CHAPTER 12: Theatre Appreciation

Chapter Outline

LESSON 1  •  Theatre Conventions  226
LESSON 2  •  Audience Etiquette  230
LESSON 3  •  Comparing Theatre with other Media  234
LESSON 4  •  Evaluating Theatre and Media  238

Spotlight on Terms

- actor viewpoint
- aesthetic appreciation
- audience commitment
- audience etiquette
- audience viewpoint
- blackout
- camera shots
- constructive criticism
- curtain call
- illusion
- intermission
- mass media
- performance space
- production techniques
- program
- spectacle viewing
- suspend belief
- theatre conventions
- vista shots
The main focus of this chapter is on appreciation—learning to enjoy, understand, and evaluate performances. In this chapter, you will learn about established theatre practices and theatre etiquette. You will also be given the opportunity to compare live theatre with media such as television, video, film, and computers. As you explore live theatre and various other media, you will learn the importance of making judgments about each of them.

The evaluation process in theatre arts can help you think as an individual rather than accepting what others write or say about a performance. Questions will be provided for you to determine the value of various performance media. It is essential today to learn to make sound judgments about what you choose to see and hear. The world has more choices than ever before, and your theatre arts class can guide you in making wise decisions.

### Theatre Conventions

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- Recognize and respond to live theatre.
- Identify and explain theatre conventions.
- Reflect on and form opinions of dramatic experiences.

**Warm Up**

Do you remember attending your first theatrical production? Divide into pairs and share your experiences.

#### theatre conventions

established techniques, practices, or devices unique to theatrical productions.

#### performance space

an area set aside for a performance.

#### program

printed sheet of paper or booklet that provides information about the production.

When you attend a live performance, you encounter several theatre conventions. **Theatre conventions** are established techniques, practices, or devices unique to theatrical productions. Although not all of the theatre conventions will be used in your classroom, school auditorium, or community theatre, it is important that you know about and recognize them.

Many theatre conventions can become part of your classroom performances. By putting the following conventions into practice in the classroom, you will know what to expect when you attend other events staged in a theatre or auditorium.

#### Performance Space

There has to be an area set aside for the performance. In theatre, this is called the **performance space**. In many schools, the performance space is an auditorium stage. But theatrical performances can also take place in a gym, cafeteria, or regular classroom. The important thing to remember is that there must be a space set apart so that the actors are physically separated from the audience.

#### The Program

As you enter a theatre to attend a production, you are often presented with a **program**. This printed sheet of paper or booklet provides
When you attend a live production, get to the theatre or auditorium early. Take your seat promptly so that you don’t ruin the performance for other audience members by making noise and walking in front of them after the show has started.

you with interesting information about the production. A program should include the title of the production, the name of the playwright, and credit to the publishing company. Also listed should be the cast of characters and the actors playing the roles. Most programs give credit to the director, the designers, and the technicians. A more detailed program would give a brief explanation of the plot to guide the audience’s understanding of the play.

Many shows sell advertising space in the program to help pay the cost of producing the publication. A program not only provides information, but also makes a nice souvenir of the performance.

House Lights

A universally used signal that the show is about to begin is the blinking of the house lights. The house lights are the lights in the ceiling above the audience. In some theatres, when these lights are turned on and off in succession, the lobby lights and rest room lights also blink. This signal is a notice to the audience that they should take their seats because the performance will begin in about 5 minutes.

Approximately 5 minutes after the blinking of the house lights, the same lights will begin to slowly dim, or become softer. As the lights fade out into total darkness, the audience is aware that the show is beginning. The slowly dimming lights give the audience time to become quiet and prepare to enjoy the show.

Curtain Up/Open

Even though most school curtains pull from side to side, many professional curtains are flown (rise above the stage) and actually go up into the fly area, the area above the stage floor. The expression “curtain up” or “curtain open” refers to the rise or opening of those curtains. Not all stages have curtains, however, and in many performances, the

To have great poets, there must be great audiences, too.

Walt Whitman
curtains are already open when the audience enters the theatre. In these cases, the audience knows that the performance will begin by another signal—perhaps the entrance of an actor, a special sound effect, the beginning of the music, or the dimming of the lights.

**Intermission**

An *intermission* is a short break in the action of the play for the audience. One-act plays or short performances do not usually have an intermission. A long performance or a play that has more than one act usually does have intermissions. The length of the intermission is usually printed in the program. During intermission, members of the audience can stand up, move around, go to the rest room, get a drink of water, or visit quietly with friends. It is important to be aware of the time and be ready to sit down quietly toward the end of the intermission. To be courteous to others in the audience, you should be in your seat by the time the performance resumes.

