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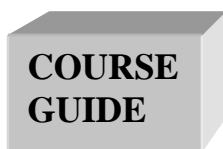
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE

MAC 313

COURSE TITLE

CRITICAL WRITING AND REVIEWING



MAC 313 CRITICAL WRITING AND REVIEWING

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CONTENT

Introduction	v
What You Will Learn in this Course	v
Course Aims	vi
Course Objectives	vi
Working through this Course	vi
Course Materials.....	vii
Study Units.....	viii
Textbooks and References	viii
Assignment File	viii
Presentation Schedule	viii
Assessment	viii
Tutor-Marked Assignment	ix
Final Examination and Grading	ix
Course Marking Scheme	ix
Course Overview	x
How to Get the Most from this Course	xi
Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials	xii
Summary	xiii

Introduction

MAC 313 is a 2credit-unit one-semester course designed to drill students of Journalism or Mass Communication in the principles of critical writing and reviewing and in the theories and methods of criticism.

This course will explain and provide guidance to students in the preparation for journalistic use of various kinds of critical articles and reviews dealing with the fine and popular arts.

The course is especially designed for professional and academic needs of students offering B.Sc or B.A degrees in Journalism and Mass Communication.

The course has a guide which serves students in effective use of the course materials as contained in the course units. The course also provides for Tutor-Marked Assignments which students must respect.

What You Will Learn in this Course

The overall aim of MAC 313: Critical Writing and Reviewing is to expose students to the basic concepts in journalistic criticism as a means of giving guidance in reporting and criticizing the arts.

The meaning, structure, components and functions of criticism would be treated along with creative essentials of critical writing. This course will also assist students to appreciate the major differences between a review and critical article and their commonalities with other forms of writing.

Your understanding of Critical Writing and Reviewing will prepare you to be schooled in the fine and popular arts and mastery in knowledge of the arts will help you surmount challenges that go with analysis and appreciation of value of arts in our lives.

The course will stimulate students to think and write about the arts critically and professionally. It will enhance students' understanding of power of arts not only as a source of treasure but a means of knowledge and a guide to action. The course will nurture the students into professional art critics who will appreciate the power of the fine and popular arts in our individual and collective lives.

Course Aims

The major aim of this course is expose students to the general principles and practices of critical writing and reviewing and help them learn how to apply the basic techniques of criticism and be an increasingly effective critic of value.

The course is also aims at helping students realize the full extent of their responsibility as critical journalists enough to remain aware of their readers' needs but go beyond these to assist readers in forming and tastes.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course the following objectives is designed to be achieved:

- ❖ educate students on how to appreciate the fine and popular arts and apply the basic principles of criticism in reporting and evaluating them.
- ❖ teach students the approaches, components and techniques of critical writing and how to write critical articles and reviews on the fine and popular arts.

Working through this Course

The student is expected to read the recommended texts and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) o effectively harness and retain the rich information in this course.

In each unit, the Self Assessment Exercise spelt out must be done by the students. NOUN expects students to submit these assignments for periodic assessment. There will be an examination at the end of this course. The components of this course and what you ought to do are stated below.

Course Materials

The main components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. References
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation

In addition, you must obtain your copy of the materials provided by NOUN. You may obtain your copy from the bookshop but should any problem arise in obtaining the materials, you may contact your tutor.

Study Units

There are seventeen study units in this course. These are:

Module 1

Unit 1 Meaning of Critical Writing

Unit 2 Critical Writing and Critical Thinking

Unit 3 Critical Writing and other Forms of Writing

Module 2

Unit 1 Functions of Criticism

Unit 2 Theories of Criticism

Unit 3 Approaches to Criticism

Module 3

Unit 1 Components of Criticism: The Critic

Unit 2 Components of Criticism: Direct Data

Unit 3 Components of Criticism: Indirect Data

Module 4

Unit 1 Writing the Review

Unit 2 Writing the Critical Article

Unit 3 The Reviewer and the Critic

Unit 4 The Critical Writer's Style

Module 5

Unit 1 Reviewing the Fine arts

Unit 2 Reviewing Books

Unit 3 Reviewing Drama

Unit 4 Reviewing Music

Unit 5 Reviewing TV and Motion Pictures

Each unit has a number of self-tests which are drawn from the materials the student has already studied. The tests are purposely meant to keep the student awake to what he or she has studied from the course. NOUN believes that if properly utilized, an excellent combination of self-tests with tutor-marked assignments will certainly lead to achievement of overall objectives of this course.

Textbooks and References

The following text books are recommended for students:

- Allen, M. (2004). *Smart thinking: Skills for critical understanding and writing* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford UP.
- American Psychological Association (APA) Critical thinking. (n.d.) *Webster's New Millennium Dictionary of English, Preview Edition* (v0.9.7). Retrieved February 02, 2009, from Dictionary.com website: [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/critical thinking](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/critical%20thinking)
- Barranger, M. S. (1995) *Theatre: A Way of Seeing*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing
- Barrett, T. (1994) *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company
- Calvocoressi, M. D. (1931). *The Principle and Methods of Musical Criticism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Cottrell, S. (2005). *Critical thinking skills: Developing effective analysis and argument*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave: MacMillan.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston, MA: Heath.
- Facione, P. (2006). *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts*. Millbrae, CA: Insight Assessment and California Academic Press..
- Fisher, A. (2001) *Critical Thinking: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, E. A., Hoffman, S., Moore, L. M., Ratcliff, G., Tibbetts, S., & Click, B. A. L. (1995). *National assessment of college learning: Identifying college graduates' essential skills in writing, speech and listening, and critical thinking*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2007). *Consequential validity: Using assessment to drive instruction*. Foundation of Critical Thinking. [Online]. Available: www.criticalthinking.org
- Pope, R. (2002). *The English Studies Book*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Rivers, L. W. and Somolkin, S. (1988). *Writing Opinions Reviews*. Ames, Iowa: University Press.
- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Uyo, A. O. (1987) *Mass Media Messages in a Nutshell*. New York: Civiletis International
- Wilson, D. S. (1977). *Introduction to Print Media: Readings In Nigerian Journalism* (ed). Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1973) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. Philadelphia: Chilton

Assignment File

In the Assignment File, you will find details of the work you are expected to submit for marking to your tutor. Marks you obtain for these assignments will count towards the final grade you obtain in this course.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course materials sets important dates for attending tutorials and for completing tutor-marked assignments. You are required to submit all your assignments by the dates due. You must be careful not to fall behind and delay your studies.

Assessment

The assessment of the course has two aspects. These are Tutor-Marked Assignments and the Written Examination. Tutor-Marked Assignments are based on information and knowledge gained in this course.

You must submit assignments to your tutor for marking according to deadlines set in the Assignment File. The assessment will count for 30% of your total course grade.

You must sit for a final three-hour examination at the end of the course which will account for 70% of your total course grade.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

There are seventeen tutor-marked assignments in this course. The student needs to submit all the assignments. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course grade.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. Use information contained in study units of your course and recommended textbooks to complete your assignments. However, you are advised to read additional reference materials to broaden your knowledge and deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with TMA (Tutor-Marked Assignment) form, to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the Assignment File. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination of MAC 322 will be three hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments 1-20	20 assignments, best four marks of twenty count @7.5% (on the averages) = 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course marking Scheme

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	Title of work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
	Course Guide	1	
Module 1			
1	Meaning of Critical Writing	1	Assessment 1
2	Critical Writing and Critical Thinking	2	Assessment 2
3	Critical Writing and other Forms of Writing	3	Assessment 3
Module 2			
1	Functions of Criticism		
2	Theories of Criticism	4	Assessment 4
3	Approaches to Criticism	5	Assessment 5
Module 3			
1	Components of Criticism: The Critic	6	Assessment 6
2	Components of Criticism: Direct Data	7	Assessment 7
3	Components of Criticism: Indirect Data	8	Assessment 8
Module 4			
1	Writing the Review	9	Assessment 9

2	Writing the Critical Article	10	Assessment 10
3	The Reviewer and the Critic	11	Assessment 11
4	The Critical Writer's Style	12	Assessment 12
Module 5			
1	Reviewing the Fine arts	13	Assessment 13
2	Reviewing Books	14	Assessment 14
3	Reviewing Drama	15	Assessment 15
4	Reviewing Music	16	Assessment 16
5	Reviewing TV and Motion Pictures	17	Assessment 17
17 Revision			
18 Examination			

Table 2: Course Overview

How to Get the Most from this Course

The study units replace the university lecturer in distance learning. One of the great advantages of distance learning is that you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Reading the lecture serves instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. First, there is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives which let you know what you should be able to do when you have completed the unit. Use these objectives to guide your study and check whether you have achieved the objectives at the end of each unit. To significantly improve your chances of passing this course, you must make a habit of checking whether you have achieved set objectives.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from other materials.

Reading Section

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. So, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor when you need help.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly

2. Refer to the 'Course Overview' for details to help you organise your own study schedule. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should fashion out your own convenient schedule for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to respect it. A major reason while students fail is that they do not respect their schedules. So if you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and some of your set books at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignments form and also on what is written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

- ❖ You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- ❖ You have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises,
- ❖ You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with the tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

MAC 313 is packaged to introduce you to the basic concepts and principles of Editorial Writing. Upon the completion of the course, you will be able to answer the following questions among others:

- ❖ What is the meaning of Critical Writing?
- ❖ How can you distinguish between a critical article and a review?
- ❖ What are the functions of criticism?
- ❖ What are the major theories and approaches to criticism?
- ❖ What are the components of criticism?
- ❖ How do you review and criticize different genres of the arts such as books, music, drama and others?
- ❖ How should the critic's style read like?



