

Readings in **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES**



Edited by

**Adesina Lukuman Azeez
Lambe Kayode Mustapha
Rasaq Muhammed Adisa
Saudat Salah Abdulbaqi**

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Basic Elements in Critical Review and Writing

Patrick Udende

Objectives

At the end of the chapter, students are expected to:

1. Understand the nature of criticism and meaning of critical review and writing.
2. Explain the functions of critical writing.
3. Explain qualities of critical writer.
4. Understand guidelines for critical review and writing.
5. Explain types of review.
6. Review different works of art.

Introduction

For the avoidance of doubt, this write-up is skewed to creative works of art. Works of art include but are not limited to books, sculpture, music, dance, movie, photography and painting. All these are products of human creation based on imagination of the creator. Given that these creations are product of human imagination, they do not attain perfection unlike God's. This is why no matter how beautiful and appealing some works of art may appear, analysts are bound to fault them in a way. When the work of art is open to criticism, modifications are made; subjective as the criticism may be. It should be acknowledged that in spite of the subjectivity embedded in the review, specific rules guide reviewers and critics in their review and criticism.

Works of art play key functions in society ranging from information through education to entertainment. They also contribute to the economic growth and development of society. Premised on this, enormous responsibility is conferred on professional critics or reviewers to help creators of artistic works showcase their works, help readers have value for money, as well as help preserve the values of truthfulness and openness in our society through their review and criticism.

Critical Review Defined

Researchers and commentators have tried to advance several but overlapping definitions in their attempt to define critical review. Before making an insightful incursion into some of these definitions, it is important to conceptualise the concept 'review'. Review is the process of going over a subject twice or more times in a study in order to commit it in the memory and summarise the facts. Differently put, it is an act of carefully examining the quality or condition of a subject normally a work of art such as book, play, music, and painting. Review has two primary goals – to inform the reader about the content of the work of art and to provide an evaluation that gives judgment of the work's qualities. These two goals are intricately related suggesting that it is when the reader becomes knowledgeable about the work of art that they have the capacity to pass a valid judgment on the qualities of the work. Review is different from 'a review'. Whereas the former is a process or act of reviewing, the latter is a short write up of critical writing for a print media patterning a particular work of art or event. To elucidate more, a review is the product of review. Without reviewing there will be no "a review".

Critical review is not a mere summary; it is an analysis and evaluation of a book, article, or other media of communication (Skene, n.d.). In a broader sense, critical review involves explanation, interpretation, analysis and evaluation. Four key words are apparent in this definition, namely explanation, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation. Explanation means to simplify or clarify by stating the outcomes the reviewer's reasoning and justifying their reasoning by means of evidential considerations upon which your results were based. Interpretation deals with a careful examination of the interconnectedness of different parts and the whole with a view to making inferences about the implications and meanings of the pattern(s). Analysis means breaking into parts or segments. That is the process by which the whole is separated into its components and those components are examined with a view to discovering their nature, functions, and relationship. Evaluation, otherwise known as assessment entails judgment based on the subject matter. The judgment in our context which borders on any work of art could be positive, negative or even

neutral. Any form of evaluation depends on the specific work of art be it book, music or painting just to mention three. Being critical, therefore, requires making judgments as to the truth, relevance, effectiveness, breadth, contribution of the work of art, including its informational structure.

Critical Writing

Okenwa (1998), cited in Okunna and Omenugha (2002), posits that critical writing is “a style of writing where the writer operates with facts which are woven into arguments that are balanced out and structured in a logical way to make the conclusion convincing and acceptable” (p.197). This implies, critical writing is not based on abstraction or concocted thoughts but on established facts. These facts are not treated in isolation but as interrelated parts that make an organic whole of the subject or work of art. The definition further shows that the component parts are not haphazardly treated but are logically presented to allow the writer to express an informed opinion, which can be highly subjective.