**Blackout**

When all of the stage lights are turned out at one time, it is called a *blackout*. Blackouts are often used to show the passage of time at the end of a scene or act. If an actor is stretched out on a couch, pretending to sleep, a blackout could make the passage of time more believable for the audience.

Blackouts are also used for special effects. Because some actions cannot be portrayed in broad view of the audience, a director might choose to “chop off a head” or “melt down” a character during a split-second blackout. When the lights go up again, the “deed” will have been accomplished, and the show can continue.

**Curtain Down/Closed**

The term “curtain down” or “curtain closed” refers to the fall (or close) of the curtain at the end of an act or at the end of the play. The closing of the curtain at the end of an act is often followed by an intermission. The closing of the curtain after the last act means that the play is over. This is usually followed by a reopening of the curtain for a curtain call.

**Curtain Call**

To an actor, the curtain call is one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of the performance. The *curtain call* occurs at the end of the performance, when the actors come onstage to acknowledge their appreciation of the audience and to take a bow.

Some directors allow each actor to come forward alone or in small groups to receive the applause. Other directors prefer to open the cur-
The curtain call is everyone’s reward for months and months of hard work.

Tains to the entire cast in a line across the stage. Most often, at some point in the curtain call, the entire cast holds hands and bows in unison.

Applause

Applause is the opportunity for the audience to let the entire company know how much they enjoyed and appreciated the performance. Applause is acknowledgment and reward for all the hard work and team effort that went into putting on the production.

Proper audience etiquette does not include whistling, cheering, and foot stomping. Show your appreciation with strong, but polite, applause at the appropriate times during the performance.
Applause is given at the end of scenes and acts, at the end of the performance, and during the curtain call. During a performance, if there is an especially touching moment or outstanding scene, sometimes an audience will burst into a spontaneous “round of applause.” This is appropriate, and the actors will hold their lines until the applause dies down.

Applause in the theatre is not cheering, whooping, catcalling, or stomping feet, as you might see at a pep rally or athletic competition. Rather, it is a sincere, dignified recognition of the performance.

A standing ovation (all members of the audience standing while applauding) is often given at the end of a production. A cast that receives a standing ovation is receiving the ultimate display of appreciation from an audience.

1. **Stage Scavenger Hunt.** Explore your school for appropriate places to stage theatrical activities. Compile a class list. Which places would be the easiest to use? Which places would present the most challenges? Why?

2. **Scrapbook for Theatre Programs.** On your own or with your class, compile a collection of old theatre programs. Compare the programs for content and design. Determine the one best suited for a theatrical event at your school. After the assignment, arrange the programs in a class scrapbook.

**Audience Etiquette**

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

◆ Recognize and respond to live theatre.
◆ Use appropriate audience etiquette.
◆ Reflect on and form opinions of dramatic experiences.

Having the opportunity to attend a play is a very special event. You cannot view a play every day, as you might a television program. You cannot even attend plays with the same frequency that you see movies. Even though live productions are extremely popular today, plays are not always readily available. In fact, many of you may view as many television programs in a week as you will attend live theatrical productions in a lifetime. **Audience etiquette** is appropriate audience behavior at a theatrical event. Your parents and teachers have stressed the importance of good social etiquette. Most of you have been taught the proper way to greet
Changes in philosophy and religion that began in the mid-1800s had a great impact on theatre in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Influenced by writers such as Darwin and Marx, people began to question their religious, political, and economic beliefs. This questioning led to a wider variety of opinions, and the art of the period began to reflect the conflicting beliefs.

The neoclassical rules for drama (page 88) were being applied in fewer and fewer productions, even though more theatre was being produced than ever before.

The theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be roughly divided into two broad types, realism and departures from realism (which you’ll read about later). The realists wrote plays in which characters spoke, dressed, and behaved just as people did in everyday life. Scenery began to look like rooms in which many of the audience members lived.

The playwright who is often considered to be the first realistic writer was Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright. Some of his plays, such as *A Doll’s House* and *Ghosts*, were very controversial when they were first staged because of their subject matter and style. Today, these plays are considered classics.