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Module 1

Unit 1 Meaning of Critical Writing

Unit 2 Critical Writing and Critical Thinking

Unit 3 Critical Writing and other Forms of Writing

UNIT 1 MEANING OF CRITICAL WRITING

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Definition of Critical Writing

 3.2 What it means to be critical

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The fine arts such as literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music and drama and the popular arts (motion pictures, radio, television, photography and recordings) though neglected, underrated and underreported have remained a critical part of human life. They prove how far man has gone in his civilization. When properly explored and exploited, the arts offer tremendous economic and socio-political opportunities. The arts are treasures in themselves and the very

use of the arts to criticize society has continued to draw the ire of leaders all over the world. Power of the arts has thus placed enormous responsibility on professional communicators to not only help readers have value for the money but also preserve the values of truthfulness and openness in our society.

This unit defines critical writing with particular emphasis on what it means to be critical.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you the student should be able to:

- define what criticism is
- know what it means to be critical

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Critical Writing

Criticism is an appraisal, evaluation or judgment offered on a piece of art, performance or production which may be positive, negative or both. Criticism implies a deeper knowledge of the art, performance or production under consideration and of the standards of measurement.

C. T. Winchester (Wolseley, 1973: vii – viii), one of the classic writers on the subject defines criticism as “the intelligent appreciation of any work of art, and by consequence the just estimate of its value and rank” and “the general nature of the functions of criticism is much the same whether the object criticized be literature, or painting, or sculpture, or painting”.

Wilson (2000) says critical writing is the literary art of assessing or examining the merit of any work or art and giving judgment on it; an art which is employed in the textual criticism of books, artistic and aesthetic appreciation of plays, movies, music, creative and fine arts and other public events. It usually involves a detailed critical examination marked by careful attention to the history, origin (an inward look at its type) set against standards that seem universal.

Pope (2002: 43) identifies four basic meanings of criticism:

1. finding fault and pulling to pieces [the text] in a negative sense;
2. analysing and pulling to pieces [the text] in the neutral sense of taking apart;
3. interpreting [the text] with a view to establishing [its] meaning and understanding;
4. evaluating [the text] with a view to establishing [its] relative or absolute worth.

Critical writing then is the writing of essays and articles either for broadcast or publication which appreciates and judges the arts. It is an expression of opinion which may be positive or negative.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that critical writing:

- appreciates or shows a clear perception of the aesthetic qualities of an object, performance or production and
- passes judgment because it basically evaluates the value of a work of art necessarily on qualities which make it a unique work of art;
- expresses an opinion about a performance, a book, a recital, a dance, an art exhibition, a movie, or some other evidence of an art.

- demands that you have deep knowledge of the subject matter or that you know your field and be familiar with the standards of measurements and of looking at all aspects or parts of a text, object, performance or production;

As Wolseley (1973) concludes, critical writing is informed by a sense of discussion. If critical reading is the attention we pay to the relationship we have with language, critical writing is the attention we pay to sharing that relationship with others.

3.2 What it means to be Critical

At university, to be critical does not mean to criticize in a negative manner. Rather it requires you to question the information and opinions in a text, object, performance or production and present your evaluation or judgment. To do this well, you should attempt to understand the subject matter from different perspectives and in relation to the theories, approaches and frameworks in your course.

Basically, to criticize means to appreciate and to pass judgment with some measure of analysis. To appreciate is to have a clear perception of the aesthetic qualities of an object.

To judge is to evaluate. Evaluation is the process of examining a subject and rating it based on its important features. To evaluate is to pass judgment upon or to indicate the value of a work of art. We determine how much or how little we *value* something, arriving at our judgment on the basis of criteria that we can define. Here you decide the strengths and weaknesses usually based on specific criteria. Evaluating requires an understanding of not just the content of the

object, but also an understanding of its purpose, the intended audience and why it is structured the way it is.

Analyzing requires separating the content and concepts of a object into their main components and then understanding how these interrelate, connect and possibly influence each other.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. In your own words, define Criticism.
2. Briefly outline how you can write a Critical Article

4.0 CONCLUSION

I have defined the concept of criticism and shown how you can be critical in your writing. I have explained that criticism is at once an appreciation, an evaluation or judgment and an opinion based on deep knowledge of the subject matter and standards of measurements. I have also shown that criticism is concentrates on the results of an artist's efforts and is directed at the fine or popular arts to indicate their value. It therefore offers the journalistic critic a powerful skill for intelligent evaluation of any work of art.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has tackled the meaning of criticism and explained what it takes to be critical.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1a. What is criticism?
- b. Explain how you write a critical article.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Pope, Rob. (2002). *The English Studies Book*. London & New York: Routledge.

Wilson, D. S.(1977). *Introduction to Print Media: Readings In Nigerian Journalism* (ed). Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 2 CRITICAL WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Definition of Critical Thinking

 3.2 Requirements for Critical Thinking

 3.3 Critical Writing and Thinking

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the primary aims of this course is to develop citizens who are able to engage in critical thinking and clear writing. NOUN attaches much importance to enhancing critical thinking and writing competencies among its students. Critical writing and thinking encompass much of what we do when using our brains. Critical writing and thinking skills particularly are not restricted to a particular subject area but are at the heart of what it means to be a scientist, researcher, scholar or professional in any field. Whatever you are studying, critical thinking is the key to learning and to making progress. Critical writing and thinking is therefore one of the most important skills to be learnt at this university.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you the student should have opportunity to:

- understand what critical thinking is
- recognize some of the critical thinking skills
- explain the relationship between critical writing and critical thinking and
- differentiate between critical writing and other forms of writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has been variably defined over the past 80 years. Listed below are several definitions of critical thinking in the literature:

“active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 118).

“purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual methodological, criteriological, or contextual consideration upon which that judgment is based” (Facione, 2006, p. 21).

“is analytical and strategic, linking knowledge bases to practice strategies” (Price, 2004, p. 47)

“critical thinking...includes interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, presenting arguments, reflection, and dispositions” (Jones, et al., 1995).

“critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information

gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Fisher, 2001).

From these definitions, there appears to be consensus definition of critical thinking as the mental process of actively and skillfully analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion. It is a process by which we use our knowledge and intelligence to effectively arrive at the most reasonable and justifiable positions on issues.

3.2 Requirements for Effective Critical Thinking

According to Cottrell (2005) and Allen (2004), critical thinking shares the following skills with critical writing:

Analysis: Examine the material by breaking it into its component parts to better understand the parts and the whole (*identifying, classifying, categorizing, comparing*); that is examine how the key components fit together and relate to each other or otherwise identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express belief, judgment, experiences, reasons, information, or opinion

Synthesis: To *synthesize* is to weave together material from several sources, including your personal prior knowledge, to create a new whole. making connections between the parts and the whole to see the pattern of relationships (*organizing, connecting, designing, predicting*); that is, bring together different sources of information to serve an argument or idea you are constructing. Make

logical connections between the different sources that help you shape and support your ideas.

Interpretation: examining the connection (s) between the parts and the whole to make inferences about the implications and meanings of the pattern(s) (*associating, inferring, decoding*); that is, comprehending and expressing meaning or significance of wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria.

Evaluation: Means forming judgments about meanings, qualities and values (*justifying, critiquing, verifying, deciding*); that is you are assessing the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation

Inference: When you look for inference, you are seeking to understand what is suggested or implied but not stated Identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information & to deduce the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation

Explanation: Here, you state the results of your reasoning and justify your reasoning in terms of evidential, conceptual, methodological, and contextual considerations upon which your results were based; and you present your reasoning in the form of cogent arguments.

Self-regulation: This means self consciously applying skills in analysis and evaluation to your own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting someone's reasoning or results.

3.3 Critical Writing and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking involves both reading and writing critically. Reading critically means examining different points of view with an open and enquiring mind, evaluating your own position, and drawing conclusions as to whether a particular point of view is persuasive. Writing critically means presenting your conclusions in a clear and well-reasoned way to persuade others.

Clear thinking helps to produce clear journalist writing. In critical writing, just as in other forms of journalistic writing, the journalist must be able to think critically as well as clearly. Critical thinking, Wolseley (1973:7) says, demands certain mental equipment:

- a measure of objectivity
- realization of the climate of opinion
- awareness of the methods of making estimates or arriving at judgment
- perspective gained through knowledge of the art being evaluated and understanding of the audience

These qualities separate the journalistic critic from virtually all his peers in journalism. Not every journalist possesses these qualities of course but these can all necessarily be achieved by the student through study and practice.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the critical thinking skills as they relate to critical writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Critical thinking is the process of applying reasoned and disciplined thinking to a subject. To do well even in your studies, you need to think 'critically' about the things you have read, seen or heard. Acquiring critical thinking skills helps you to develop more reasoned arguments and draw out the inferences that you need to use in your assignments, projects, examination and later in your work as a journalistic critic.

These skills are essential if you want to obtain high grades in your university study and, like other skills, they improve with practice.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit provides a general orientation to critical writing and critical thinking. It examines what is meant by 'critical thinking'; the skills associated with it, the relationship between critical writing and critical thinking, and the affinity critical writing shares with other forms of writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define critical thinking in your own words.
2. In what five specific ways can critical thinking help you as a journalistic critic?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Allen, M. (2004). *Smart thinking: Skills for critical understanding and writing* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford UP.

