

# HOW TO CRITIQUE A WORK OF ART

## What is a critique?

A critique is an oral or written discussion strategy used to analyze, describe, and interpret works of art. Critiques help students hone their persuasive oral and writing, information-gathering, and justification skills.

Below is a sample set of focus questions for an art critique related to four major areas of art criticism: **description, analysis, interpretation, judgment.** (The number of questions and aspects of specificity will vary according to the art form and number of works in the critique).

## Description

*Describe the work without using value words such as "beautiful" or "ugly":*

- What is the written description on the label or in the program about the work?
- What is the title and who is (are) the artist(s)?
- When and where was the work created?
- Describe the elements of the work (i.e., line movement, light, space).
- Describe the technical qualities of the work (i.e., tools, materials, instruments).
- Describe the subject matter. What is it all about? Are there recognizable images?

## Analysis

*Describe how the work is organized as a complete composition:*

- How is the work constructed or planned (i.e., acts, movements, lines)?
- Identify some of the similarities throughout the work (i.e., repetition of lines, two songs in each act).
- Identify some of the points of emphasis in the work (i.e., specific scene, figure, movement).
- If the work has subjects or characters, what are the relationships between or among them?

## Interpretation

*Describe how the work makes you think or feel:*

- Describe the expressive qualities you find in the work. What expressive language would you use to describe the qualities (i.e., tragic, ugly, funny)?
- Does the work remind you of other things you have experienced (i.e., analogy or metaphor)?
- How does the work relate to other ideas or events in the world and/or in your other studies?

## Judgment or Evaluation

*Present your opinion of the work's success or failure:*

- What qualities of the work make you feel it is a success or failure?
- Compare it with similar works that you think are good or bad.
- What criteria can you list to help others judge this work?
- How original is the work? Why do you feel this work is original or not original?

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNED ART CRITIQUE:

1. In class: students will choose an artist from the hat.
2. Select an artwork of your choice by that artist. You can find most artworks on [www.artchive.com](http://www.artchive.com). Print the image on the art room color printer – no larger than 5"x7".
3. Critique the artwork following the above format. Use your own words. (Copy and Paste is considered PLAGIARISM and is subject to a score of 0 plus a discipline referral) This art critique should include your own perspective, interpretation and your own ideas about the piece (in the interpretation section).
4. You may type the critique or submit a hand-written copy (very legible).
5. Critiques are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due dates.

## **ELEMENTS OF ART (tools)**

- LINE
- SHAPE
- COLOR
- VALUE
- TEXTURE
- FORM
- SPACE

## **PRINCIPLES OF ART (method)**

- BALANCE
- EMPHASIS
- MOVEMENT
- PROPORTION
- RHYTHM
- REPETITION/PATTERN
- HARMONY/UNITY
- VARIETY

*Think of the elements as the tools that are used to achieve good composition and design.*

*The principles are the ways (the methods) that the tools (ELEMENTS) are used to create a good composition.*