The realists, like Ibsen, believed that plays should be as close to lifelike as possible. These attempts at realism sprang from the playwrights’ beliefs that theatre had the power and responsibility to instigate change. These playwrights believed that if the audience members recognized an injustice in society and became emotional about it as a result of seeing the play, the audience would try to bring about changes. Therefore, realists dealt with subject matter that had been taboo on the stage before this period—topics such as social injustice and unhappy marriages. Plots were not clearly resolved at the end of the plays as they had been in previous periods. Instead, the future of characters seemed to depend upon the forces of heredity and environment, two forces that the character could not control.

Characters in realistic plays have several notable characteristics. First of all, they are not stereotypes. None of them are clearly evil, nor are they clearly good. Instead, they are a mixture of complicated impulses and motivations, just as people are in real life. These characters are revealed to the audience in great detail, in such a way that the audience understands what forces, such as heredity and environment, made them the way they are. These characters speak in everyday speech patterns rather than verse. And the setting that the audience sees them moving through is usually a very thoroughly detailed room, filled with all of the items that one might find in one’s own home.

Other playwrights who provide wonderful examples of early realism are August Strindberg and Anton Chekhov.
someone and even the proper way to answer a telephone. Appropriate audience behavior is just another important social grace you need to learn as you grow up. Because attending a live theatrical event is different from watching a movie or television program, it is important to know what is expected of you at a play, opera, ballet, musical, or concert. Appropriate behavior begins when you arrive at the theatre or auditorium. If you do not have a ticket for the show, you should allow time to purchase one before the performance begins.

**Before the Performance**

Always arrive on time. It is annoying to the other members of the audience when they cannot see part of the performance because late-comers are walking in front of them or climbing over them. People arriving late also make noise as they are being seated, which prevents audience members who arrived on time from hearing the dialogue or music.

Gum, food, and drinks have no place in the theatre! Chewing, eating, and drinking are all noisy activities that can distract the actors as well as the audience. To be a good citizen and theatre patron, remember to use the trash receptacles in the lobby of the theatre before you enter the seating area. Save all eating and drinking until after the performance or during the intermission.

Remember also to take care of rest room business and drinks of water prior to being seated. If you have to leave in the middle of the show, you will miss some of the performance as well as distract the people seated near you.

Once you are seated, be considerate of those who are seated around you. Keep your hands, arms, feet, and personal belongings such as umbrellas to yourself. Be especially careful not to put your feet on the chair in front of you. If you want to visit with friends, do so quietly before the performance begins.

As a safety precaution, always take note of the exit nearest your seat. Law requires exit signs to be lighted and clearly visible. If an emergency should arise and the exit needed, you would know where to go.

**During the Performance**

Be considerate of those seated near you. Do not distract anyone’s attention from the performance by talking or making noises. Even if you know all the lines to the show or all the words to the songs, others in the audience did not come to hear or see you perform. Speaking aloud or singing along from the audience is considered in extremely poor taste.

As a member of the audience, you can best show your respect for the actors by giving them your full attention. Shouting out comments or whistling is not considered appropriate theatre behavior. Such responses should be saved for football games and track meets. Responses such as laughter, tears, or even gasps of surprise are expected from the audience. Performers enjoy such reactions and hope that they will
During the performance, be quiet and attentive. It’s acceptable to laugh, or cry, if the performance is humorous, or sad, but don’t do anything to restrict the enjoyment of other audience members.

come from the audience at the appropriate times. These types of reactions give the actors feedback, letting them know how their performance is affecting the audience.

Avoid leaving your seat once the performance begins unless you have an emergency. If you must leave, do so as quietly and inconspicuously as possible. If you are attending a performance with your class or with a school group, quietly notify your teacher or director that you have an emergency.

Many productions use special theatrical techniques, such as unusual sound effects, spectacular lighting, or blackouts. If you are viewing a performance with younger brothers and sisters who have not attended the theatre before, prepare them for such occurrences so that they will sit calmly if the lights go out.

Recording music, videotaping performances, and taking photographs are all prohibited during a theatrical event. Recording any music during a performance without written permission of composers and performers is a serious violation of the copyright law. Cameras are distracting to other audience members as well as to the performers. Flashes on cameras can momentarily blind a performer or cause a break in character or dialogue.

**After the Performance**

When the performance is over, wait until the house lights are turned up so that you can see the aisles and exits clearly. As you wait patiently for your turn to exit, it is appropriate to quietly discuss the performance with your friends. Check under and around your seat for any personal belongings that you might have left.

As you exit the theatre or auditorium, avoid pushing against those in front of you. Remember to be courteous, even though you may have to wait several minutes before you can exit. Climbing under or hopping over seats only demonstrates to others that you lack good judg-
This type of behavior is rude and extremely irritating to those who enjoy the theatre experience.

