

A Guide to Writing a Critique of an Artwork

1. Give an introduction about the facts of the piece. Who? What? When?
2. Use the following outline as a guide in writing the critique of the piece.

A. Description

Make objective* or value-neutral* statements about the work. Exclude interpretations and evaluations, and instead take an objective inventory of the work. Point out single features such as objects, trees, and people. Then point out abstract elements such as shapes and colors. Finally point out texture, which can lead to a description of the “characteristics of execution.”

*A test of objectivity would be that most people would agree with your statement.

B. Formal Analysis

Make statements about the relations among the things you named in the Descriptions (Part A). How is the work of art organized or put together? Use the Principles of Art worksheet to help discuss similarities and differences in the formal elements of the artwork. Finally, note the overall qualities of the work.

C. Interpretation

Make statements about the meaning(s) of the work. This is the most creative part of the critique. Use a hypothesis; support it with arguments, based on evidence given in the **Description** and **Formal Analysis**.

D. Judgment

This is the most complex part of the critique and requires an opinion regarding the worth of an object, based on what was learned in the previous stages of the critique. Are you moved by this work? What do you think of it?