

The University of Texas at Austin Performing Arts Center

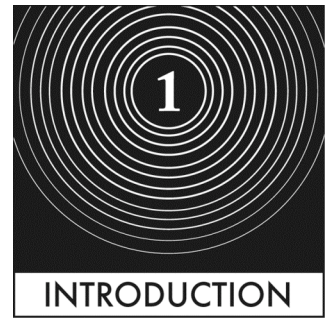


Curriculum Guide Series

Music Reviews A Genre Study

Includes introduction, resources,
standards, and student handouts.

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Genre Study – Music Reviews

The following pages include a lesson plan and student handouts for a genre study centered around music reviews.

This lesson can work well if the students are going to see a musical performance, but it can just as easily be accomplished using students' own CDs or MP3 players.

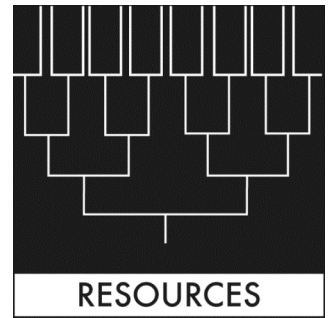
These reviews can be submitted to music review websites, school newspapers, or students may choose to post them on blogs. The possibilities for authentic use of the review the students write it almost endless. If this lesson is done in conjunction with a musical performance at a performing arts center,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

Reviews in the classroom

1. 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 paying attention to details that critics notice.
 - a. To help with reading the reviews, I've included several different strategies 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 during class. After this initial writing phase, take the time to share out 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.

Music Reviews

A study in genre



Resources

Websites useful for finding music reviews: _____

Rolling Stone Magazine
<http://www.rollingstone.com>

Be aware language may be an issue and some schools block or filter this site.

Pitchfork Media
<http://www.pitchforkmedia.com>

Non-print music review. Again, language can be an issue, but the reviews are often short.

National Public Radio
<http://www.npr.org>

While they don't often review pop music, the radio format gives students an alternative way to publish reviews.

New Yorker
<http://www.newyorker.com>

These are long format reviews, but the pop music ones can be quite interesting.

Websites useful for finding song lyrics: _____

Note: Many schools block various lyric sites; one way around this may be to try searching for the song through Google or to try the band's website and discography.

<http://www.lyrics.com>

<http://www.azlyrics.com>

<http://www.songlyrics.com>

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Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

7th Grade English Language Arts and Reading

(1) Listening/speaking/purposes. The student listens actively and purposefully in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

- (A) determine the purposes for listening such as to gain information, to solve problems, or to enjoy and appreciate (4-8); and
- (B) eliminate barriers to effective listening (4-8).

(12) Reading/text structures/literary concepts. The student analyzes the characteristics of various types of texts (genres). The student is expected to:

- (C) compare communication in different forms such as contrasting a dramatic performance with a print version of the same story or comparing story variants (2-8).

(15) Writing/purposes. The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms. The student is expected to:

- (A) write to express, discover, record, develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve (4-8).

(8) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads widely for different purposes in varied sources. The student is expected to:

- (C) read for varied purposes such as to be informed, to be entertained, to appreciate the writer's craft, and to discover models for his/her own writing (4-8); and
- (D) read to take action such as to complete forms, make informed recommendations, and write a response (6-8).

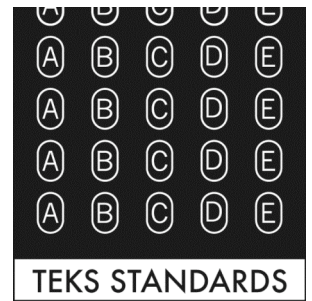
9th Grade English Language Arts

(1) Writing/purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms, including business, personal, literary, and persuasive texts, for various audiences and purposes. The student is expected to:

- (A) write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays, and stories.

(8) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including world literature. The student is expected to:

- (B) read in such varied sources as diaries, journals, textbooks, maps, newspapers, letters, speeches, memoranda, electronic texts, and other media; and



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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. Music 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 music review?

Reading Reviews

Read through the reviews your teacher gave. As you read answer the following questions (the indented questions will help you answer the first question):

- 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 music or not? Why or why not?

Defining the genre

After answering all of the above questions, think about what a music review needs to sound like to be a music review. Also, look back at your notes about the author's purpose in a music review. Now, list the defining characteristics of the music 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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Practice Music Review Writing

Think of your favorite song or record and think how you would be a music critic writing about that song or record. While you answer the questions below, remember the reviews you read and the characteristics of the genre.

- ★ List three words that describe the music on the song or record.

- ★ List three words that describe how you feel when you listen to the music.

- ★ What is your favorite line in the song/record? Explain why you like it.

- ★ Write two similes you would use in your review. (“Listening to this song is like...” or “The songs on this record are like...”)

- ★ What other song or record does your chosen song or record remind you of?

Opening lines need to be catchy so that the reader gets excited about the writing. What would your opening line be for your review on your favorite song or record?