



ROYAL
DERNGATE &
NORTHAMPTON

BECOMING A THEATRE CRITIC

The best piece of advice for a budding theatre critic is the same piece of advice given to writers in all mediums – find your voice. The thing that will make your review interesting to read – and to write – is the fact that it is unique to you. So be **BOLD** and work out what your opinion is.

FINDING YOUR OPINION

Watch the show!

This might sound silly, but make sure you actually watch the performance! Sometimes, knowing that you have to write a review can get in the way. Being an active audience member will help you to write a review from the heart.

Reflect

On the night you see the production, there might be 700 other people in the theatre – all with their own opinions. So it is important to work out what your unique opinion is.

If possible, write some of your thoughts down as soon as the play has finished. Use the box below to reflect on the things you liked and the things you didn't like about it.

I liked...

I didn't like...

It is also a good idea to write a sentence about how you felt when leaving the theatre. If you felt happy and uplifted, then you probably had a good experience of the theatre. If you felt tired and drained, you were probably bored. Remember, your review is all about your opinion. Even if everyone else in the audience seemed to love the play, you are entitled to say that it didn't work for you.

When I left the theatre I felt...

Research other reviews

Use the internet to find other reviews of the play. Check out newspaper websites, theatre blogs and social networking sites. For each review you find, decide whether you agree or disagree with the opinions of the reviewer. This will help you to decide what your opinion is.

Sum it up

Try to write one sentence that sums up your opinion of the play.

An example would be: I think CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF was an exciting, fast-paced production with excellent performances from the cast and an interesting set design.

My sentence is...

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Details

It is important to include some details about the production in your review. This is to help readers imagine it and to back-up your opinion about it. Areas to include detail about are listed in the table below. Try to write a couple of details about each element to help you when you come to write your review.

Set	
Costume	
Sound	
Lighting	
Characters	
Dialogue	
Dramatic Moments	
Directorial Decisions	
Pace	
Special Effects	

It is very easy to fall into the trap of describing the play, as opposed to reviewing it. Each detail must be written about in an analytical way and used to back up your opinion about the production.

For example, instead of writing *'the set design was naturalistic'* you might write: *'the naturalistic set design by Amanda Stoodley made the location of the play very clear'*

STYLE

Think about your audience: **who** are you writing your review **for**? Most reviewers would say they are writing to the general public – to people that have seen the production already and people that might see it in the future.

You should keep your style simple; to make sure it is accessible to your audience.

Here are some tips to make your review nice and easy to read:

Keep your sentences short

Most experts would agree that clear writing should have an average sentence length of 15 to 20 words. This does not mean making every sentence the same length, however. Be punchy. Vary your writing by mixing short sentences (like the last one) with longer ones (like this one).

Use words that are appropriate for the reader

Try to say exactly what you mean, using the simplest words that fit. This does not necessarily mean only using simple words – just words that the reader will understand. Avoid using theatre jargon or overly long words that they might find confusing.

Enjoy writing your review

The best way to make your review fun to read, is to have fun when you are writing it. Use your personality and creativity to paint a picture for the reader-allowing them to get a feel for the production and your opinion of it.

Good Luck!