

Theater Review Assignment

Length: 2-2.5 pages | MLA style and documentation are required | Use Standard American English Usage

Typically theater reviews advise audiences whether a play is worth attending, giving the performance either a thumbs up or a thumbs down. Generally we call this a “value claim.” A review can focus on a single idea from an essay, or it can deal with an entire essay, focusing on its most conspicuous features. It can also focus on a play, looking at the overall impact, or a theme one finds. Just be sure to tell your reader, in a thesis statement, what it is you are going to do, and then support the thesis with specific examples, details, and quotes.

- A play's **ideas**: How logical is the plot? Does it move smoothly and realistically? What assumptions underlie the ideas?
- A play's **language**: Is the dialogue clever, attention keeping? If dialect is used, is it used appropriately?
- A play's **structure**: setting, costuming, acting, plot, dialogue, directing, special effects,
- A **theme** in a play: love, hate, betrayal, symbolism, etc.

Sorting your responses:

First, after reviewing your notes, see if there is a focus to your comments and observations. What elements caught your attention? If you find that you have an idea that has potential, stop and briefly work it out on a piece of scratch paper. Sharpen the focus until you arrive at a thesis: a specific statement that makes a comment on some aspect or aspects of the play. Here are some possible thesis statements that could be used for papers that have a single focus.

- Offensive language spoils the play.
- Exaggerated acting hurts the effectiveness of the plot.
- The play is delightfully ironic and funny.
- The nostalgic tone weakens the impact of the theme.
- Beautiful photography and excellent acting make this an effective play.

If there is no focus to your comments, you might want to write a review that covers a variety of the ideas that you have about the play. In that case, your thesis might look something like this.

- The play, *FOB*, while humorous and well acted, is filled with stereotyped characters that take away from the overall effectiveness of the production.

However, do not try to cover everything you have noted. Support adequately each section.

Organizing a review essay:

Introduction

1. Introduce the play, the director, and any other pertinent information. The reader needs to know immediately what you are critiquing.
2. Give a brief summary, 2 or 3 sentences, of the play. A quote may or may not be useful here.
3. Introduce your thesis.

Main body

4. Fill the body of your paper with an analysis of the play, covering the points stated in the play. What you **do not want is a summary of the play** that simply restates what the play is about.
5. Make sure you have firm topic sentences that remind readers what you are critiquing.
6. Check, particularly if you are covering several different aspects of a play, that you have smooth transitions that join dissimilar ideas and smooth transitions that link paragraphs.
7. Make sure you have adequate support for each main point you make (**1 main point per paragraph**).

Conclusion

8. End your theater review by giving it a sense of closure. You could echo your thesis without repeating it *verbatim* or leave the reader with a powerful thought about the play. Be inventive. Usually a few sentences will suffice since the review itself is relatively short.