Thus, to be critical does not mean to criticise in a negative manner. Rather, it requires the critic to interrogate the pieces of information and views in a work of art and present his decision. For the critic to be successful, a clear understanding of the subject matter from different viewpoints and in relation to the theories, and guiding principles is non-negotiable. Wilson, cited in National Open University of Nigeria (2015), similarly admitted that critical writing is the literary art of evaluating the merit of any work or art and giving judgment on it. The art evaluation is applied in the textual criticism of books, artistic and aesthetic appreciation of plays, movies, music, creative and fine arts and other public events. This involves a thorough examination that is marked by careful attention to the standards that seem universally allocable to a critical review.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that critical writing is the writing of essays and articles either for broadcast or publication which appreciates and judges the arts. It is subjective expression of opinion which may be positive, negative or neutral. This leads us to the three types of critical review discussed in the next subheading.

Types of Critical Review

Given that a review is subjective and the subjectivity is informed by the disposition of the critic to the work of art under review, the judgment could be in support of the review, adversary to the review or take the middle-of-the-road approach. Okunna and Omenugha (2002) prefer tagging the three types of review as pro-review, con-review, and neutral review.

Pro-review: This is the type of review that is positively disposed towards the work of art. In this type of review, the strengths of the work of art outweigh the weaknesses. The reviewer, who is convinced of the overriding advantages of the work of art over its shortcomings never hesitates to recommend the work of art for patronage. In promoting the piece, it is advisable that the reviewer first presents the weaknesses of the work followed by its perceived overwhelming benefits.

Con-review: This type of review diametrically contrasts pro-review in the sense that the reviewer considers the strengths of the creative work to subordinate its weaknesses. This way, con-reviewers are cautioned to first present the strengths of the creative work of art before its weaknesses. In this consideration, the judgment is not commendable to advantage the work of art. This is why it is not only rare but also unethical and unprofessional for a reviewer to recommend a work of art that they are unconvinced about its goodness in the first place. Recommending an obvious unsatisfactory creative work of art to the audience would vitiate their credibility. However, in writing a review that disadvantages a work of art, the reviewer is expected to handle it with a measure of sensitivity by taking recourse to effort, time and financial investment in the work not to condemn it out rightly.

Neutral-review: Neutral-review takes the middle-of-the-road approach. It strikes a balance between the strengths and weaknesses and probably leaves the verdict to the audience to make. To the extent that, audience depends on the reviewer, who is expected to be a professional or specialist for an informed decision, they are not encouraged to embark on neutral-review.

Distinction between Critical Writing and other Forms of Writing

Critical writing versus news story: The main difference between a news story and a critical writing is that a news story is time-sensitive. Mass media are interested in publishing news stories as soon as an event occurs (Dianova, 2017). Critical writing, however, is not as time-dependent and contains no urgent content. The reviewer is at liberty to write one shortly after the publication of the work of art. Additionally, the news writer normally adopts the inverted pyramid style and does not require much creativity like a critical writer. Besides, whereas opinionating is accepted in critical writing, news writing is averse to the writer's opinion. The news writer reports the issue, idea or phenomenon as it is devoid of subjective colouration. One melting point between news writing and critical writing is that writers of both are by-lined.

Critical writing versus broadcast commentary: It is significant to note that both critical writing and broadcast commentary use words which possess immense and compelling power. The spoken word used in broadcast commentary is even more powerful than the written word in critical writing because it has the ability to engage the listener in a type of conversation. Due to the fact that the listener of a broadcast commentary does not have the ability of re-reading a certain story to comprehend it as they can in a newspaper, the broadcast commentator uses common and familiar words to make the conversation more meaningful than the critical writer. This is not to say that the use of ambiguous words has a place in critical writing.

Critical writing and broadcast commentary have by-lines and are subjective writings. That means both express opinion and provide the reader with a critical viewpoint. Nevertheless, critical writing, essentially, evaluates and appreciates what makes the subject matter unique. Broadcast commentary does not, necessarily, appreciate. It is, largely aimed at pointing out an irregularity or any misnomer, correct a wrong, validate a point or elucidate a process or concept or simply tell a story with a view to amusing or amazing the reader.

Critical writing versus editorial writing: Akpan (2000) defines editorial as an article that expresses the opinion of the editors or publishers. Editorial is regarded as the corporate voice and conscience or soul of the news media. It is described as the corporate voice of the news media

because it gives the news media's opinion about something, rather than objective reporting which is based on facts (Udende & Onobe, 2014). According to Ossai (2002), editorial writing is a specialised genre of mass media writing, which applies mainly in the print media.

