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## Your Final Paper

Your assignment is to write an original essay (750 – 2000 words, which is about 3 to eight double-spaced pages, plus a Works Cited page) on the final live production you saw this semester. You have previously written a "deconstructed" essay employing the terms and ideas of the course. For this assignment, you will retain the major elements of the previous paper but create a more fluid essay.

The audience for this paper is an educated theater-goer who wants to know about **this** production specifically. Your content should describe your experience going to this production. It should analyze and interpret what this production was about, and discuss how the many elements we have learned about over the course of the semester contributed to the overall achievement of the production. Finally, you will evaluate the performance based on what you know about the theater, and describe the relevance of the production. Some ideas you might explore in the last section of your essay are the social and human significance of the work, the artistic quality of the production, the way in which it is revelatory about art and theater itself, and the entertainment value of this performance. (These categories are discussed in the final chapter of your textbook.)

The paper should be in essay form, not a series of answers to questions, but should incorporate all this information in the following **required** structure:

### **The Opening Paragraph – Overview**

1. A terrific thesis statement which focuses your report specifically on the production.
2. The name of the play, properly formatted in italics, along with the name of the author.
3. The name of the theater where you saw the performance, the date on which you saw the performance, your seat number, the approximate cost of your seat, and notes about anyone who attended the play with you.
4. Briefly characterize the audience for the play on the evening you saw it demographically.
5. A short statement about any important historic facts about the play that would be helpful in discussing it, using terminology and concepts from the appropriate chapter of the textbook. Such facts might include when the play was written, the theatrical movement (such as realism, expressionism, meta-theater, etc.) to which it belongs, original language if not written in English, etc. Be sure to cite any sources you consult to discover this information, including the production program for the performance. FOR THIS, AND ALL SECTIONS OF THIS PAPER, PLACE TERMINOLOGY FROM THE TEXT IN **BOLD FACE** TYPE TO IDENTIFY VOCABULARY YOU HAVE

MASTERED IN THIS COURSE.

**Second Section – The Text - two to three paragraphs**

4. In a short sentence identify the duration and genre of the play. In a second sentence, using terms and ideas from the “timeline” section of Chapter Two, discuss any interesting aspects of the structure of the play.

5. Very briefly, using the same pattern you used for the first two reports, recount the plot of the play. This should take no more than one concise paragraph. It is not the bulk of your report and you will be penalized for devoting excessive space to it.

6. In a single sentence, no more, summarize the theme of the play.

7. Discuss any interesting aspects of the “diction” and “music” of the play, in the sense of the Aristotelian elements. If you attend a musical you will want to incorporate information from our unit on Musical Theatre into your report, so be sure to read and assimilate that chapter before writing your final draft.

8. In a single, concise, grammatically-correct sentence per aspect cited, employing one or more terms from the "qualities of a fine play" section of your text, describe the strengths of the text.

**Third Section – The Director and the Performers – one to three pages**

9. In a concise unit, describe what was interesting about the performances of the actors, applying terms and concepts from your text's acting chapter. Make sure you use the *actors'* names when discussing their choices and skills, and the *characters'* names when discussing the action of the play. In early reports the greatest flaw in discussing acting was generalizing and judging, (“The actors were really good... or really bad”) instead of observing and describing. Be specific. Give examples of exact moments and detailed performance choices to back up any generalization you make.

10. Direction can be both difficult to "see" in a finished performance, and hard to write about. Cohen suggests that one way to articulate the outcome of a director's central task of conceptualizing a play is to state the concept of the play as a tagline. Using this approach, in a single, concise and grammatically-correct sentence in some manner which identifies the director, state the concept of the play as a tagline.

**Fourth Section – The Visual Elements – one to three pages**

11. Using vocabulary from the Designers and Technicians chapter discuss the staging format, and the design of lights, costumes, sets, sound and make-up. This section of your report should be thorough, dedicating a concise paragraph to each topic. In early reports the greatest flaw covering these topics was generalizing and judging, (“The costumes were awesome”) instead of observing and describing. Be specific.

### **Final Section – The Big Picture – one paragraph to one page**

12. This is where you talk about one, some or all of the following: the social and human significance of the work, the artistic quality, the way in which it is revelatory about art and theater itself, and/or the entertainment value of this production.

13. In a conclusion, summarize the main points presented in the body of your essay and finish with a statement about the overall experience, including the quality or worth of the production as measured by the standards we have learned about in the class. This should not be merely subjective and personal, but an educated assessment.

14. Attach a Works Cited page, as always, using MLA format.

### **Checklist:**

1. After preparing a first draft, did you go back and rewrite/revise to achieve greater clarity, more economy, and better style?
2. Have you proofread your paper carefully to insure correct spelling of all words (especially names, titles and theatrical vocabulary) and use of good, college-level English grammar? You are highly encouraged to use the feedback from both spelling and grammar checking software in TurnItIn to eliminate the most common, easily avoidable, errors.
3. Have you used correct MLA style, including italicization of play titles every time they occur?
4. Are all sources properly cited, including the theatrical program and our textbook, every time you are using them? Do your citations include both the in-text citation at the point of usage, and a corresponding entry on your Works Cited page? Remember: You have to cite more than just direct quotations from a source. If you used a source for information, such as the playbill from the production, you need it place an intext citation after the information and have a corresponding entry on the Works Cited page.
5. Have you discussed the play using the theatrical terms and concepts you have studied throughout the semester? The major point of this exercise is to apply the disciplinary perspectives and terminology you have acquired. In the second reports there was a general tendency to skip this, using layman's terms to discuss the play. Unfortunately, that created confusions where theater terminology would have been precise.
6. Have you gone back through the paper and placed specific theatrical vocabulary you

are using in **boldface**, as instructed? There should be a significant amount of this, an average of one word per paragraph. The clearest indicator of your learning is that you can express your critical ideas in the vocabulary of the theater.

7. Do you address all the topics, and in the required five section order?

8. Do you have specific examples gleaned through keen observation to back up every assertion you make in the paper? A weak paper is one that could have been written without ever seeing the play because it so lacks detail. A strong paper is one that shows evidence of close, thoughtful observation.

**How to submit this paper:**

This paper should be submitted via the TurnItIn site, in the center column of iLearn. Your paper must be in .pdf, .rtf, .doc or .docx, ODT or HTML format, and be less than 20MB. It should be constructed using MLA guidelines and include an MLA Works Cited page at the end. There are complete instructions for how to use MLA format available at the OWL site (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>), for which a link is also provided in the bottom center block of iLearn.



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