1. **Rules for Audience Etiquette.** Create a short positive rule for appropriate audience etiquette. Illustrate the rule on a poster that would be appropriate for your classroom or for a hall in your school. Follow your teacher’s guidelines for poster design.

2. **Dos and Don’ts for Theatre Etiquette.** Demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate audience behavior in a scene prepared for an elementary school class. Lead the elementary school students in a discussion of the importance of appropriate behavior in the theatre.

3. **Theatre Etiquette Video Show.** Create a scene that would appeal to students your age, teaching appropriate etiquette in a fun way. Videotape the performance to share with other classes at your school. Ask the classes to evaluate the tape.

---

**LESSON 3**

**Comparing Theatre with Other Media**

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- Recognize and respond to live theatre and other media.
- Compare live theatre, television, and film.
- Participate in class activities to become aware of the differences in live theatre, television, and film.

**Warm Up**

How much does media impact your life? Count the number of hours per week you view television or attend movies. Compare your figure with those of your acting company. Share with the class.

**Mass media** communication that can reach large audiences.

You are fortunate to be playing a role in today’s live theatre and mass media. **Mass media** are various channels of communication that can reach large audiences. During the twentieth century, the world has seen an explosion in the development of technology in live theatre and media such as television, video, film, and computers.

Computers have had a tremendous impact on live theatre. People in theatre now use the computer to design sets, costumes, programs, posters, and tickets. The computer is also valuable in keeping track of inventory and business records for theatre productions. On a larger scale, theatres use computerized lightboards and use the computer to operate the set pieces in productions. Clearly, the computer is an asset to the production of live theatre.

So far, you have been learning about live theatre, which is the form that drama took for centuries. But today we have other means—other
media—for communicating drama. In this lesson, we will look at some of the similarities and differences that occur when drama takes place in other media.

Live theatre, television, and film are all connected and similar. But they also have unique differences that are fascinating to explore. Even though the subject of this book is theatre, you experience drama more frequently through television and film. Therefore, you need to understand the similarities and differences between live theatre, television, and film. These similarities and differences can be divided into three categories: the audience viewpoint, the actor viewpoint, and the production techniques.

**Audience Viewpoint**

The audience viewpoint is the way the audience sees and responds to the cast members. Actors are viewed live at the theatre, but television and film are prerecorded and edited (except for live television shows) before they are presented to an audience. This means that the audience does not see the actors in television and film firsthand. Television and film audiences do not have the same personal connection with the cast members that is felt in live theatre. In general, television and film have larger casts and have less connection with the audience. The actual presence of the actors onstage helps establish a unique relationship between the audience and the players. The player-audience relationship is a connection, or bond, between the audience and the players that aids the understanding and appreciation of the play and cast. Television, however, is viewed in small, private settings. And films are shown on large screens suited for extravaganza or spectacle viewing, allowing films to be viewed with wonder and amazement by large audiences. For example, many movie theatres provide their patrons today with wall-to-wall screens, stereo sound (DTS Digital Sound and THX Sound System), and listening aids. This type of viewing is impressive, but it doesn’t have the player-audience relationship that live theatre can offer.

Another difference in the audience viewpoint has to do with imagination. A live theatre audience must imagine that what is happening onstage is happening in the real world. Live theatre cannot produce the real world as effectively as television and film. For example, the painted backdrop onstage may present an outdoor scene, but you must **suspend belief**—allow yourself to pretend that what is happening onstage is real—to associate the backdrop with the scenery outdoors.

The audience commitment (audience responsibility) is quite different for live theatre and other media. Live theatre requires the most audience commitment. People who choose to go to the theatre must pay to enter the theatre. Once they are seated, they become an integral part of the performance. They must use imagination, observation, and concentration while watching the actors. The audience must believe in what is happening on the stage, even though many of the scenes may be pantomimed or performed in front of a set that is obviously not the real thing. The audience becomes involved in the production by listening, applauding, and oftentimes laughing or crying at the scenes that
are taking place. The audience is important to the actors, too. The two work together to create the wonder of live theatre and establish the player-audience relationship mentioned earlier.

Less commitment is required by the film audience than by those attending live theatre. In general, the movie audience pays about one-third the cost of live theatre. What’s more, less imagination is required by this audience because the movies are often brilliantly produced, directed, and edited so as to create a realistic setting. Millions of dollars are spent to create realistic sets or to take the actors to real locations. The audience may eat popcorn and candy and drink beverages while watching the movie. They may talk to the people sitting next to them, even though to do so is inconsiderate of others in the movie theatre. Of course, the actors do not know who might be in the audience, and there is no personal audience-actor relationship as in live theatre.

