense of...”
- “The set transitions are seamless and enhance...”

- **Direction and Pacing**

- “The director’s vision for [play title] is evident in...”
- “The blocking and movement on stage are choreographed with..”

- **Dialogue and Script**

- “The dialogue in [play title] is...”
- ‘The language used by the character is both...’

- **Emotional Impact**

- “The play leaves a lasting emotional impact, promoting...”
- “The powerful climax of [play title] left the audience...”

- **Comparisons**

- “Fans of [playwright’s name] will appreciate...”
- “While not without flaw, [play title] holds its own against...”

- **Conclusions**

- “Overall, [play title] offers an...”
- “I wholeheartedly recommend [play title] to...”

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Play Review Outline

Introduction

Play Title:

Date attended:

Director:

Playwright:

Your opinion of the play: (*amazing, thrilling, thought-provoking, etc.*)

Brief Plot Summary: (*One key moment/turning point/your reaction*)

Body

Describe one main concept: (*costumes, make-up, props, emotion, theme, etc.*)

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Conclusion

Provide a summary: (*offer recommendations on who would enjoy the play*)