

The University of Texas at Austin



Performing Arts Center

Curriculum Guide Series

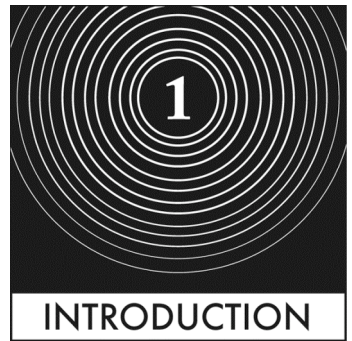
Dance Reviews A Genre Study

Includes introduction, resources,
standards, and student handouts.

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Genre Study – Dance Reviews

The following pages include a lesson plan and student handouts for a genre study centered around dance reviews. This study culminates in students writing their own review of a dance performance



This lesson can work well if the students are going to see a professional dance performance, but it can just as easily be accomplished using video or student performances.

The reviews that students write can be submitted to school newspapers, or students may choose to post them on blogs. The possibilities for authentic use of the reviews the students write are almost endless. If this unit is done in conjunction with a dance performance at a performing arts center, maybe the performing arts center will publish a review or two on their website.

Reviews in the classroom

1. If this is a professional performance the students will see, find some reviews of the company online. Companies will often list them on their websites or you can do a search of local newspapers. Read and discuss the reviews in class before the students see the show. In this way, they are prepared to think about the performance as a critic and will pay attention to details that critics notice.
 - a. To help with reading the reviews, several different strategies are included in this document.
2. The first class after the show, have the students journal/freewrite/brainstorm about the show. Reactivate that knowledge and their experience. It may help to play the music from the show during class. After this initial writing phase, take the time to share and discuss. Then give the students an opportunity to write more as the discussion may have encouraged other memories to float to the surface.
3. Then have the students write a more formal, but still short, review. Maybe they can submit them to the school newspaper/newsletter.

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Resources for Lesson Plans and Reviews

ArtsEdge, Kennedy Center

This is a website with lesson plans, articles for teachers, videos, interviews with artists, and other valuable resources. A must-see for dance teachers.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/>

This lesson plan was informed by the “Teaching Students How to Critique” article on ArtsEdge.

<http://www.artsedge.org/content/3338/>

Dance Magazine

A magazine full of reviews, articles, pictures, ideas, and the like. Unique to the online version are the blogs (Apparently it recently underwent an editorial shift and has improved its quality and content.)

<http://www.dancemagazine.com/>

Read Write Think

A great website for help with students reading and writing. This could be particularly helpful when they are reading difficult reviews.

<http://www.readwritethink.org>

Good Dance Reviews

New Yorker Magazine: www.newyorker.com

New York Times: www.nytimes.com

Village Voice: www.villagevoice.com

General Dance Resources Online (ones you might not already know)

National Endowment for the Arts

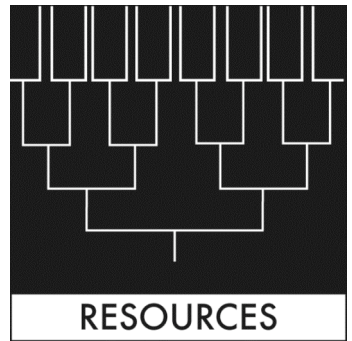
This website lists various resources for dancers, companies, dance teachers, and those who care about dance. Very broad, but a good starting point.

<http://www.nea.gov/resources/disciplines/dance/resources.html>

Texas Cultural Trust

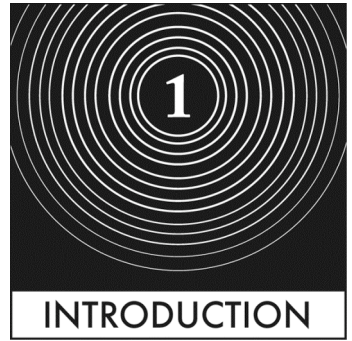
A good resource for Texas-centric art things. They have various programs for artists and funding opportunities for existing programs.

<http://www.txculturaltrust.org/index.html>



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Genre: a class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, technique, or the like

(from dictionary.reference.com)

All types of writing fit into a genre, many of which you are familiar with: short story, personal essay, poem, play, or novel. Dance reviews are another type of genre that has a particular form, and employs specific techniques to communicate the author's purpose.

Question—

What is the author's purpose in writing a dance performance review?

Reading Reviews

Read through the reviews your teacher gave. Choose the one that is most accessible to you or that is written in a style you would like to model. As you read answer the following questions (The indented questions will help you answer the first question fully.):

- How has the reviewer organized the review?
 - What does the author describe first, second, or third?
 - What would you label as the introduction and or conclusion?
 - Is there a “thesis statement” that seems to sum up the review?

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- What is the tone of the piece?
 - List some of the more powerful adjectives that the author uses?
 - Are those adjectives generally positive or negative?
- What types of figurative language does the reviewer use? (Metaphor, simile, symbol, hyperbole, personification, etc.)
- Does the author recommend the performance or not? What reasons are given?

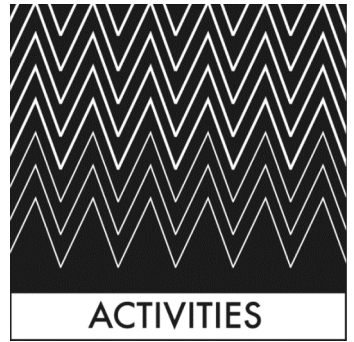
Defining the genre

After answering all of the above questions, think about what a dance review needs to sound like to be a dance review. Also, look back at your notes about the author's purpose in a dance review. Now, list the defining characteristics of the dance review genre and explain why those characteristics are necessary for a piece of writing to be included in the genre.

Characteristic	Explanation

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Organizing a Review

Just like any genre, there are particular ways that dance reviews are organized. One of the most common ways is described below. After learning and discussing the pieces of a review, use the rest of the handout to work through the steps with the performance you saw.



1. *Describe: Explain what you see. Leave out 'value' words that discuss feeling or interpretation or thinking. Just say what you see.*
2. *Analyze: Describe the separate pieces of the performance, how the work is organized.*
3. *Interpret: Explain how the performance makes you think and feel. Ground this explanation in the performance itself, but you can make reference to your own experience if it is important.*
4. *Judge: Give your opinion of the performance's success or failure. Again, give specific reasons for your opinion that are taken from the work.*

The ideas below are just some ways that you can think about each of these pieces of your review. Don't be limited by the boxes. Feel free to cross something out and add your own category.

The dancers looked like...

The costumes were...

The choreography reminded me of...

Describe

Other thoughts...

- Other ideas:
- Lighting
 - Music
 - Tempo
 - Technique
 - Energy

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The performance was organized around...

An important moment in the dance was...

Analyze

There was a story about ...

There was a character who...

This performance makes me think...

because...

This performance makes me feel...

because...

Interpret

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Judge

Reasons to see the performance	Reasons to avoid the performance

Choose one: **RECOMMEND**

NOT RECOMMEND

Use the following lines to put your opinion into complete thoughts and sentences. Be sure to pull from the ideas you wrote down in each of the four parts of the review. Also, think of a good way to close the review. Go back and reread some final lines from the model reviews to help you think about this.

You may want to think about submitting your final review to your school newspaper, posting it on a dance blog, or condensing it and submitting it as a letter to the editor (a different genre with different conventions).