Television requires the least amount of audience commitment. The small television screen has a remote control that often is used to “surf” from channel to channel in search of the best entertainment. People watch television in their homes, and many obstacles get in the way of what is happening on the screen. Audience members eat, talk, laugh, play games, and walk from room to room during the programs. The actors do not develop a relationship with the home audience, although many television programs have studio audiences to enhance the outcome of the program. The live studio audience helps evoke natural responses from the actors. Directors like to use them to make the show more appealing.

**Actor Viewpoint**

The [actor viewpoint](#) is the way the cast members react to the audience and the production situation, and the way they contend with working in live theatre and other media. Onstage the actors perform
They must have their lines memorized and rehearsed. They spend endless hours during and outside of rehearsals perfecting their roles. They use their voices and bodies in ways that would not be used in television and film. The voice, body movements, and gestures often must be exaggerated for the theatre audience to see and hear. But in television and film, the slightest movement, gesture, or sound is easily recorded by the camera filming the scene.

Film and television actors also must work hard and rehearse endlessly and diligently. They have to perform for specific cameras and work around many obstacles, equipment, and crew members without breaking character. The actors must use total self-control because the camera picks up every movement. The actor’s work is affected by the camera’s every move. These camera angles (camera angles), which include vista shots (faraway shots), long shots, medium shots, and close-up shots, may be altered, spliced (placed elsewhere in the film), or omitted without the actor’s knowledge. A vista scene is shot from far away to give a sense of place. Long shots are still shot from far away but you begin to pick out part of the scene on which to focus. Medium shots bring you closer to the focus of the scene. You see what is starting to happen. In close-up shots the camera closes in on an expression or detail that the director wants the audience to notice. These procedures are used to help the audience understand the film and are not controlled by the actor, but are the decisions of the director and the producer.

Production Techniques

Production techniques are the methods used to stage a play and the methods used to produce television programs and films. Settings in live theatre are limited, and the audience’s sight lines (the positions and places onstage that an audience is able to see) must be considered. In television and film, however, mobile cameras allow the filmmakers to create realistic settings in great detail.

Lighting onstage must approximate time and conditions. But television and film scenes can be filmed on location, and the actual lighting, weather, and environmental conditions can be recorded. “Flashbacks” can be shown immediately in television and film; onstage, “flashbacks” are harder to convey.

An illusion—something that looks real but is false—and passage of time are easier to convey in film and television because the camera can start and stop. Special effects can appear realistic on the screen, while the special effects onstage have limited power (although computers have revolutionized stage productions).

ACTION

1. Commercial Time. As a class project, view and discuss several commercials on television. In small groups, create and dramatize an original commercial for a product. Present the commercials and videotape them. Play the commercials back, and discuss the types of appeals (propaganda techniques used in commercials and advertising) used by each group.
2. **Mock Television Program.** Prepare a television program similar to a talk show or a sitcom. After selecting a type of program and having a purpose in mind, write and edit a script (time limit 10 to 15 minutes). Choose a director, cast, advertising crew, and technical crew. After writing, editing, planning, organizing, and rehearsing the script, videotape the program using various camera shots. Play back for study and evaluation.

3. **Reporter's Viewpoint.** Choose a television program to watch; choose a movie to see; and attend a live theatre production. Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter, and write a story comparing the performers and production techniques with your class.

---

**Evaluating Theatre and Media**

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**
- Evaluate and critique live theatre, television, and film performances.
- Define and develop aesthetic appreciation.
- Reflect on and form opinions of dramatic experiences.

**Evaluation, as you learned in Chapter 2, helps you understand, analyze, and improve your theatre skills and techniques. In this lesson, you will develop an appreciation of theatrical values by learning how to evaluate live performances, television drama, and film productions.**

The ability to evaluate dramatic performance is a valuable skill beyond the theatre classroom. When your class attends a live theatre production or views television drama and films, you will be given an opportunity to study and appreciate theatre as an art form. Through this experience, you will also develop your sense of aesthetic appreciation. **Aesthetic appreciation** is the ability to recognize, understand, and value that which is pleasing, beautiful, cultured, and tasteful in the arts (theatre, music, visual art, and dance). For example, as you develop an appreciation for live theatre, you will feel the responsibility to support only performances that have merit and are worthy of your time and energy.

