



Writing a Critical Response to a Performance

This is one approach to responding in writing to a viewed performance—it is **NOT** necessarily the best and it is certainly **NOT** the *only* way you can approach the task. This is a guideline to get you started—your **BEST** writing will come when you find your own *personal* style for writing—in the meantime experiment with variations of the following structure.

- **INTRODUCTION**—In a few sentences summarise what play you saw, the theatre, the company producing it, a quick plot statement, an overall evaluation.
- **THE PLAY**—Begin by giving a **BRIEF** overview of the plot—no more than three concise sentences until you develop some *finesse*. Identify the major themes and issues that the company have highlighted—**give some examples from the plot to back up your point**. You can also add some *informed opinion* about whether the play as written was any good—make sure you have reasons stated. (This is where you analyse, establish context/s, cultural heritage links, historical and social background, etc.)
- **THE PERFORMANCE**—Discuss how the play was realised in performance—what style or styles were evident—how did they highlight the themes and issues through the use of set, costume, lighting, and other production elements. **As always provide carefully selected examples to support your evaluation.** This can be a more detailed overview of the whole production. You might also want to discuss the relationship constructed with the audience and audience responses.
 - **THE PERFORMERS**— Discuss the acting and actors—how did they play the characters, what choices were apparent—did actor or director make the choice—how effective were the characterisations and the performances—did it all work—**back it all up with examples.**
 - **THE PRODUCTION**—a more detailed discussion about the various choices made in the production elements—how did they achieve the overall effect through set, costume, lighting, etc—did it all work together—discuss level of abstraction, symbolism, special effects, etc—**evaluate and give examples to support**
 - **COMMENDATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**—state what (and why) you valued in the performance—make suggestions about how you might have modified it for better effect. **Again—examples—detail—and clearly stated reasons.**
- **CONCLUSION**—a bit like the introduction—an overall statement of opinion and key concerns drawn from your discussion above—**DO NOT** simply restate the introduction.