In substance, both the editorial and the critical article express opinion; they evaluate, interpret, and are subjective and hope to influence, inform and educate. In addition, they entertain. A humorous piece of editorial and criticism, surely, is worth reading. In as much as editorial writing and critical writing share certain features, the editorial writer operates anonymously unlike the critical writer who is by-lined.

Critical writing versus column: A column is a page dedicated to someone who expresses the opinion or view in a newspaper or magazine. One who is privileged to write a column is known as a columnist. The columnist is, therefore, accorded an everlasting or obvious title, that is written regularly by the same person. Sometimes different persons with different titles interchangeably, feature in the column expressing their viewpoint on diverse matters.

The columnist, who is usually an expert in the area they write about, enjoys the privilege of maintaining a column in a newspaper or magazine. For example, in the University of Ilorin Bulletin (Unilorin Bulletin), three prominent columnists interchangeably write in a dedicated column. These erudite columnists are Prof. Adesina Lukuman Azeez, who is eminently associated with the title *The Podium*, Prof. Adedimeji Malfouz recognised by the title *Our Alma Mater*, and Mr. Kunle Akogun whose title is *Town and Gown*.

The columnist shares characteristics of a critic. One of these characteristics is that they are typically a critic, and criticism requires of their proficiency or competence in the subject being evaluated. It is fashionable that most newspapers and magazines devote columns for review or criticism on a broad spectrum of subjects – books, arts, dance, plays/theatre, radio and television, films, etc. These are usually featured in special sections and are so labeled.

Critical writing versus feature writing: A feature is a creative journalistic article which informs, explains analyses, interprets, and exposes issues. Okoye (2002) defines feature as straight news, which has been beefed up with more salient facts to make it more in-depth, more

comprehensive and more exciting. It is a colourful story about people, events, places and life. Features strive to talk about artists and about their work, about art history; features could 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, cited in National Open University of Nigeria, 2015). Much as critical writing appreciates unlike feature writing which emphasises human interest, both of them, however, have by-line.

Structure of a Critical Review

A critical review is commonly brief and its structure is comparable to the one given below (<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>):

Introduction: This part of review, otherwise referred to as the lead or opening paragraph, is considered most significant segment and difficult part of the review. It begins with a sentence that states the writer, the title and provides a brief explanation of the topic of the text. The introductory sentence also features the goal of the text and highlights of the basic findings or main argument. This is closely followed by a brief statement of the evaluation of the text reviewed, which can be a positive or negative assessment or a combined response. The introduction of review is normally very short, often in one paragraph for a journal article review and two or three paragraphs for a longer book review.

Summary: This section gives a synopsis of the key points of the article containing few examples. It also encapsulates a short clarification on the writer's purpose as well as the organisation of the text. This section of the critical review should not be longer than one third of the whole. Reviewers are encouraged to present a summary of the key points along with a limited number of examples. It is also permissible for them to also briefly explain the author's purpose or intentions throughout the text and reviewers may briefly describe how the text is organised. The summary should not be more than a third of the critical review.

Main Body or Critique: This segment of the review contains the nucleus of the reviewer's viewpoints. It is divided into different sections which guide the reviewer to briskly and concisely unfold the details in decreasing order of importance. As the heart of the review, the reviewer takes cognisance to the strengths, weaknesses and significant attributes of

the text. The reviewers base their discussion on specific standards or principles and includes other sources to substantiate it (with references). The reviewer has the prerogative to decide on what sequence the critique will take.

Conclusion: This is the final phase of the review which ends with the reviewer's main point of the review. Reviewers are required to conclude the review with a restatement of the general opinion of the text. It can also include suggestions and some additional clarifications on the judgment to show that it is reasonably fair. This is usually a very short paragraph. If the reviewer uses other sources in the review, conventional wisdom and professional practice demand that the reviewer needs to similarly include a list of references at the end of the review.

Functions of Critical Reviewing and Writing

Information: Creators of artistic works routinely produce several works of arts most of which significantly mark a departure from some similar existing ones. Reviews of these works provide audience information about them (creative work of arts). Depending on the work, reviews explain the structure, style and form of presentation. Without information about the work of arts, audience would lack knowledge about their existence. In the same vein, creators' visibility would be inhibited. But as Okunna and Omenugha (2002) observed, it is the duty of the critical reviewer to help their audience attempt to make sense of all these.

