

Chapter 02 The Background and Expectations of the Audience

Multiple Choice Questions

1. A question that is NOT one of the criteria by which to judge a play and a production is

- A. "What is being attempted?"
- B. "Have the intentions been achieved?"
- C. "Were the intentions appreciated by the audience?"
- D. "Was the attempt worthwhile?"

2. A critic might offer background information about the

- A. playwright.
- B. subject matter of the play.
- C. style of the production.
- D. All of these answers are correct.

3. A critic usually has more _____ than a reviewer.

- A. time
- B. space
- C. knowledge
- D. All of these answers are correct.

4. Which of the following usually works for a television station, a newspaper, or a magazine and reports on what has occurred at the theatre?

- A. reviewer
- B. critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

5. Which of the following attempts to go into greater detail in describing or analyzing a theatre event?

- A. reviewer
- B.** critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

6. Which of the following will often try to explain how the theatre event fits into a category or genre, or into the body of the playwright's work?

- A. reviewer
- B.** critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

7. Which of the following is usually restricted by time, space, or both?

- A.** reviewer
- B. critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

8. Which of the following is frequently limited in terms of experience and theatrical background?

- A.** reviewer
- B. critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

9. Which of the following attempts to analyze a theatre event very closely?

- A. reviewer
- B.** critic
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

10. Which of the following might offer an opinion about whether or not the event is worth seeing?

- A. reviewer
- B. critic
- C. both reviewer and critic**
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

11. Which of the following attempts to put the theatre event into a larger context?

- A. reviewer
- B. critic**
- C. both reviewer and critic
- D. neither reviewer nor critic

12. Which of the following is NOT a responsibility of a *dramaturg*?

- A. researching criticism of past productions of plays their theatre is doing
- B. writing research notes or small articles most often used in the programs for the audience's benefit
- C. production research to determine the style of the play that the director will employ**
- D. identifying older yet meaningful plays that may have been overlooked in planning a theatre season

True / False Questions

13. Because a "collective mind" is created when a large number of people are gathered into a group, the background of the individual spectator has little to do with the theatre experience.

FALSE

14. Women comprised the largest part of the audience in ancient Greece.

FALSE

15. Because artists are often accused of being "antisocial," "subversive," or "enemies of the state," and are thus outsiders, the art that they produce is often unrelated to the society in which it is produced.

FALSE

16. Art may question society's views or reaffirm them, but it cannot escape them; the two are indissolubly linked.

TRUE

17. While the latter part of the fifth century B.C.E. in Greece is considered to be a golden age for politics, philosophy, art, and architecture, for the theatre it was a time of decline.

FALSE

18. During the Elizabethan era, women were barred from performing on the legitimate stage.

TRUE

19. The bringing together of cultures by population shifts and swift global communication, and the challenges to long-held beliefs characterized by the writings of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Albert Einstein, are reflected in the eclecticism and fragmentation of an inclusive, contemporary theatre.

TRUE

20. Although their societies were vastly different, both the Greek and Elizabethan theatres shared a strong connection between the type of theatre they presented and the times and social conditions they lived in.

TRUE

21. While Broadway theatres are all within the district near Times Square in New York City, the styles of their architecture and types of their stages vary considerably.

FALSE

22. To perform in repertory means to present a series of plays over a given span of time.

TRUE

23. Until the early 1950s, most new plays written in the United States originated in regional theatres.

FALSE

24. Off-Broadway theatre began in the 1950s as an alternative to Broadway and is located in smaller theatres outside the Times Square district.

TRUE

25. While the trend toward diversity in the American theatre has given birth to many multiethnic, multicultural, and gender-based theatre companies representing groups with special interests, plays produced by these theatres rarely enter the mainstream of American theatre.

FALSE

26. Off-Broadway shows are usually produced wherever inexpensive space is available—churches, lofts, warehouses, large basements—and are characterized by low-priced productions and a wide variety of offerings.

TRUE

27. Live theatre is actually flourishing throughout the United States; even in areas where professional theatre may not be present, there are typically active college and university theatre programs in addition to numerous amateur community theatre groups.

TRUE

28. When a person watches a play, it is expected that they will ignore their own individual memories, emotional scars, and private fantasies.

FALSE

29. Women played an important role in the creation of Greek theatre during the classical period.

FALSE

30. If a reviewer dislikes a particular production, it is probably best to avoid it.

FALSE

31. A critic should treat a play as an aesthetic object separate from its social, political, or cultural context.

FALSE

32. Because the reviewer should represent the tastes of the general public, it is not important that he or she have a thorough background in theatre.

FALSE

33. No matter how knowledgeable a critic is about theatre, much of what he or she writes is simply opinion.

TRUE

34. One unique aspect of Maria Irene Fornés's play *Fefu and Her Friends*, described in the text, is that during one part of the play the audience is divided into four groups and taken to different locations to view scenes.