This lesson will offer guidelines on how to evaluate live theatre, television, and film. Evaluating theatre and other media means forming opinions and making sound judgments about the characters and the production, paying close attention to their excellence and shortcomings. When opinions are formed and judgments made, people do not always agree. Disagreement is part of the process of learning how to evaluate. Important steps are listening to others, asking questions, and

---

**Warm Up**

In your journal, list one of your favorite live stage productions, television programs, and films. Explain why you chose each one.

**aesthetic appreciation**
the ability to recognize, understand, and value that which is pleasing, beautiful, cultured, and tasteful in the arts (theatre, music, visual art, and dance).
A stylistic movement in theatre occurring about the same time as realism was naturalism. A French playwright, Émile Zola, is considered to be the founder of the naturalistic style of theatre.

Zola had been strongly influenced by the scientific discoveries and practices popular in the early 1900s. He admired the scientists for their apparent ability to observe natural forces at work without influencing the forces that they were observing. So he brought this scientific type of observation to his theatre work.

Zola suggested that artists should present a picture of the real world on stage without making their opinions or presence felt. He and his followers argued that theatre should present a “slice of life” on the stage, that plays and play production should be just like looking into a window on characters’ lives and watching them, whatever they were doing. This meant that the playwright was to no longer put only the most important and dramatic moments and conversations on stage, but should also show life’s less glamorous details. Everything from character development, language style, setting, props, and costumes should be lifted directly out of life and placed before the audience without adjusting it in any way.

The naturalists, like the realists, believed that theatre should point out society’s flaws and try to get audiences to examine social injustice. Therefore, as in many of the realistic plays, the characters in naturalistic plays are from the lower classes and are engaged in situations that had not previously been the subject matter of plays. But unlike realism, naturalistic plays are often made up of a series of brief scenes or episodes rather than the tight dramatic structure of longer scenes found in realistic plays.

The best-known naturalistic dramas from the turn of the century are Gerhart Hauptmann’s *The Weavers* (Germany) and *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorki of Russia. Gorki’s play presents characters in a flophouse who have sunk to the lowest level of Russian society.

Although the naturalistic movement was not popular for long in its original form, it has reappeared in many plays and productions since its beginnings and has also influenced the making of many films.

This is a scene from Zola’s dramatization of his novel *Thérèse Raquin*. This depressing story involving betrayal, murder, and suicide was not a hit with late nineteenth century French audiences, but is one of the best examples of naturalistic drama.
reading others’ comments and reviews before you decide how you judge a performance. It will be worth your time to establish guidelines in choosing what you watch on stage, television, and film.

**Evaluating a Live Performance**

Johann von Goethe, German playwright and author of literary masterpieces, gave us an example to follow in evaluating a work of art or literature: ask three basic questions that address the intent and structure of a piece, its effectiveness, and its value.

What did the author want to do? (intent and structure) Did the author accomplish the task? (effectiveness) Was it worth doing? (value)

These same questions in expanded forms can be used to evaluate live theatre, television, and film performances.

1. What was the theme?
2. What was the plot?
3. How were the characters developed?
4. How effective was the dialogue? Was it meaningful language? Explain.
5. How effective were the actors? Were they believable? How effective were the interpretations of their roles, their voices, their movements, their reactions to the other actors, and their projection? Were they disciplined and in control?
6. How effective were the stage designs, set, makeup, costumes, lighting, and special effects?
7. How effective was the director? How effective were the director’s selection and casting of the play, interpretation of the characters, and blocking and creation of stage pictures?
8. How smooth was the organization of the crew? How well did they handle the changing of scenes and blackouts?

---

**Criterion:** That which is striking and beautiful is not always good; but that which is good is always beautiful.

Ninon de l’Enclos

---

**intent**
the author’s purpose in a work of art or literature

**structure**
the form, internal as well as external, in which a work is presented

**effectiveness**
the degree to which a work achieves its purpose

**value**
the merit or worth of a work in artistic and human terms

---

Once the performance is over, most theatregoers enjoy analyzing and discussing their reactions to the play. Developing your evaluation skills will add to your enjoyment of theatre, television, and movies.
9. Did you agree with the conclusion of the play? Why or why not?
10. Who was your favorite character? Why?
11. What was your favorite scene? Why?
12. What was the reaction of the audience to the play?
13. What was your reaction to the play?
14. In your opinion, was the play a good work of art or a poor one?
15. Did the production make you think?
16. Did the production make you change your view of something?
17. What emotions did you experience during and after the play?
18. How would you change this production?
19. Would you recommend this play to another person? Why or why not?
20. What gives this play merit?

