



THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing a Critique

To critique a piece of writing is to do the following:

- **describe:** give the reader a sense of the writer's overall purpose and intent
- **analyze:** examine how the structure and language of the text convey its meaning
- **interpret:** state the significance or importance of each part of the text
- **assess:** make a judgment of the work's worth or value

FORMATTING A CRITIQUE

Here are two structures for critiques, one for nonfiction and one for fiction/literature.

The Critique Format for Nonfiction

Introduction

- name of author and work
- general overview of subject and summary of author's argument
- focusing (or thesis) sentence indicating how you will divide the whole work for discussion or the particular elements you will discuss

Body

- objective description of a major point in the work
- detailed analysis of how the work conveys an idea or concept
- interpretation of the concept
- repetition of description, analysis, interpretation if more than one major concept is covered

Conclusion

- overall interpretation
- relationship of particular interpretations to subject as a whole
- critical assessment of the value, worth, or meaning of the work, both negative and positive

The Critique Format for Fiction/Literature

Introduction

- name of author and work
- brief summary/description of work as a whole
- focusing sentence indicating what element you plan to examine
- general indication of overall significance of work

Body

- literal description of the first major element or portion of the work
- detailed analysis
- interpretation
- literal description of second major element
- detailed analysis
- interpretation (including, if necessary, the relationship to the first major point)
- and so on

Conclusion

- overall interpretation of the elements studied
- consideration of those elements within the context of the work as a whole
- critical assessment of the value, worth, meaning, or significance of the work, both positive and negative

You may not be asked in every critique to assess a work, only to analyze and interpret it. If you are asked for a personal response, remember that your assessment should not be the expression of an unsupported personal opinion. Your interpretations and your conclusions must be based on evidence from the text and follow from the ideas you have dealt with in the paper.

Remember also that a critique may express a positive as well as a negative assessment. Don't confuse **critique** with **criticize** in the popular sense of the word, meaning "to point out faults."