American Psychological Association (APA) Critical thinking. (n.d.) *Webster's New Millennium Dictionary of English, Preview Edition (v0.9.7)*.

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UNIT 3 CRITICAL WRITING AND OTHER FORMS OF WRITING

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Critical Writing and Broadcast Commentary

 3.2 Critical Writing and the Editorial

 3.3 Critical Writing and News Writing

 3.4 Critical Writing and Feature Writing

 3.5 Critical Writing and Column Writing

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Critical writing shares affinity with other forms of journalism. This unit shall examine the relationship between critical writing and other forms of writing in order to help the student distinguish them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- differentiate between critical writing and other forms of writing

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Critical Writing and Broadcast Commentary

Critical writing and broadcast commentary express opinions and both are subjective writing. Both provide the reader with a critical view and hope to convince and influence. But critical writing basically evaluates and appreciates what makes an object or idea a work of art, and necessarily, a unique work of art. Critical writing makes use of tastes and standards to determine how the object may be perceived by the reader.

Broadcast commentary does not necessarily appreciate. It is mainly to point out an anomaly, correct a wrong, prove a point or explain a process or concept or simply tell a story to amuse or amaze. Both critical writing and broadcast commentary however demand that you have deep knowledge of the subject matter. Critical writing particularly insists that you be familiar with the standards of measurements

3.2 Critical Writing and the Editorial

The editorial and the critical article all express opinion, evaluate, interpret, are subjective and hope to influence. An editorial could be defined as a corporate voice of a medium on issues of public interest, an opinion a newspaper writes to inform or explain, persuade or convince, and stimulate insight sometimes in an entertaining or humorous manner.

Critical writing does all that and also offers some measure of entertainment. A humorous piece of criticism certainly is a must read. Aside from influencing readers, criticism also serves as a guide to the reader. A book review, for instance, says Wolseley (1973), must tell the reader what the book is all about

(information), what the critic thinks of the book (opinion, influence), whether the book is worth spending time on (guidance) and also entertain the reader (humor).

3.3 Critical Writing and the News Writing

Critical writing shares characteristics with news stories. A traditional news story is an objective journalistic form. It is a straightforward presentation of facts, a recounting of factual and timely events without opinion.

Critical writing for journalism is not news reports of art shows. Critical writing emphasizes opinion but news writing emphasizes information. A news report of art shows is not critical writing. Critical writing concentrates on the results of the artist's efforts.

3.4 Critical Writing and Feature Writing

A feature is a creative journalistic article which informs, explains analyses, interprets, and exposes issues; a colorful story about people, events, places and life.

Features may be about artists and about their work, about art history, be personality sketches and biographies of artists and human interest sidelights on the arts, but they are not critical writing because they are not ordinarily about evaluation (Singer, 1974). Critical writing appreciates; feature writing emphasizes human interest.

3.5 Critical Writing and Column Writing

A column expresses the opinion or view of persons who work for the newspaper or magazine, and who are thereby known as columnists

Uyo (1987:15) defines a column “as an article, usually with some permanent or obvious title, that is written regularly by the same person, or in some cases, different persons, who express (es) their opinion on diverse matters, from the most mundane to the most profound.”

The columnist is usually an expert or specialist in the subject or field he writes about. A critic can maintain a column in a newspaper or magazine. The columnist therefore shares characteristics of a critic, is traditionally and largely a critic, and criticism demands of him expertise in the subject being evaluated.

Most newspapers and magazines have review or criticism columns on a wide variety of subjects – books, arts, dance, plays/theatre, radio and TV, films, etc. These are usually featured in special sections and are so labeled.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Outline the differences between critical writing and other forms of journalistic writing discussed.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Critical writing shares affinity with other forms of journalism such as broadcast commentary, editorials, the traditional news story and the feature. The critic can also use several types of composition such as description, exposition and

argumentation. But in all these, the journalistic critic must concentrate on the results of the artist's efforts and appreciate or exercise judgment.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discussed the affinity critical writing shares with other forms of journalism such as broadcast commentary, editorials, the traditional news story and the feature. But it emphasized the distinctive mark of the journalistic critic which is appreciation or exercise of judgment.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Which of the journalistic forms writing discussed shares the closest affinity with critical writing? Justify your answer.
2. What common characteristics do broadcast commentary and the editorial share with Critical writing?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Fisher, A. (2001) *Critical Thinking: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rivers, L. W. and Somolkin (1988). *Writing Opinions Reviews*. Ames, Iowa: University Press.
- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
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- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

MODULE 2

- Unit 1 Functions of Criticism
- Unit 2 Theories of Criticism
- Unit 3 Approaches to Criticism

UNIT 1 FUNCTIONS OF CRITICISM

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Critical Writing and Broadcast Commentary
 - 3.2 Critical Writing and the Editorial
 - 3.3 Critical Writing and News Writing
 - 3.4 Critical Writing and Feature Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The functions of critical writing coincide with those of all journalistic writing. The principal purposes of journalism are to inform, entertain and influence. Criticism does all these but it emphasizes the function of influence. This unit shall discuss the major functions of criticism.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- identify the major functions of criticism.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Function of Information

This is the function of reporting to which Oscar Thompson (Woleseley, 1959:24) says criticism “has one clear function, so central and dominating that all others may be regarded as subsidiary or supplementary”. It “... is to hold up a mirror to what has been composed or performed and to the performance.” Criticism conveys information if capably written and if indeed well written it offers even a measure of entertainment.

3.2 The Function of Influence

In fulfilling its function of influencing readers, criticism also serves as a guide. A movie or book criticism performs several functions for the viewer or reader at once: it performs the information function by telling the viewer or reader what the book or movie is about; it also performs the function of influence by telling the viewer or reader the reviewer’s opinion or what the reviewer thinks about the book or movie; then it offers guidance when it tells the viewer or reader whether the book or movie is worth his time or money; and finally, it entertains the viewer or reader if he enjoys reading the review itself.

3.3 The Function of Promotion

Another function of criticism is that it must promote. To many in the media industry, criticism is primarily a publicity tool, a factor in developing a favorable public attitude toward the work of art in question.

3.4 The Function of Advertising

Another function of criticism is to earn money directly for the medium through advertising. This is the tie with commerce which tends to stultify honest criticism. Criticism is regarded by some entrepreneurs of the arts also as a means of attracting advertising accounts.

Space in some Nigerian dailies is devoted to certain of the arts seasonally because of advertising. But Singer (1974) says its effectiveness as such varies according to the art form, the type of publication and the community.

3.5 The Function of Prestige

Critical writing sometimes is published for prestige by publishers or program makers who want their publications or programs to in good company and to be seen in the right places. So long as the rest of the publication earns sufficient revenue, the luxury of prestige-getting is continued. But Wolseley (1959:23) says, "a journalist who is given to understand that his writing should inform, influence, guide, and entertain readers, as well as promote the art itself so that it attracts advertising to the publication and lends prestige to the magazine or paper, must be a superjournalist indeed."

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Which of the functions of criticism do you consider most important? Why? Fully justify your answer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You as a journalistic critic must understand the impact of these functions and commerce on criticism. A purely task of informing, influencing, and the like is immensely difficult, for in discharging it honestly you may ruin advertising accounts or offend a friend or play favorites. It takes a bold critic to damn a book, play, or movie when he knows that the same medium will carry a sizeable volume of advertising for the same book, play, or movie.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discussed the functions of critical writing and the commercial and social difficulties associated with performing them. This is to help understand how increasingly hard it is to ignore the impact of commerce and social relations as a journalistic critic.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the major functions of criticism?
2. What do you consider to be the impact of commerce and society on criticism?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Fisher, A. (2001) *Critical Thinking: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rivers, L. W. and Somolkin (1988). *Writing Opinions Reviews*. Ames, Iowa: University Press.

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 2 THEORIES OF CRITICISM

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Authoritarian Theory

 3.2 Impressionistic Theory

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There are two broad theories of criticism. Criticism relies on both the intimate experience the critic has with the work of art he is judging and his possession of reliable criteria of criticism. These criteria act as useful guides to writing the criticism.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- describe the major philosophies or theories of criticism
- be familiar with the practices of the best journalistic critics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Authoritarian Theory

The authoritarian critic believes that there exist fixed standards with which to judge a new book, painting or some other composition or performance. He uses these standards and insists that all works of art must conform to these standards and any deviation from these standards is condemned.

Authoritarian criticism usually consists of judging particular works by historical, moral, judicial, classical and scientific models which already have been accepted as good. He judges new works by comparing them to his knowledge of what has gone before. It is knowledge of what has gone before that gives the critic his perspective. You can say that the authoritarian critic is rather fixed, inflexible and rigid in his evaluation of works of art.

Authoritarian criticism is produced only after years of study and exposure to the art of the past. It seeks to impose on all writers the strict observance of rules. Thus to the authoritarian critic, criticism is meaningless unless the yardstick of the critic is visible and respected.

3.2 The Impressionistic Theory

The impressionistic critic has no rules, he likewise has no standards. The impressionistic critic who follows Anatole France's (Wolseley, 1959:75) "is he who narrates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces." This means the impressionistic critic has no respect for fixed standards with which to judge a new book, painting or some other composition or performance.

It is his own impressions of the work of art under review that are important to him. He emphasizes his own impressions, rather than the facts or simple description. That is he does not judge a work of art on how nearly it approaches the qualities or characteristics of an earlier work but on its own merits and on its effect upon him.

