

HELPFUL TIPS FOR YOUR DANCE REVIEW PAPER

For your first paper, choose two of the *live* SJSU dance performances to attend. One of these will be the topic of your Dance Review paper. After deciding which one to write about, describe and evaluate the event. Include detailed descriptions of the dance, the dancers, and the dance events you witnessed. The tone is like that of someone reporting from the scene.

Here are some DANCE OBSERVATION GUIDELINES. Choose the ones that seem most relevant to your experience; you don't have to write about them all.

The Dancers - Who are the participants? Note the age, gender, ethnic, racial or class background. How many dancers are there? Are they formally trained or informally? What do they wear in the performance of the dance? Is it something specialized or ordinary? If there is a costume, what is the origin? Is there an obvious leader, or soloist(s)?

The Event – Ask the “W” questions (you don't need to write about all of these):

Where did this dance event take place? Describe the setting. If it is significant, note the location of the dancers, audience, and musicians.

When did this event take place? (day, night, weekend, etc.) How long is the event?

What was its purpose?

Who is the audience? Describe their demographics and what they are wearing, if significant. To what degree do they participate?

The Dance – Does the dance have a name? If you are dealing with more than one tell what they are and provide a general overview of variations or similarities in the movements. Pick one or two dances to describe in detail, especially if they offer a good comparison or contrast. Don't write about every single dance in the concert!

1) **SPATIAL PATTERNS**: Look for solos, couples or group formations. How do the dancers use space? Are they arranged in lines, circles or squares? Do they stay there or move around to create complex floor patterns?

2) **STRUCTURE**: Is it improvisational, choreographed or structured? Is there a general emotional quality, a story, or a theme?

3) **EFFORT**: Describe the energy of the dance, including tempo, rhythmic punctuation. Is the movement flowing, percussive, sudden, slow? Do the dancers move rigidly, fluidly, forcefully?

4) **SHAPE and POSTURE**: What is the overall stance or body posture of the dancers? Is it different from men to women? Are some body parts emphasized over others? Do the movements reach out or are they contained close to the body? Angular or curved?

When you start to create a written narrative for the movements, use your thesaurus to help you find descriptive language. This is your chance to be poetic as well as accurate, to use adjectives and descriptive phrases to make your point. Metaphors and similes are very useful in giving these descriptions some life. However, avoid clichés like the plague (heh) and take care that the images your language evokes are appropriate to the dance.

Select specific moments or items from the event to analyze, interpret, or reflect upon in order to support your perspective. Remember that although this is not an Opinion paper, your opinion (positive or negative) is valuable, but must be substantiated with evidence from the performances themselves. Finally, make an assessment about the piece supported by specific examples.

GENERAL NOTES FOR YOUR 2-3 PAGE PAPER

INTRO/CONCLUSION: Start with an Introduction and finish with a Conclusion that summarizes the themes arising from your observation of a live dance event.

SPELLCHECK AND PROOFREAD: Spellcheck every time you add something new to your paper, know matter how trifling or short. Proofreading means either you read your paper out loud to yourself, or give it to someone else who is skillful in this area and will be honest with you. **DO NOT PROOFREAD ON THE SCREEN**, print it out and read it aloud from the paper.

USE PRONOUNS SPARINGLY, IF AT ALL: (I, we, me, my, our, you, your) If used, identify who “we” are. Avoid using the generic “one” or the editorial “we” in place of a pronoun. Try not to use the pronoun “I” much at all, as these are not Opinion papers; rely on your hard facts.

IN GENERAL: Use no unnecessary words. Each paragraph should have one idea. The first sentence of a paragraph should introduce a new thought while linking to the last paragraph. Be specific: clarify, describe and define. Assume a reader who knows little or nothing about your topic but who is intelligent and interested. Try verbalizing your ideas to a friend first to help you clarify your thoughts.

Enjoy your dance events!