Evaluating Television and Film

There are many fine television dramas and films, but when you make your selection, you must use discrimination, recognizing important differences and distinctions. Television and films can take you anywhere and show you many situations. This is why you must use discrimination. Many dramas on television and on film are not appropriate for all ages, nor do they all have merit. They are also much more accessible than live theatre. There are critics who rate television programs and movies and suggest appropriate viewing. Some critics write for magazines and newspapers; others can be heard on the radio or on television. The Motion Picture Association of America provides movie ratings for parents and young people:

- **G**—all ages admitted
- **PG**—all ages admitted, but use parental discretion
- **PG-13**—parents strongly cautioned
- **R**—restricted; persons under 17 must be accompanied by an adult
- **NC-17**—no children under 17 admitted

Most movie theatres enforce these codes, but it is still in your best interest to learn to be selective in what you see and hear. Use the following criteria to help you select and evaluate television drama and films before you view them.

**Before viewing:**
1. What comments have you heard about the television program or film?
2. What reviews have you read in newspapers or magazines about the television program or film?
3. Is the television program or film supported or recommended by people you respect or by organizations such as Hallmark and PBS that have a history of producing quality shows?

(You may not agree with the comments and opinions of others, but you may find them helpful in forming your own standards.)

**After viewing:**
4. Did the story have a well-developed theme and plot? Were the characters well developed?
5. How effective were the actors? Were they believable? How effective were their voices, their movements, and their reactions to other actors?

6. Did the story have human values? Did it have appropriate role models, language, and messages?

7. How effective was the director’s work? How effective were the casting directions given to the actors, and message given to the audience?

8. How effective were the set designs, scenery, lighting, and special effects?

9. How effective were the costuming and makeup?

10. How effective were the camera operators?

11. How effective was the television or film editor? Did the television program or film flow together? Did the sequencing make sense? Should part of the program or film have been left out? Was something missing?

12. Did advertising of this television program or film influence you in choosing it?

13. What did you like best and least about the television program or film?

14. What would you change about the television program or film?

15. Would you recommend the television program or film to another person? Why or why not?

In your process of appreciating and evaluating performances, do not be fooled by false advertising or critics who use words to glorify their reviews and create publicity. Select television programs and films that set high standards for living and represent models of ethical conduct. Base your evaluation standards on sound judgment, human values, and literary merit.

**Giving Your Evaluations in Class**

When you evaluate a live performance, television program, or film production in class, give constructive criticism—helpful comments and opinions that are expressed in a positive way. Your judgments and opinions of both strengths and weaknesses are always important and should be voiced. You may be asked to give a critique that is oral or written. Keep in mind how you would like your work to be critiqued. Clear and definite comments of how someone or something could be improved are better than vague statements about how bad someone or something was.

As you evaluate live performances and other media, play the role of critic, judge, or reviewer. Your teacher may ask you to play the role of a contest judge to evaluate the activities assigned. Or you and a classmate may role-play the well-known television personalities Siskel and Ebert and conduct your own review of live stage performances, television programs, or movies.

You must have specific evaluation criteria (questions or evaluation comments) before you start judging or forming opinions of performers, live plays, television dramas, or films. These criteria may be provided by your teacher, or you may be asked to develop your own. Use the
same type of questions that were given in Chapter 2 and in this lesson as a guideline in developing your own evaluation forms. Use appropriate language and a writing style that your class will understand. Above all, do not omit this process from your theatre assignments and adventures.

For each activity, use the following evaluation form (or use one of the forms given earlier in this lesson).

**Form for Evaluating Theatre and Other Media**

Answer the questions on a scale from 1 to 4. Use these rankings: 1, poor; 2, average; 3, good; 4, excellent.