The impressionistic critic at his best may possess knowledge of the authoritative critic but he draws upon himself rather than outside authorities

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Which of the theories do you consider most dominant? Why? Fully justify your answer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Theories of criticism are the points of view of the critic to his subject. Most criticism combines the authoritarian and impressionistic theories and few are dominantly either.

5.0 SUMMARY

Critical theories are many but we have reduced them here for working purposes to two. These distinctions, it must be remembered, are theoretical. The journalistic critic simply performs his job though he benefits from understanding and using these theories consciously until they become part of himself, unnoticed, yet in use.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A good critic “is he who narrates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces.” Discuss this statement with reference to theories of criticism

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 3 APPROACHES TO CRITICISM

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Moral Approach

 3.2 Psychological approach

 3.3 Sociological Approach

 3.4 Formalistic Approach

 3.5 Archetypal Approach

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Regardless of which theory of criticism is dominant, Scott (1977) suggests that five approaches can be employed by critics in providing access to a particular work of art.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- describe the major approaches to criticism

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Moral Approach

The moral approach uses ethical principles of human conduct such as 'order, restraint and discipline' as basis to criticize life, creative or literary art. To the moralist, criticism becomes "a repository of basic human conduct" (Wilson, 2000) which is used in criticizing works of art.

3.2 Psychological Approach

The psychological approach uses the tools of psychologist such as 'Oedipus complex' to explain acts or characters in work of art. This method also studies the lives of authors as means of understanding their art.

3.3. The Sociological method

The sociological method presupposes the interrelatedness of art and society and evaluates a work of art within its social context.

3.4 The Formalistic approach

The formalistic approach is a method of contemporary criticism which "stresses a close study of the text or work rather than sees the work merely as an expression of social, religious, ethical or political ideas" (Wilson, 2000). The formalistic method is also referred to as the "aesthetic, textual, or ontological approach, or new criticism" with journalism as its official organ. This method is easily the most influential of the critical methods.

3.4 The Archetypal or Totemic approach

The archetypal or totemic approach is often referred to as 'mythological or ritualistic' method. It reflects on culture is a demonstration of some basic cultural pattern from which it draws great meaning and appeal to humanity in a work of art.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Define each of the approaches discussed here in your own words.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has considered the major approaches to criticism. These are no set rules but these are to serve as useful guides to the critic. A critic may use several of these approaches depending on the work of art under consideration and the critic.

5.0 SUMMARY

The approaches discussed here are related. The moral and psychological are related while the sociological and archetypal are also similar. These distinctions are therefore not watertight and one approach can dissolve into another in a criticism.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Compare two approaches of your choice and show the strength one against the other.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Wilson, D. S.(1977). *Introduction to Print Media: Readings In Nigerian Journalism* (ed). Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.

MODULE 3

- Unit 1 Components of Criticism: The Critic
- Unit 2 Components of Criticism: Direct Data
- Unit 3 Components of Criticism: Indirect Data

UNIT 1 Components of Criticism: The Critic

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Critic's Background
 - 3.2 The Critic's Attitude
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A distinguishing Greek-French author and critic, M.D. Calvocoressi (1923), was among the first to analyze the components of musical criticism. He noted that there are three major factors in appraising a work of music. These, we may apply to appraising any work of art. The first is the critic, the human factor in the communication who encodes, composes, and calls up messages.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- define and classify the background of critic
- show how his background and prejudices can affect the work he is appraising.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Critic's Background

The critic's qualifications, then, according to Wolseley (1959) are that: he must like what he does, have an absorbing interest in the art form itself, possess an understanding of the art form, have the ability to transmit in words his reactions and judgments, know more than his subject.

An editor and publishers cannot tolerate ignorance in their critics and tacitly encourage it. The critic's background include the body of knowledge he possesses, his diverse interests, his tastes, inborn and or acquired; his likes and dislikes, prejudices for and against, sense of judgment, experience and observation, formal schooling and elaborate training, an analytical mind and ability to express himself. Words for instance, are a critic's tools. He can add up his vocabulary by judicious reading. He can and should supplement his background experience by achieving great knowledge about his chosen field in theatre, cinema, television, music, literature, art.

Of course, all these fields have some relationship to one another. All that the critic needs to know is everything about every art, history, sociology, economics, philosophy, language, and religion. You may think this sounds impossible but do the best you can to build your background as you work. A firmer base or standard

is established by greater background and the journalistic critic should not be unwilling to invest ten years of his life into an area without any guarantee of getting anything back except personal satisfaction to secure the background a critic must have.

Exposure strengthens standards of judgment. These help you know not only what has gone before so that you are a better judge of originality and treatment, but you also know what standards can be achieved in writing and performance.

3.2 The Critic's Attitude

The critic holds a mirror to the performance, an intensifying mirror, and acts as a funnel. But as a human being, the critic is subject to varying moods which make him see things differently. His emotional stability – even his disposition at the time of appraisal - a deep personal problem, an illness, perhaps a quarrel with his wife – may put him in varying moods. He should be aware of 'out-of-sorts' feelings.

The critic's predispositions are an important factor. Just how important depends on the critic's edibility to detach himself emotionally from what he is writing long enough to assess his emotions as well as what he is writing about. The critic must make sure that his own background and prejudices do not blind him to the merits and demerits of the work he is appraising. A critic must repress his personal inclinations but not his standards of taste and performance.

All his life, a critic must therefore retain an open mind, and respect the expert practitioner in any field of performance and creative arts. Open-mindedness here is not to the point of vacuity but to the extent of avoiding dogmatism. The real

value of open-mindedness is the willingness to try to understand the strange, the obscure, or the off-beat. When a critic avoids closed-mindedness, his own tastes, but not his standard probably will broaden. But Wolseley (1959) says when he starts to constrict, it is time to retire as a practicing critic.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Who is a journalistic critic?

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit teaches that basically, the critic should be an intelligent observer of works of art, should train himself and develop a background against which he can convey and pass on his impressions coherently and accurately, put them into perspective as possible, by reading and experience, should acquire certain ideals of taste.

5.0 SUMMARY

No human is objective; each of us possesses certain prejudices and preconceptions and the criticisms we write reflect these predilections. For a critic to be successful he must be equipped with background knowledge through conscious observation and study, and formal schooling. The critic must therefore do something about his conscience and overcome all background deficiencies and afflictions of his attitude so that they do not get into his criticism.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Itemize and briefly describe ten qualities of a good critic.
2. In not less than three pages of A-4 sized paper, discuss how a critic can add problem to critical writing.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.
New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book
Company

UNIT 2 Components of Criticism: Direct Data

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Material

3.2 Form

3.3 Workmanship

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The late Oscar Thompson (Singer, 1974) in his *Practical Musical Criticism* refined Calvocoressi's analysis of the components of criticism and noted that direct data – the music itself – can be divided into three major factors of material, form and workmanship. This formula can be applied to any work of art being reviewed whether a stage play, movie, TV documentary, book, the fine arts as well music.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- be familiar with the variables that make or mar criticism

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Material

Material is the work itself. It may be a book, a film, a stage play, a poem, a piece of music, a painting, or sculpture. If it is a book, the quality of paper or wood; if it is stage performance, the costume or setting.

3.2 Form

Form is the label or parts in which you breakdown a book, performance or production. If a book, is it biography, or drama or prose or poetry? If music, is it pop, gospel, classical, symphony, reggae etc.

In discussing material and workmanship, form sometimes is crowded out. Form may be only label. That is, a play may be advertised as comedy or tragedy. Various terms such as rhapsody, drama, concerts, symphony, musical drama, tragedy, musical comedy, operetta, light opera, comedy and other terms may described the form of the creation being reviewed and the critic may agree with this label or not. One may accept a label as to form even though the technical qualifications are not always met.

The element of form – the firmness of structure or lack of it – also overlaps into material and workmanship. The basic worth of the material of a play may be appraised in terms of universality. Could the setting of the play be transferred to another time or place with equal effect? The quality of universality aids any creative work. The quality of performance can override deficiency in the work performed.

3.3 Workmanship

Workmanship is effort or craftsmanship expended on the work of art. These are the creative aspects of a work of art: inspiration, originality, freshness, conviction, soundness of structure. You have to say whether the new work has inspiration. The inspiration may be in the originality of a play's plot or musical composition, or in its expert craftsmanship. The play or movie or musical composition or painting can have originality or it may use a previous playwright, composer, or artist's idea, or structure and give it a new twist.

Your experience and abilities should help you make comparisons. New writer or composer may have used a previous practitioners' idea, or structure, and given it a twist. He may thus bring freshness of treatment to the work. In this case, workmanship may be principal factor for examination.

But whether old or new, it is the playwright or composer convincing in what he says (material) and how he says it (workmanship). The creative artist may have a good idea (material), but may not have developed it to its fullest extent (workmanship). Again he may have a good play idea, the plot may teem with possibilities yet the overall structure may not take advantage of all the material; or the plot may be top – heavy with subplots that impede the principal action. Here, the imbalance of material and form makes a faulty structure. Judgment of musical composition, course, also employs standards of material, form and workmanship. Does the music have basic worth? Is there sufficient thematic structure?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss what elements you would consider in evaluating workmanship in a work of art.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Analysis of material, form, and workmanship is suggested as an aid to the critic. After some practice, such appraisal will become subconscious or second nature. The critic will strive to appraise the basic worth of any new work – whether it has genuine substance or is of the fashion of the day, whether there is sound workmanship or merely a high technical finish.

