

Written Response to Performance Guide

Theatre Arts

Firestone High School

Rationale

Viewing live theatre and responding to it with eloquence is an important aspect of any good theatre educational situation. We expect our students to develop a set of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a theatre production and to be able to coherently communicate a critique both verbally and in writing. Further, the theatre student is expected to actively pursue live theatrical events as both a participant and an observer. This assignment requires the student to seek out a theatre performance that is interesting to them and through that process familiarizes them with the theatrical landscape in their immediate area.

Overview

It is important to note that this paper is to be a *response* or *critical analysis* and not a review. The student is supposed to consider the production a whole while writing the response without making a recommendation to the reader. The student must use the method of critical analysis being developed in almost every theatre course of study to address the production on its own merits. It is important that the student understand the limitations of venue; the student should not analyze a professional production in the same way they would a high school production.

Content

Theme should be the first consideration regarding the quality of a production. The student must arrive at a possible theme before analyzing any other aspect of the production. All other aspects of the production should build on the theme in a clear and logical fashion and therefore can be evaluated only in relationship to the theme. The student is to address the production as a single artistic expression not as a series of individual elements.

The student might address the following elements in consideration for how they contribute to the production as a whole: *plot*, *characterization*, *style*, *acting*, *staging* (both blocking and technical), and *audience reaction*. This list is not to be considered a checklist and should be used as a guideline only. The student may elect to concentrate on only two or three of these elements in a particular response. The specific content of the response will likely be dictated by the nature of the production.

The student is to create their response based only on personal observation. It is important that the response be written soon after attending so that detailed observations are not lost to the mists of time. The response should not present opinion as fact; opinion must be supported by evidence provided in the production. The student is encouraged to make their point and then prove it in the content of their writing. The student should *never* rely on audience reaction to gauge the effectiveness of any kind of artistic expression.

The student should *not* under any circumstances synopsise the production's plot. Instead, the student should assume that the reader has also seen the production in question.

This writing is to be formal in nature. It is to be type-written following the MLA format. The paper is to have one inch margins on all four sides and appear in a type face no larger than 12 points. It is acceptable for the paper to be written in the first person. Responses written by ninth and tenth-graders should be between 600 and 850 words in length. A response written by eleventh and twelfth-graders should be between 850 and 1000 words.