Education: Reviews educate audience on usefulness of creative work of arts. Consequently, the critical reviewer is very elaborate taking into account that their arguments may even alter the reader or listener's line of thought. In order to achieve this, the critical reviewer elaborately summarises, for example, the performance such that they do not only satisfy the audience member, who was not at the performance. Similarly, the reviewer enhances the overall impression of the performance by augmenting it with something relevant. This could be introduction of some stimulating and refreshing details to those who watched the performance. By so doing, the reviewer also helps the reader or audience make an informed opinion on what they think of the movie, play, or concert they attended previously.

Guidance: This function is essentially for creators of any form of art. What this function means is the ability of the review to provide producers the opportunity to improve on subsequent creative works. This is possible because the critical reviewer points out in clear terms the strengths and weaknesses of works. Creators of future works naturally tend to build on the strengths of already produced works and at the same time are guided by the obvious weaknesses reviewed in their future production. The guidance offered is fundamental taking to account that producers operate in a keenly competitive business environment. They heavily invest time, money, and efforts with a view to surpassing their competitors. The guidance provided by the critical reviewer, therefore, serves as a barometer for future outings. On the part of the audience, reviews offer guidance when it tells them whether the creative work of art deserves patronage.

Evaluation: Essentially, critical writing and reviewing is assessing the success or recommendable potential of the work of art which the reviewer is concerned with (Okunna & Omenugha, 2002). It is instructive to reiterate that reviews are used to informing readers of the value of creative work of art through explanation and interpretation. The reviewer, therefore, presents information that will allow the reader to make a value judgment about the article.

Entertainment: Reviews also serve as sources of entertainment. To achieve this objective, reviewers make use of brightness and novelty of tone and an introduction of appropriate human interest where necessary. Introducing human interest angle requires humour which may be tasking but doing it worth the effort. A precondition to the reviewers is the insistence that they use an expression only because it says what they mean and not because it is simply to demonstrate their dexterity in the use of words. But it is advisable for the reviewer to avoid excessive ornamentation of style and appallingly stale expressions.

Qualities of Good Critical Reviewer

Critical review and writing is a challenging intellectual exercise that demands inborn interest, professionalism, and adequate training that exposes the reviewer to ethical standards and principles guiding their

work. For reviewers to succeed, it is expected that they possess certain basic qualities as discussed below:

Audience consciousness: The reviewers' primary responsibility is to the audience to whom they recommend the creative work of art. They must, therefore, be interested in their audience while writing the review. This is where knowledge of the audience in terms of demographics and psychographics counts. Knowing the audience helps the reviewer decide on language and even the medium in which the review will be published. Elaborating on the need for critical reviewers to be knowledgeable of their audience, Wallace and Wray (2011) pointed out that successful critical writing like any academic writing:

involves anticipating what your target readers will need to know and delivering it in the most effective way. To write convincingly for your audience entails knowing something about who your readers are: what they know, what they believe, what they expect, what they are likely to find convincing. It also entails understanding what their purpose is in reading your work (p.46).

Wallace and Wray (2011) further stressed the merit of being audience-conscious thus:

Awareness of audience is a generic skill. It demands different emphases according to the purpose and destination of the material. However, in all cases, unless you provide adequate warranting for the claims in the conclusion of your argument, your readers will find it unconvincing. If they do, it will undermine the achievement of your purpose in writing the text (p.46).

It is only by serving the needs of the audience based on knowledge about them that the reviewer will be able to sustain their credibility as they are able to guide the audience as they should.

Experience of work of art under review: To the reviewer, experience and familiarity with the work of art is a necessity. In order to have the experience, the reviewer needs to read (the book, novel or play), watch (the performance, dance, movie) or listen (to the music). For the fact that

the review is meant to inform, educate, entertain and influence, the reviewer has to read, watch or listen to the work of art from the beginning to its logical conclusion. It would be unethical to review a half-read book or one not read at all (Okunna & Omenugha, 2002). It is unethical for critics, who only read the blurb and pass their judgment.