5.0 SUMMARY

Direct data is everything present in the music (or other creative work). Direct data provide the principal basis for appraising a new work of whatever medium. Direct data is everything present in the performance or creative work under review. It involves the creative aspects of a new work of art such as inspiration, originality, freshness, conviction, and soundness of structure.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Using your knowledge of direct data studied in this unit; criticize a review on any work of art published in any Nigerian daily (Attach photocopy of the review).

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Rivers, L. W. and Somolkin (1988). *Writing Opinions Reviews*. Ames, Iowa: University Press.

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 3 Components of Criticism: Indirect Data

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Indirect Data

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indirect data stem solely from outside the creative work itself. It is everything external to the work. Indirect data may be useful in your review. It may even influence your judgment

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- identify and explain what indirect data is in critical writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Indirect Data

Indirect data are –

- the artist's or artiste's intention, expressed, disavowed, or not expressed at all;

- the place or position of the work in the artist's or artiste's output,
- the position of the work in its contemporary setting, or place in history;
and
- whether the work has any significance, or any intent.

Such indirect data must be considered. First of all, there is a label of the author himself, whether he is well known or not. The name of the author should, however not predispose the critic and each work should be judged solely on its own merit. When reviewing a new artistic work by a prominent creator, it is valid to appraise it in terms of the man's previous output but only as an aid and not to mislead or to be an end in itself.

In reviewing plays or movies or books, the indirect data can be helpful or otherwise. If it is drama or play, first ask yourself whether the play has any true life connections or connotation? A play may have fictional characters that may have coincidental semblance with people living or dead. If a book is a biography, how true to life does it appear? Has the biographical order of events been followed faithfully or have they been juggled? Have characters and or events been added or omitted – added for dramatic effect, omitted to avoid cluttering the script? All these are interesting as to factual accuracy. But what is important is whether the tempering with biographical facts enhances or detracts from the quality of the book.

Music is full of examples of indirect data, avowed and disavowed. First of all, there is programme music-music with a title that tries to tell a story, in contrast to pure music, which is solely for its own sake. Such music may be inspired by a natural phenomenon or poem and although your knowledge of the story or

poem may enhance your enjoyment of the music, it may not necessarily make the music itself any greater.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Choose a particular art form, describe and give examples of indirect data that can be useful in its criticism.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit we have shown that indirect data, though useful in criticism and may have a bearing in what you include in your review, it can sometimes be misleading. The name of the author, for instance, may sometimes predispose the critic and make criticism an unwilling apologist. You must be careful to judge each work solely on its own merit though this is sometimes hard.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit focused on indirect data as a major component of criticism. Indirect data comes from outside the work of art and is extrinsic to it. It may be the artist's or artiste's intention, the place or position of the work in the artist's or artiste's output, the position or place of the work in contemporary setting or history, or it may be the work's significance or intent. You must note however that indirect data is determined largely by the individual work of art under review.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is indirect data in critical writing?
2. How can it help you in criticizing say a poem?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Rivers, L. W. and Somolkin (1988). *Writing Opinions Reviews*. Ames, Iowa: University Press.

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

Module 4

- Unit 1 Writing the Review
- Unit 2 Writing the Critical Article
- Unit 3 The Reviewer and the Critic
- Unit 4 The Critic's Style

UNIT 1 Writing the Review

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Writing the Review
 - 3.2 Preparation of Copy
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A review is a short piece of critical writing for a newspaper or magazine, about a particular art event. It is distinguished here from the full length criticism known as the critical article. In writing a review, you may follow a more or less fixed pattern especially as a beginner or follow no regular pattern.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should

- learn how to write reviews
- be able to construct a critical review

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Writing the Review

You can write your reviews in two basic formats. You can write your review in form of pure reporting that amounts to a news story about the material viewed or heard. You can also write a review that may incorporate expression of opinion and not merely describe through the senses but attempt to evaluate or appreciate.

No accepted pattern of any sort exists for writing reviews. But for the less experienced reviewer, it is safe to emphasise reporting over criticism, and merely describe and report the news. And because the review is largely news, it is advisable that it should follow the traditional inverted-pyramid pattern of news writing.

Journalistic critics therefore develop their reviews in different ways. Established critics can develop their reviews

- by constructing the review around personal experience, such as recalling an encounter with a star or artist at the start of the performance; or
- dispensing first with the news aspect, then launching a generalisation about the event and backing it up with evidence; or

- relating an anecdote or reporting an incident which leads into the opinions or evidence to be presented.

As a beginner however, your reviewing can be reduced to a formula. Depending upon your purpose, you may intentionally devote certain amounts of space to particular types of content. But the structure of a review suggested here is, however, meant as a guide and not to stifle your creativity as a critic.

The Beginning: is the most important and difficult part of the review. The beginning should be well thought of. This part can be called the lead or opening paragraph or intro. A straight news story usually has the most important facts in the lead. As with a good news story, the lead should be as interesting as possible and it should incorporate or emphasize any of the journalistic five Ws and the H and immediately give the reader information about the what, where, when, who, why, and how - depending on which is more dominant. This is a desirable format of all journalistic writing.

There are several straight news attention-getting leads you can experiment with. The commonest is the summary lead which encapsulates or provides a synopsis of the plot or action or description of appearance.

The Main Body: can divide the 5Ws and H and your views, unfolding the details in decreasing order of importance. Some parts can be criticism, either all authoritative or all impressionistic or both and some parts review. This part of the review can contain the heart of your views and must be constructed to carry your essential summaries and opinions and should be brisk and concise.

The Ending: This is the second most important part of the review after the opening paragraph and is almost as difficult to construct as the beginning. But several sound possibilities exist for you. One is that your review can end with your (critic's) main points. Another is that you can end your review with a major point that is an integral part of the body of the review.

3.2 Preparation of Copy

Selecting Material: Constructing a review is a process of selecting material. As a journalistic critic, decide what you shall include in your review by deciding what you want to say about the art, thinking what your readers may require of you. A review should however tell all the news of the event, anything worthy of mention.

Taking Notes: You must also understand that note-taking is fundamental to your success as a beginning critic. It is therefore wise to make notes while listening to music or watching a play or movie or wandering about an art gallery or reading a book. The notes you taken will add spice to your review. It is even wiser that you take more notes than you need so that you can choose the more important items and omit the rest.

Length: You must be conscious of the length of your review. Length usually is determined by the medium therefore you must familiarise yourself with length policies of different publications. Ordinary newspaper criticisms however run from 300 to 600 words in length.

Using Quotations: Use quotes in your review. If it is a book or some such art, include quotations from the original, alternating between direct and indirect

quotes, for they give the reader a clue to the author's or artiste's style and lend authenticity to the review.

Use of the Pronoun: Eschew the use of the first, singular or plural, in your reviews. Remember that you are speaking for your newspaper and avoiding the first-person pronoun makes your review appear more factual rather than one man's statement of opinion. Therefore let your review speak for itself. It carries more weight when expressed in impersonal terms.

Using Words: Words are a reviewer's stock in trade. The bigger your vocabulary, the better equipped you are. Words help you to express yourself precisely and to convey fine distinctions. Avoid flamboyant phrases and esoteric words that send your readers to the dictionary or are understood by only a minority of readers.

Beginning and Ending: Points at the beginning and ending of a review often carry more weight than if placed deeper into the story. Therefore, do not start or end your review with an observation that is an exception to your general premise.

The Legal Angle: You can not safely be ignorant of the laws of journalism that cover libel and slander, plagiarism, copyright, and related topics. Knowledge of these has particular pertinence for you since as a critic you express opinions and opinions are the commonest source of libel and slander. As a critic, you are at liberty to say what you wish about a work of art but you must be careful not to reflect upon the artist in a way that damages him or her professionally.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss some of the common ways used by critics in developing their reviews.

4.0 CONCLUSION

No accepted pattern of any sort exists for writing reviews. Experienced critics begin framing their reviews while watching or hearing what they are to criticize and the opening paragraphs occur to them effortlessly. And by the time the critic settles down to write the body of the review may take shape also and he has well in mind what he wishes to say. For a beginner, a formula is of considerable help until you learn eventually to dispense with the pattern.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit considered possible ways of writing reviews. The unit acknowledges that while no accepted pattern of any sort exists for writing, it is better for a beginner to reduce your reviewing to a formula which may serve you as a guide.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Reduce reviewing to a formula and discuss your formula with practical reference to a particular work of art.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 2 Writing the Critical Article

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Critical Article and the Critic

3.2 Writing the Critical Article

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing the critical article is a major test of the critic's abilities. The critical article is more extensive than the review. It is also more intensive, more penetrating, and analytical. In the critical article you cannot stop at merely describing or reporting but you must also dissect.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- locate a critical article on sight
- attempt writing a good critical article
- discern and identify conventional features of a critical article

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Critical Article and the Critic

The critical article, like the essay, is difficult to define, for it has no special form, as does the news story. It resembles the essay in that it, too, is a short piece of prose, with less emphasis on style, and wider purpose. It may be intended to inform, guide, entertain, and influence and it is collection of facts or ideas assembled to gratify on or more of these intentions. Largely, the critical article can be defined as a piece of prose which is intended to analyze some phase of the arts, and attempts to evaluate them. To Wilson (2000), the critical article is a careful composition that evaluates and appreciates the whole body of a writer's work, the whole career of a singer or the complete field.

Whatever it is called or however it is classified, on important thing is that, as a critic, you must be dominantly idea-minded as opposed to thing-minded. Some persons react most strongly to things – persons, facts, events; others attend more spontaneously to ideas, notions, generalisations, and thoughts about things. The reporter gives pictures of persons, things, and events in writing; the critic explains, relates and analyzes them and points to opinions and conclusions resulting from his cerebration. The writer of the critical article therefore should be idea-minded.