TRUE

35. In their work for most regional professional theatres, the dramaturgs are responsible for examining new plays, researching plays the theatre is producing, and possibly working with playwrights on developing new scripts.

TRUE

Essay Questions

36. Discuss a work of art that has had a particularly strong effect on you because of a personal experience that was reflected in it. How did your experience influence your response? Have other students had similar experiences?

Answers will vary

37. Analyze the culture of a particular society at a time when theatre thrived—Greece in the fifth century B.C.E., Europe in the middle ages, Elizabethan England, France in the seventeenth century—and discuss the basic assumptions of that society. Read and discuss a play which reflects the assumptions of the society.

Answers will vary

38. Assume that you are going to the theatre. Choose a specific play, perhaps one you are asked to attend for class assignment, and list the preconceptions you might take with you (regarding subject matter, author, the play itself, the historical period in which it was written, and personal factors). Where do your preconceptions come from and why?

Answers will vary

39. Discuss Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, written in 1959, in the context of the kind of issues that were at the center of the civil rights marches of the 1960s. Discuss *As Is* by William Hoffmann or *The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer (both produced in 1985) in the context of the treatment and understanding of gays at the height of the AIDS crisis.

Answers will vary

40. The text notes that sometimes artists are accused of being antisocial, subversive, or enemies of the state or of common morality. Can you think of any contemporary artists that are sometimes described in these pejorative terms and why? What do people object to in their art? Do the stories we tell and the images we share affect the people who see them? In what way? Should our society be concerned about the stories and images that are being produced? To what extent should those images be controlled in the best interests of the society?

Answers will vary

41. There is great disagreement over the issue of whether art can create changes in a society or whether it merely reflects what is already happening. How do you feel about this? How does your opinion relate to the issue of censorship? Should art that many people believe goes against societal values be suppressed? Why or why not?

Answers will vary

42. For many years, women were not allowed to perform on the stage. How might this fact have affected plays written during that time? How might it have affected the way women were portrayed? How might contemporary drama, film, and television change if women were not allowed to act, direct, write or produce? How might they change if men were not allowed to act, direct, write or produce?

Answers will vary

43. Theatre productions have a variety of purposes: to entertain, to offer escape, to provoke thought or political action, to educate, etc. Discuss your favorite television shows in terms of these purposes. Which purpose or purposes mentioned above do they have?

Answers will vary

44. As the text indicates, many theatres are devoted to the experiences and interests of specific groups of people. Discuss why such theatres might be valuable to members of those groups. What might be the effect on people if the stories and images they encounter did not include people and experiences that reflected their own? If the representation of these experiences is separated from the experiences of other groups, does this weaken the connections between groups of people? If you are not a member of a particular group, would you be inclined to go to such a theatre? Why or why not?

Answers will vary

45. Describe the ideal qualifications for (a) a daily newspaper reviewer; (b) a television reviewer; (c) a magazine critic; (d) the author of a lengthy theatre article for a scholarly journal.

Answers will vary

46. The two essential elements of theatre are a performance and an audience. Since the critic is not one of the essential elements, do we really need a critic at all?

Answers will vary

47. What are the advantages of reading reviews and criticisms *before* going to a performance? What are the advantages of waiting until *after* a performance to read or hear criticism?

Answers will vary

48. Looking at most newspaper, television or blog reviews, would you say there is much difference between these accounts of a theatre event and consumer reports on a given product? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary

49. Read professional critics' reviews of three current Broadway plays. Find three different reviews for each play—one that is positive, one that is negative, and one that is mixed. Identify quotes from each review that prompted you to feel this way. (Broadwayworld.com provides links to professional reviews as does Playbill.com. This is an excellent way to examine students' critical reading skills and gives you an idea about their basic writing skills as well. Use the assignment fairly early in the semester.)

Answers will vary

50. Discuss the relationship between the importance of reviews and the price of tickets to an event. When ticket prices are high, will people tend to rely more on reviews in making a decision about whether to attend an event?

Answers will vary

51. In the English theatre of the seventeenth century, spectators at plays were allowed to watch the first act of a production without paying for a ticket. After the first act was over, they had to either buy a ticket or leave the theatre. What effect might this have on the role of the reviewer? Of the critic?

Answers will vary

52. Discuss which is more important in making a decision as to whether to attend an event: reviews, or the advice of a friend? Why?

Answers will vary

53. What is the relationship of awards such as the Tony Awards or the Academy Awards to reviews? Are they themselves reviews? Are they influenced by reviews? Are they influenced by box office revenue?

Answers will vary

54. Discuss how important it is to be able to talk after the performance about a play or movie. Do people tend to go beyond "I liked it" or "I didn't like it" to discuss why they felt that way, or what the event was about?

Answers will vary