Ability to write effectively: An outstanding quality of a critical reviewer is the ability to write effectively. It is through writing that thoughts are communicated. Sadiku (2015) underscored the importance of good writing skills that "writing is a gem to pick. A person with good writing skills is always victorious at expressing himself/herself. The writing skill is the 'hard copy' of your intellectual level or the level of your expression" (p.31). As an aspect of a creative project, whether it is a film, dance, music or book, without writing the flow of ideas will definitely halt shortly beyond the source.

Good writing is not for the novice. It is acquired from long time training and practice. Reviewers, who lack this basic requirement, cannot effectively pass their judgment to the audience as sound as their judgment may be. Thus, critical writers necessarily need to develop a discerning mind. After acquiring some measure of education, they need to develop their writing skills by constant reading of books, audio-visuals like YouTube, and attending seminars, workshops or conferences.

Knowledge of the medium of publication: Works of creative art and their respective reviews remain unread or unwatched unless when published or exhibited or performed. Book reviews, for example, are normally published in newspapers, magazines or academic journals. These are good outlets through which audiences are better informed about reviews. Just as knowledge of audience is essential, so is the case with medium of publishing because media have different characteristics. The characteristics of broadcast media are different from those of the print media. Even in the print media, newspapers do not share similar characteristics among themselves talk less of their magazine counterparts. Knowing the peculiarities of the medium of publication places the reviewer at an elevated pedestal to know the appropriate language and length of the review.

Theories to Critical Review and Writing

Theories are broadly considered as a coherent system of interrelated concepts beneath one or more viewpoints. They mean interpretations of one or several aspects of the social world, incorporating a bundle of connected concepts defined in a particular way (Wallace & Wray, 2011). Theories may be used to interpret and explain what has happened and to predict what will happen. In scholastic landscape, theories help to explain phenomena. They serve as barometers that guide a scholarly feat. Against this standpoint, the two theories that guide critical review and writing, namely authoritarian and impressionistic theories, shall be explored. The rationale is that these two theories influence perspective and criticism of critics based on critics' orientations of these theories. Consequently, the theoretical leaning of each critic comes to bear on the output of the critic.

The Authoritarian Theory: Critics who have inclination to the authoritarian theory believe that there exist permanent criteria that benchmark how to judge any work of art. In essence, the standard or criteria are not flexible but endures in their undiluted form. Therefore, it would be unthinkable for a critic to explore alternatives but bound to operate within the confines of the established standards. Undetached from these standards, the critic uses these criteria and insists for total compliance of every work of art to these criteria without deviating from these standards.

Given that authoritarian critics religiously abide by the dictates of fixated paradigms or principles, they evaluate particular works by historical, moral, judicial, classical and scientific models which already have been accepted as good (National Open University of Nigeria, 2015). Thus, in event the authoritarian critic is to evaluate new works of art, they compare them to their preexisting knowledge of what has for long been established. After all, it is with recourse to the underlying principle of authoritarian theory that lay down criteria provide knowledge which the critic must not deviate from.

It would suffice to point out that authoritarian criticism is feasible only after years of study and exposure to the art of the past. This cumulative knowledge and experience consciously or unconsciously conditions the

writer to strictly adhere to all rules. This justifies why the authoritarian critic has some aversion on criticism. To the authoritarian critic, criticism is therefore, unnecessary and meaningless, unless the yardstick of the critic is visible and respected.

The Impressionistic Theory: The impressionistic theory is a direct contrast to the ideals of authoritarian paradigm. The hallmark of this theory is that attempts to articulate or express the felt qualities of a particular creative work of art as well as the responses (the “impression”) is aimed at showing that the work directly evokes from the critic (Fard, 2016). In reference to William Hazlitt, who wrote an essay “On Genius and Common Sense” (1824), Fard (2016) continued, “you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind ... though you may not be able to analyze or account for it in the several particulars” (p.332).