3.2 Writing the Critical Article

In writing the critical article, you can find the following steps very useful

Step 1: You are endowed with an idea or you are given an idea by an editor; either way, you obtain a topic or subject for the critical article.

Step 2: You research and gather facts and opinions relating to your subject. Research can come from your observation, from interviews, books and other media.

Step 3: After research, you analyze and relate facts gathered to gain new insights pertaining to the general purpose of the article in question. That you reflect on the different dimensions of the subject, on available alternatives and consequences, discount prejudices and biases. You can record your observations and makes use of your notes, clippings, letters and other sources.

Step 4: You can prepare an outline at this stage and list words, phrases, and sentences that represent all the different items that will go into the article regardless of relationship or order. Analyze this list in turn, group related items together, or arrange in any desired order. You may wish to write a paragraph setting forth the purpose of the article at this point, as a starter.

Step 5: Design an attractive opening or ending; you can begin with strong news-peg based on news event relating to the subject of the article among other openings. Your ending should grow naturally from the beginning or from the theme of the article. It may repeat the beginning to clinch the idea, or it may be an anecdote which emphasizes the chief message of the article.

Step 6: Next, you develop methods of presenting you materials in the body of the article. You can use either the deductive method or inductive method. The deductive method proceeds from general to the particular. Using the deductive method you may start with a general statement that follows an example or incident, and then provide minor details, all leading to the general statement of

the original proposition. The inductive method proceeds from the particular to the general; it begins with minor and works up to the general proposition which is usually stated at the end as a sort of conclusion.

Step 7: To write is to write and re-write and write until the critical article is ready after a number of drafts. You may allow a more experienced person to read your copy before you finally submit for publication along with whatever necessary pictures or artwork.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Examine the newspapers and magazines and identify critical articles, those run as regular parts of publications and those which appear under special features. Can you discern any conventional pattern? Analyze any of them in terms of its structure or design.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As you can from this unit the design of the critical is not very different from that of the critical review. It has a beginning, middle and an end. Its structure resembles that of a human being: it has a head, a body and feet. These distinctions must be different. The head must be smaller than the body, and the feet are of different construction than either of the two.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit teaches that there are two common methods of developing your critical article. If you plan to begin inductively, there are various choices for the opening. You can begin with an anecdote, or an incident, or a news-peg, or an example which sets forth the detail, or a slight descriptive passage. You must not forget

that the body of the article stems naturally from the type of beginning. If your article begins with a generalization, you must proceed to supply the support for that generalization in the body. Your ending should grow naturally from the beginning or from the theme of the article.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Submit a three-page critical article on A4-sized paper with 1.5 spacing on any work of art of your choice. Try to follow the steps suggested in this unit. You may shuffle them to suit your purpose.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wilson, D. S. (1977). *Introduction to Print Media: Readings In Nigerian Journalism* (ed). Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 3 The Reviewer and the Critic

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Reviewer

3.2 The Critic

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A true critic is not necessarily a reviewer, a reviewer is not necessarily a critic, in fact, and he rarely is. Each has his rightful place and they really are quite different breeds of the cat.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- differentiate between a reviewer and a critic

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Reviewer

A reviewer is not a critic even though he too must be critical. He is a reporter who writes what amounts to a follow-up news story about the material viewed or

heard. He therefore avoids opinion. He merely reports, that is, describes through the senses without attempting to evaluate or appreciate.

A review is objective reporting. You report what goes on outside you. You take note of first hand events; consult reference books for facts about the artist and their schools, familiarize yourself with catalogues, ask the artist direct questions, talk to the guards and people at the exhibition, ask the ticket taker for facts about attendance, report on special events, incidents, or whatever else that may make attractive copy but you do not enter the area of criticism.

As a reviewer, you are fundamentally a newsman, and the review is basically a piece of news. You are temperamentally very different from the critic. Your philosophy of writing is to approach objectivity as well as possible, be accurate, complete, and well rounded. Your strong points are speed, topicality, wit, and fact.

As a critical reviewer, you should be able to summarise the performance so well that you not only satisfy the man who was not there but add something to the overall impression, perhaps by some enlivening details to the man who was. As such, the reviewer should also help the reader or listener make up his mind what he thinks of the movie, play, or concert he attended night before.

3.2 The Critic

The critical article is subjective reporting. The critic expresses an opinion about a performance or a work of art or music. You tell your readers what goes on inside you. As such you must go beyond reporting or reviewing into the realm of the subjective. You must move from the objective the subjective. As a critic though,

you too must at least meet all standards of good reporting then add what converts a report into criticism; your opinions and comments.

The critic publishes several months after the reviewer has forgotten what the movie was even about. As a critic, you are really a kind of a garden-variety philosopher. Your virtues are long meditation, a firm historical sense, profound insight, and truth-even truth with a capital T. Your audience finds the reviewer flashy and cheap, the past master of snap judgment. Consequently, you must be overly elaborate bearing in mind that your arguments may even change the reader or listener's mind.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In a logical sequence, outline how a reviewer thinks and writes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The value of these distinctions between the reviewer and the critic for you as a new writer of critical material is that if you feel you are not grounded enough in the art form at stake, you can skip the critical writing and confine yourself to objective reporting so that you can produce something that is fair and usable.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt from this unit that the reviewer and the critic write in different ways, in different places, for different audiences. They operate on different levels and they think in different ways. Nevertheless, as you can notice, there is shadow line between the two; the same person can sometimes do the same jobs, sometimes even fuse the two activities.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the similarities and differences between a critic and a reviewer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 4 The Critic's Style

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Critic's Style

3.2 The Tone of Criticism

3.3 Developing your Style

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The journalistic critic's style is limited by the type of publication in which his or her work appears or the audience he addresses. The critic's writing must be suitable for most publications or other media and for the educationally limited as well as the technically well-informed readers he or she tries to serve.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should

- be familiar with the style of criticism
- be able to cultivate your own style

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Critic's Style

For a journalistic critic, it is advisable to conform to the stylistic traditions of the press. The journalistic critic's style is characterised by use of short sentences, simple words, brief paragraphs, and avoidance of foreign terms and exotic references and, except where inescapable, of technical terms; brightness and newness of tone and an introduction of human interest where possible.

But as a critic, you share the editorial and article writers' measure of freedom, and since you are thought to appeal to a somewhat better educated group of readers, you are allowed to use a few of the technical words of your occupation and the specialized language of the art you are evaluating.

Style refers to the method, the manner, and the personality of the writer. But Percy Marks (Wolseley, 1959:93) says "personality is as elusive as it is real and important. If we could define personality, we could define style..." He adds that the style of writing should reflect the personality of the writer, and that when as a student critic you have learned to give a true expression of yourself, you have achieved style.

Your goal as a critic therefore, writes Oscar Thompson (Wolseley, 1959:97-98), is to "rid writing of its last suggestions of effort, by perfecting a technique that reads as if it took care of itself." You must go straight to point, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, and word by word. There should be no waste, no padding, no clutter, or circuitous phrases. You must say what you wish to say, no more, no less. Yet you must never be curt and must never spare. The

amplitude of your ideas should prevent that. Your style should be as mellow and easy as it is precise and clear.

Vary your sentence structure. Each sentence should be a complete idea in itself and each sentence should be related to what precedes and follows.

But at the bottom of all is the use of words. As Oscar Thompson (Wolseley, 1959: 98) again says, “none has a happier faculty for finding the exact and illuminative term”. Your words must be reasoned and organized. When you express any opinion, and you are expected to – your words must buttress your opinion. Remember that your opinions are the main points of his story. While the general reviewers with nouns and verbs, the most interesting words in a critical review are the adjectives and adverbs.

3.2 The Tone of Criticism

The tone of criticism has various characteristics resulting from the nature of the writer. Some of these include ornateness, simplicity, smartness, preciousness, banality, pomposity, and humorousness.

As a beginning critic you must learn never to pretend to be radical and pass judgment in alarming manner or feign dignity of mind and solidity of judgment when actually you are concealing the fact that you have nothing to say. Be wary of humor, wisecracking and punning.

Humor is always difficult to write. You must use an expression only because it says what you mean and not because it makes you look bright and clever. You must be mindful also at whom you direct your barbs for they may be out of place.

Avoid ornamentation of style, excessive resort to technical jargon and appallingly stale expressions. Chesty writing and such triteness shows you have a barren vocabulary and no taste. It is possible for you to be simple and direct without being commonplace in style. You must not over-quoting from a book being reviewed or paraphrasing such that you distort the original and employing words inaccurately.

3.3 Developing Your Style

Now that you are dumped into critical writing responsibilities, it is necessary you consider what is involved in developing your own style.

First, if you are sincere in seeking after a useful and effective style, it is helpful if you devote many hours reading writings of established writers on the subject.

Second, if you are to become a master critic in your profession, you must begin to write, write and write for many years. You must not imitate the styles of others as a means of developing your own and do not try to develop a style before you begin to write.

Third, understand that a good style should show no sign of effort. Therefore, you must never take the smallest pains with your style or think about it or try to know whether it is style at all. Just continue to write as your personality directs and you will arrive at your objective.