### Evaluation of the Script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the theme clear to the audience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the play offer the audience positive experiences?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the play well written?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is the dialogue entertaining?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the dialogue make you think?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the dialogue evoke emotional responses?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the play have a strong plot?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are the scenes in the play easy to follow?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is there a strong climax in the play?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is the ending effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does the play hold your attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluation of the Acting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are the characters true to life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are the actors’ interpretations effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are the actors natural and at ease with their techniques?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are the actors’ movements motivated at all times?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are the roles developed into distinct personalities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are the actors’ voices effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do the actors use proper volume, rate, diction, pronunciation, phrasing, inflection, and projection?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If a dialect is used, is it effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Are the actors always in character?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are the actors’ facial expressions effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are the characters relating to each other in sharing scenes, picking up cues, and reacting with each other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Is each character believable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluating the Stage Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the set appropriate and effective? Does it add to or take away from the play?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are the stage designs appropriate to the meaning of the play?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Are the costumes appropriate? Are they true to the time period? Are they clean and tailored properly? ______
4. Is the makeup appropriate in developing the characters? ______
5. Are the special effects an asset to the play? ______
6. Do all the details of the play’s production come together for a polished performance? ______

General Comments

1. Are you interested in the play? ______
2. Do you feel a connection with the characters during and after the play? ______
3. Does there seem to be a positive response from the audience during and after the play? ______
4. After the play ends, do you feel an appreciation for the actors, director, and crew? ______
5. Is the performance a positive experience for you? ______

1. **And Now the Envelope Please.** Choose a favorite character on one of the television programs you watch regularly, and evaluate this character’s performance. Decide whether or not this character deserves an Emmy. (An Emmy is an award for outstanding television performance.) Repeat the activity with an actor from a movie. Decide whether or not this character deserves an Oscar. (An Oscar is a movie award for an outstanding film performance or association with a film.) Do the activity a third time with an actor from a stage production. Decide whether or not this character deserves a Tony. (A Tony is a stage award for outstanding performance or association with live drama.) Each time, prepare your evaluation using written comments.

2. **Showtime Review.** After attending a movie, select a character who interested you, and prepare an oral critique of his or her performance. Then, with a classmate, role-play a situation in which you are leading movie reviewers sharing your critiques with the other classmates. Ask your teacher to videotape this assignment. Play back the tape and have the class critique you and your classmate orally.

3. **Here Comes the Judge.** Attend a live production with your class. After the class has returned to the classroom, participate in an activity that requires each member to be a critic. Orally evaluate the production. Use the criteria related to intent and structure, effectiveness, and value to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the play and the performers.
CHAPTER 12: Theatre Appreciation

SPOTLIGHT ON TERMS

An important part of theatre is understanding the terminology, or vocabulary, used. Add the new terms and definitions to the vocabulary section of your theatre notebook or folder.

FOCUS ON FACTS

1. Explain the following theatre conventions: performance space, program, blinking of the house lights, dimming of the house lights, curtain up, curtain down, blackout, curtain call, and applause.
2. Define audience etiquette.
3. How are computers used in live theatre today?
4. Discuss from the audience’s viewpoint the similarities and differences between live theatre, television, and film.
5. Discuss from the actor’s viewpoint the similarities and differences between live theatre, television, and film.
6. Discuss from the standpoint of production techniques the similarities and differences between live theatre, television, and film.
7. What do the different movie ratings stand for?

REFLECTIONS

Discuss the following questions with your class or answer them on paper as instructed by your teacher.

1. Discuss the changes and improvements that you have seen or experienced firsthand in the last few years in live theatre, television, or film.
2. What impact have live theatre, television, and film had on your life?
3. Does advertising play an important role in live theatre and other media? Why?
4. Relate a positive or negative experience in which you have received an evaluation or constructive criticism. Why was it positive or negative?
5. Which theatre convention do you think is the most important? Why?

THEATRE IN YOUR LIFE

1. Program Design. On your own, design a program for an imaginary event or an upcoming production.
2. Theatre Conventions Poster Design. Create a poster illustrating theatre conventions. Display the posters in your classroom or in the halls of your school.
3. In small groups, discuss how your lives are influenced by theatre, film, television, and electronic media. A reporter in each group can take notes during the discussion and report the group’s thoughts to the class.
4. How often do you use a computer in theatre? In the future how important do you think the computer will be in theatre? Be specific.
5. Discuss how television and films change, reinforce, or enhance an idea or product in advertising their programs and movies.

ENCORE

1. Live Theatre and Media Survey. Conduct a survey of your peers to find out what live productions they attend, what television programs they watch, and what films they see. Use the computer to create your survey. When finished, conduct another survey of several adults. Compare the two surveys for similarities and differences in written form.
2. Talk Show. After attending a play, think of questions you would like to ask the playwright, producer, director, actors, set designers, lighting designer, or costume designer if they were guests on a television talk show where you were part of the audience. Select one student to be the talk show host and persons to assume each of the guest roles. Members of the audience will be called upon to ask their questions. Each guest will form questions by making educated guesses about why certain artistic decisions were made.