

How to Write a Play Review



Writing a review of a play is a great way to articulate your response to a theatrical performance. The outline below covers many important topics for thinking critically about a production. More than simply stating whether the show was "good" or "bad," a review should discuss the play's basic structure, themes, and the ways in which the various design elements, acting choices and overall directorial vision addressed these issues. Check out examples of theatre reviews from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Riverfront Times. Then let us know what you think!

HEADING

1. Give title, playwright, and type of play.
2. Give date of production, place, and name of performing group.
3. Include a program of the play with your review.

You'll already have ideas about these before seeing the show!

ESSAY OUTLINE

I. Theme of play (main subject matter or message of the play)

II. Atmosphere (Tell how it was expressed in the scenery, lighting, and sound effects.)

III. Brief summary of story or plot

IV. Technical evaluation

- A. Setting/Scenic design
- B. Lighting
- C. Costumes
- D. Sound design

V. Acting evaluation

- A. Were the actors convincing in their roles?
- B. Did all characters work together to create ensemble or did some detract by not doing what they should?
- C. How did voice/movement affect believability?
- D. Did the actors underplay or overplay their parts?
- E. Were there any outstanding performances? Give specific examples and details.

Was the acting highly stylized? Or did it seem realistic? Could you understand everything that the actors were saying?

VI. Directorial evaluation

- A. Did the stage stay comfortably balanced?
- B. Did all aspects of the production communicate the same concept or feeling or were some distracting?
- C. Did this production interpret the script to your satisfaction?
- D. Was the director's concept true to what you think the playwright intended?
- E. Were any aspects of the production confusing?

VII. Personal opinion (You may discuss any aspect of the play you wish, but give reasons to justify and explain your beliefs.)

Were there any surprises? Disappointments? Feel free to respond to the entire theatre experience.