Lastly, try to understand the forms of discourse, that is, description, exposition, argumentation, and narration as a way of increasing the attractiveness of your writing in both form and style.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Is there any ideal style? Fully justify your answer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear from this unit that style is a personal characteristic. If it does not come to you naturally, you can and should acquire it. And you can always improve your style through borrowing the characteristics of others, through practice, and through self-criticism.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that the journalistic style must first conform to the stylistic traditions of the press though you share the editorial and article writers' measure of freedom. You have learnt also that you can achieve style through honest self expression, practice, and self-criticism, and that your style need not be unnecessarily ornamental.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A good style must show no signs of effort. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.
New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company

Module 5

- Unit 1 Reviewing the Fine Arts
- Unit 2 Reviewing Books
- Unit 3 Reviewing Stage Play
- Unit 4 Reviewing Music
- Unit 5 Reviewing TV and Motion Pictures

UNIT 1 Reviewing the Fine Arts

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Reviewing the Fine Arts
 - 3.2 The Art Review
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The fine arts, painting and sculpture come under the broad subject of arts. They have been with mankind for long, particularly sculpture. Their value appreciates with time; many see them as a good investment and they are increasingly receiving attention in the media in form of exhibitions and shows.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Handle art reviews with ease

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reviewing the Fine Arts

The fine arts, painting and sculpture are the most subjective of arts and the pose problems for the reviewer. Probably nowhere in the arts forms is the field more bewildering as on the fine arts themselves-painting and sculpture.

The reviewer of these and other visual arts has a problem unlike those who deal with books which, being always in type, have a more or less fixed physical form. A critic need not worry whether a book is set in a particular font or typeface or its cover has a particular color.

But as a reviewer of an exhibit of paintings you have to watch out for many different points on which you are expected to have something to say such as the quality of color, the pigment used, techniques employed in laying it on canvas, the portrayal of reality and meaning, method of presentation, artistic philosophy, the context in which the work appears, the painting's frame, its lighting, and the type of work. In an exhibit of from two to three hundred paintings or works of sculpture, the complexity of your task is obvious.

Yet you may utilize the material-form-workmanship formula as a reasonably objective standard and a workable process in appraising any work of art. You may ask, as with other art forms, what the artist is trying to do (or say) and how well

he does it. Instead of working in abstracts you can deal in concrete terms. You can name the materials, try to analyze the form, qualify the workmanship.

Remember time has changed everything. Canvas is no longer the only surface for painters. Marble and bronze are no longer the only materials for sculptors. In fact, the line between painting and sculpture is sometimes blurred. A painter today does not always use odds and ends from the woods or the rubbish heap and use spray gums on them. The sculptor may work with time-honored materials or he may use plastic, welded steel plates, wood, foam, or a combination, and may paint over the entire objected art.

Since the materials and the form are on display, concentrate on the direct data-form, material and workmanship. Where today critical judgment comes into play is in the matter of originality and workmanship. Who first used spray paint on flotsam and jetsam and sold the results to art connoisseurs, for instance? Is this artist's own idea or is he following in the path of past practitioners? The artist may use a previous practitioner's idea and give it new horizons and new force.

As a critic attending exhibits by new artists you must broaden your own standards. When an exhibit by an acknowledged master arrives, or when your local museum acquires an expensive masterpiece, you the art critic must interpret these "standard" works for your audience. Why they are masterpieces? What is so wonderful about them? Your study of the history of art, your background, and your knowledge of art will help you here. Your background is most helpful in detecting originality.

Just as a music critic should be able to delineate the fine points of a concert to his readers, you should, as an art critic, be able to write why an artist is great, why a painting or a sculpture is great. You should also be able to distinguish between an etching; a print, and a lithograph; water color wash, and gouache; glass, stone, concrete, wood, or plastic, and how oil looks on these various materials.

Ask yourself whether the artist is consistent in his execution. One work will usually stand out in an exhibition and others may be judged, in relation to it. A retired art critic once suggested the impressionistic approach for reviewing the arts: 'Take whole picture of a glance. Shut your eyes, open then suddenly, and write about your first instantaneous impression'. But ask yourself if the artist's methods and style, that is, his signature, are his own or a forgery.

3.2 The Art Review

Since art productions are shown in galleries, museums, and other exhibition places and open only between certain dates and hours, journalism critics on painting and sculpture often must give considerable news emphasis to their reviews. Members of the public can more easily read books, hear music on radio and watch TV shows, film, drama and dance but not many have opportunities of direct contact with these arts.

Hence, as a reviewer of these arts, you tend to be first of all a reporter than you need be for the other arts. The event you cover is news of a specialized nature. The articles therefore are written not in the strict inverted-pyramid form but in the form of the journalistic straight news format.

The art review should thus have a certain general construction. As with any good news story, the lead should be as interesting as possible. The body will detail the materials, try to analyze the form, qualify the workmanship. Concentrate on what the artist is trying to do or say, that is, the meaning being conveyed, how well he does it and conclude with a wrap – up comment.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What makes the fine arts difficult to review?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The fine arts, painting and sculpture are the most subjective of arts and the pose problems for the reviewer. Formal training for effective art reviewing is advisable for knowledge of the history of the evolution is necessary.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that the fine arts, painting and sculpture are a bewildering field especially for a beginning critic. The best option for you is the material-form-workmanship formula. It is a workable process in appraising any work of art. And the basic format for presenting art reviews is the news format.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain in detail how you would approach a review of the arts.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Barrett, T. (1994) *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company

- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.
New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book
Company

UNIT 2 Reviewing Books

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Reviewing Books

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Books are a storehouse of knowledge. They help the progression of civilization. Books are reviewed for several reasons: you may be entitled to free copies; you may influence readers' opinions whether to buy or not. You review books not only for flaws but for the message of the book or the theme which few books have.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- assess the value of books

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reviewing Books

When you review books, first get a notebook handy and make notes as you read through the book. Quote page references for startling revelations and unusual twists as you jot down important points.

Write down striking passages and your reactions to them. Did the book hold your attention? Classify the book as to biography, fiction, drama, tragedy, comedy, romance, etc.

Describe its content; give a synopsis of what the book is all about; communicate something of its quality of paper make, quality of content, plot, setting, grammar, and such other elements,

Pass judgment upon it was the dialogue natural and true? Do people converse like that? Is it didactic or not? How does it compare with previous works by the same author or similar works by other authors?

At the top of your review, put the title of the book, author, publishers price, date of publication and number of pages. Do not forget to talk about its writing, style, typography, paper type bindings (hard or soft).

Higher standards of book reviewing generally require that you answer the following equally, searching questions, especially in historical writing:

- Does it establish its factual details by a strict of the historical method?
- Does it have a philosophy or frame of reference" that is of a more than transient and local significance?
- Is it written in a style that helps rather than impedes the reader's understanding?

- Is it merely a piece of hackwork repeating an already known story, or does it present new data or new interpretation of old data?
- No matter how limited its subject may be, does the author seem aware of the questions that men at all times in all places persist in asking?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Assess book reviews in Nigerian newspapers in terms of whether they are regular, what type of books are featured most and make an observation about the structure and style of such reviews.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The fact of book reviews is that they enrich your knowledge and help you to be a better writer. You improve your writing style; improve yourself intellectually by writing and reading. Books help you to read wide and reading wide is the prescription for good writing and intellectual richness.

5.0 SUMMARY

There is no acceptable formula for reviewing books. You only say it how you see it and how you feel; call a spade a spade and not a farming implement. Ask yourself what the author has set out to do and how well he has done it; who is expected to buy his work; how well he has competed with other books on the subject and what chances he has of success.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What six ways can you make a book review complete and interesting?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*.

New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.

Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 3 Reviewing Stage Play or Drama

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Reviewing Stage Play or Drama

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Drama is apart of our culture and the stage has long been forum for projecting national image. Before the advent of television, theatre had been a place of entertainment and it has continued to fascinate and attract large audiences. It has still been able to survive television and notion pictures. Many plays are still been written. So many things can be dramatized-books, stories; life itself is drama acted daily by people.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- evaluate stage drama performances

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reviewing Stage Play or Drama

There is no fixed pattern for reviewing drama but the following suggestions can be useful and valuable particularly to a new reviewer.

When you review a play, first find out if it is a new one or a much acted one. If the latter, do not spend much time on it because people know it. But if it is a new one, give a synopsis of what the play is all about. You can also provide a capsule description of the play and, if possible, your verdict early in the article, but not necessarily in the first sentence.

Sometimes the pluses and minuses of a new play may be so balanced that you cannot reach a clear-cut decision. Your review should reflect this. But if full consideration of all the factors leads to indecision by all means stay on the fence. But stay on the fence only as a last resort; habitual fence-sitters have few readers so come to a favorable or unfavorable conclusion whenever; readers expect it of you. If they do not get it they are disappointed especially those who depend on your verdict to guide them whether they should or should not spend their money on that show.

Then consider the following specifics:

- Evaluate the plot of the play; does it have universality? Is the story believable? Is the plot well drawn or it is taut, or does the play leave any loose ends?
- Consider the congruity of the technical factors-setting: costumes, lighting - whether outstandingly good or bad.
- Consider stage management and direction also as well as transitions from scene to scene; are the actions logical? Is that how things happen or are the actions so contrived that you have unnatural coincidence

- Are the actions chronological?
- Are the exits and entrances merely artificial devices to get characters on and off stage?
- Does the drama or comedy move forward steadily, or is it uneven in pace? Are there interruptions or digressions of unnecessary character - that serve only to pad the story?
- Assess quality of production whether everything flows; it organic unity.
- Distinguish between acting and actors' role. Acting is effective portrayal of the designated character. Role may be to do bad things only or to provide comic relief, are the characters true representative of the types they portray in real life or are they superficial caricatures? That is, are characters true representative of the types they portray in real life or are they superficial caricatures: that is, are the characters drawn true to life? Are they humanly etched?
- Does the playwright write with insight? Evaluate the ability of the playwright to present and achieve his purpose. Has he achieved his objective? Does he dip beneath the surface in plot construction and character analysis?
- Does the play have a message? A message is perfectly acceptable in a play. If a play does not convey some message or moral, expressed or inherent, it is liable to be dull. When a play has a message, the reviewer should be careful to check his feelings. He may agree or disagree with the playwright's precepts. But whether the author is wrong or right, the important thing is: how well does he say it?
- Did the playwright face the problem squarely or is such a problem simply falsely simplified as something not really so difficult as people believe? This is, however, not to suggest that you as a reviewer should not have

feelings about any controversial or non-controversial subject. Reviewers too are human.

- Classify the play as comedy, tragedy, historical or otherwise.

After you have finished the business of summarizing the play, get down to the business of explicit credits.

- List the players in meritorious order.
- When mentioning characters, do not mix your performers and the characters they play. Do not contradict yourself in appraising details.
- Give credit to directors and producers equally as to actors but without mentioning names. Identification of actors, players, producers-in movies, plays or television all vary according to the familiarity to the reader of your review.
- The review should tell all the “news of the event”, in other words, anything worthy to mention
- The review of a new play, however, should include a few words, about the playwright. And it is news when a first play is a hit.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

As a reviewer, what critical standards provide your basis for evaluating play content and performance?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The suggestions on the structure of stage review are meant as guidelines, not as strait-jacket. As one must crawl before one can walk, these set of guidelines may be welcome to a genuine reviewer but you have the liberty to ignore them later provided you write intelligently and convincingly.

5.0 SUMMARY

As with any art, the review is not necessarily written in the inverted pyramid style but an attention getting lead is desirable. Main body of the review then will detail the nature of the show, a minimum appraisal of individual performance and consideration of such technical credits as writing, direction and the conclusion will be a wrap up comment. The first paragraph will summarize your impression of the play. Just as types of news leads in basic reporting are varied, the leads on show reviews are equally diverse.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Using your knowledge of stage performance review, provide a three-page criticism of any stage review published in any of the dailies in Nigeria. Endeavour to attach a photocopy of the article you are criticising.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Barranger, M. S. (1995) *Theatre: A Way of Seeing*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing
- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 4 Reviewing Music

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Reviewing Music

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Music is the most subjective and ephemeral of the arts. Some performance can move one listener to tears and make another gnash his teeth; it can keep others on the edge of their seats and bore others. Musical compositions are also a broad category - pop, classical, reggae, soul, blues, jazz, etc.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- appraise any musical composition or performance

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reviewing Music

As with many other medium of performance - stage, film, television - many general comments apply here but certain factors are unique to music.

Technical perfection is one of them. The ministrations of producers and sound engineers, including the balancing and mixing of sound tracts into the finished product are among factors that help differentiate a recording from a live performance. How well the recording is done should be a prime criterion for the music reviewer. So generally comment on the technical quality.

Technical perfection achieved through careful editing may sometimes rob a performance of spontaneity and urgency. These qualities may be more apparent in a recording made from a live concert-hall or theatre along with audience applause and perhaps, coughs or laughs.

At any rate, the reviewer of music tries to assay the effectiveness of the performance – play, dance, musical concert, poetry, musical composition or whatever. To do this well, he must have a good stereo-system or good sound reproducing equipment on which to listen. The goal of record reviews is to capture the sound at its best. Therefore you check for proper balance of voices and instruments and for “presence” for surface noise, or other intrusion of extraneous sound. You check also for realism and balance. A stereo generally provides a better more realistic reproduction of a stage show or other musical event involving more than one performer.

Look at the harmony between voice and instruments and the balancing of the instruments with the lyrics whether the base overrides the lead guitar; the quality of recording itself, whether it is concert, mono or stereo recording.

There may be many tracts but one message. Use your judgment as a reviewer and say whether the record does satisfy the taste of potential buyers. Do not

forget to classify the record as to rock, pop, highlife, jazz, and reggae or otherwise.

A record reviewer should comment not only on the quality of the performance but also how it stacks up to others of the same work. Your reader may want to buy this new recording upon your recommendation or he may be interested in how his copy rates in comparison to a new one. You have the problem of balancing phonographic and interpretative factors in making recommendations to him.

Do not fall prey to the occupational hazard of becoming too engrossed in recorded music such that you neglect performances in the concert-hall. Always remember that recordings spring from live performances. Continuing attendance at shows and musical events will keep your mind refreshed, help maintain your sense of proportion and equip you to point out the trends.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What makes music difficult to review?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Reviewing music is compounded by many factors. Just as much as in the live performing arts, reviewing music demands taste and background. Besides, the art has many experimenters and innovationists than theater, movie, literature or dance.

5.0 SUMMARY

Today millions of recordings are available and their types are becoming complex as a result of the various speeds they are produced and numerous devices on which to play them. All - music channels and stations are also springing up and blooming. These pose problems for the reviewer. Each age seems to have something different from the last. The music critic must update his knowledge and sharpen his tastes to be able cope with the times.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

If you are assigned to cover a live musical performance, how best would you approach your assignment?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company

UNIT 5 Reviewing TV and Motion Pictures

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Reviewing Movies

 3.2 Reviewing TV Programs

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Both TV and motion pictures are entertainment media. The screen dominated the screen until the arrival of television which has made it possible for people for people to enjoy movies and other programmes indoors. Because they have much in common, they are treated as such in reviews.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- appraise movies
- criticize TV programs

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reviewing Movies

The recipe for the basic structure of a stage-play review applies to movies as well but there is the principal additional factor of the use of camera. The screen is two

dimensional, the stage is three dimensional, but astute camera work can more than make up the difference. The camera is free and can rove and roam beyond the confines of stage and all sorts of “prick and special effects” are also possible; split second flashbacks use the camera creativity.

The reviewer essays camera work in the whole pattern. Is the trick photographing a substitute for substance, or does it enhance the story? Does it help carry the action along or is it merely a gimmick? The mobile camera is more mobile than the human eye and can achieve effects impossible in a live stage.

The reviewer should not only attempt to see the movie from the stand point of the group for which it is primarily intended but should also appraise the picture in general terms while still mentioning its specialized appeal.

The reviewer should also decide whether nude scenes (if any) are properly a part of the story or whether they are tastefully done or merely inserted for sensationalism.

Most of all, the critic should essay the movie on all its points – plot, characterization, technical effects, material, form and workmanship - in terms of the cinematic medium.

3.2 Reviewing TV Programs

There are several points unique to the television medium. The time straight jacket is one; the show must be within 15,30,60,90, or 120 minutes minus time for commercials and stations breaks. Movies and stage shows rarely have such a strict time limit. You should check whether the program has conformed to the

time limit. Be conscious also whether the program is appropriate to the time of the day. A station may present a program at an hour inconvenient for most of its potential audience.

You should also question whether the lengthened of time is ideal for the presentation. Is it a drama jammed into half an hour or an hour, but which cries for lengthier production? Is it a wispy comedy spread out over an hour or more, but which deserves much less? Is it a show that would profit by being presented in installments?

The television medium is “prey” to cycles: the western, the situation comedy, the spy story, the supernatural either in comedy or melodrama, the variety show and sub-divisions of these categories. Has the program rhymed with its circle? Program cycle can be in terms of climatic conditions or program type or seasons. Do not forget to state the sponsors of what program you are reviewing.

Classify the program as to type - drama, documentary, newscast, as general or specialized, and whether it is meant for women, children or adults. Hardly any television program is duller than a static documentary. So the primary consideration is: is it interesting?

Other factors are: does the program cover the subject adequately in the allotted time? Should the program have been longer or shorter? Does it probe the question in-depth or skin the surface? If the documentary deals with a controversial subject, does it shun the controversial aspects or plunge right in? Are both sides presented? Is the treatment convincing? Does the program make its points persuasively? Does it leave the viewer satisfied? Or is something missing? Or is the program top-heavy in some aspect? It is up to you the reviewer

to essay the favorable and unfavorable points, the active credits, and the sins of omission as well as commission.

Many programmes appeal to certain portions of the population, women or children, for instance. The reviewer should try to assess their quality and effectiveness from the viewpoint of the designed audience; also whether such program will appeal to the population at large. Specialized programs of quality usually have wider appeal.

Watch out for the advertisements in the program. Has their placement distorted the story line? Advertisements in between may destroy the program entertainment value and may even be irritating. Sometimes their sound level could be more than the program itself. There are regulations for placement. Some regulations say they should come at the beginning, some say at the end so as not to break the program.

Watch out for the ground level. It may not be uniform and may fluctuate - goes down at one point, booms at the next. This is noise, watch out for it and how it affects the program.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How does the TV program review differ from motion picture reviews?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Because television and motion pictures have much in common, they are treated the same in reviews. The movie critic must be capable of criticizing everything-

acting, directing, photograph, staging, casting, writing, music, news, sports, or any other subject matter visible or invisible on television.

5.0 SUMMARY

You can see that the criteria used for a movie apply to a drama or comedy on television - freshness and originality of story, quality of action, direction and physical production. The last factor includes optimum use of camera and, if warranted, special effects.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss seven characteristics peculiar to TV and motion picture reviews.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Singer, L. S. (1974). *The Student Journalist and Reviewing the Performing Arts*. New York: Richards Rosen Press Inc.
- Wolseley, R. E. (1959) *Critical Writing for the Journalist*. New York: Chilton Book Company