Critics who are inspired by the impressionistic theory are not bound by embedded principles guiding their criticisms. The impressionistic critics narrates their personal experiences and view-points devoid of strict observance of standards in their evaluation. This is why Thamarana (2015) opined that impressionistic criticism emphasises how the work of art affects the critic. What this means is that it is the impression of the critic patterning to the creative work of art under consideration that are important and nothing else. Consequently, the critics who subscribe to the impressionistic ideals ignores to evaluate a work of art based on how nearly it approaches the qualities of an earlier work. Rather, they are well guided by merits and implications of the creative work of art on them. It could be argued whether the impressionistic critic possesses knowledge of the authoritative critic and the answer is in the affirmative. That notwithstanding, the critic distances himself from the knowledge and acts on his instincts.

Components of Criticism

Criticism is divided into three broad components. These include the critic, the direct data and indirect data discussed below.

The critic: This refers to the critical reviewer, who opinionates on a creative work of art. What comes to mind is their general background. A basic requirement for them is to meet all the minimum standards of good reporting. In addition to this is what translates a report into criticism - their opinions and comments. In specific terms, high premium is placed on the critic's qualifications and his/her interest in the art form itself. In addition, the critics emphasise on their knowledge and comprehension of the art form; their capability to communicate in words their reactions and judgments. Failure to demonstrate knowledge about the work of art cannot earn them media space or time because no editor and publisher can compromise ignorance in their critics and modestly encourage it. The mood of the critics is never the least and their varying mood reflects in their review. For example, their emotional stability – even their temperament and mindset at the time of appraisal - a serious personal problem, an illness, financial difficulty, and perhaps a quarrel with their wife – may put them in varying moods (National Open University of Nigeria, 2015). They should be aware of extraneous feelings not to allow their emotional feelings prejudice their evaluation.

Direct data: This refers to the input or raw material for a review. For example, music as a creative art is divided into three major factors namely material (the work itself and relates to paper /book or costume/setting as the case may be), form (label or parts which relates to genre) and workmanship (effort or craftsmanship expended on the work of art manifested in form of inspiration, originality, freshness, conviction, soundness of structure). This formula is applicable to any work of art being reviewed be it a book, dance, movie, stage play, drawing or painting.

Indirect data: Indirect data deal with the external components of the creative work itself. Indirect data include the intention of the artist or artiste as expressed, place or position of the work in the artist's or artiste's output, or place in history - whether the work has any significance or not. One key motive a critical reviewer must reckon with indirect data is the presence of a label of the author themselves irrespective of their degree of popularity. A word of caution is that their degree of popularity should not be a stumbling block to the critic in making an objective assessment. Each

work should be judged biases-free and this is why merit of the work is a critical determining factor.

Writing a Review

We have established under contextualisation of review that 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, the reviewer has a profound format to follow - integrating opinion rather than mere description. Before the actual review, the reviewer makes adequate preparations on how to go about their review as presented in the next subheading.

Copy preparation: The reviewer, while preparing to write a review, first decides on the creative work of art (and more specifically, the genre) to review. This decision does not preclude what the critic wants to say about the art for maximum impact. If it is music (hip-hop, sentimental, rock and roll, country side, Afro juju), they need to listen to it from the beginning to the end in the course of which they make notes. In the case of a book, be it prose, drama/play or poetry, the task for the reviewer to accomplish is to scan the book with a view to identifying basic ideas. Thus, the reviewer scans and looks through a text with a view to identifying definite segments or important words and phrases that show where the information they are seeking is located (Wallace & Wray, 2011). This is followed by skimming the book which means reading rapidly through those sections of a text that can give the reviewer an idea of the content during which s/he underline topical junctures or themes. Having done with skimming, the reviewer settles down for an intensive reading which is a careful reading of every word of a text from beginning to end. During the careful and meticulous reading of the book, s/he take notes. Note-taking is fundamental to success and this applies while listening to music or watching a play or movie or strolling in an art gallery. It is even wiser that s/he make excessive notes to enable them select the more important items and disregard the remaining ones while writing their review.

As s/he begins the review, use of quotes is an imperative because quotes substantiate claims and gives credibility to the review. Quotes to be used

are admixture of direct and indirect quotes. Davies (2011) is of the opinion that quotes are important:

But don't make the quotations too long, and don't quote too much! You should quote only when you can't say a point better in your own words. You may also quote from the article when you are trying to show the reader that the writer did in fact say something (and you are not making this up). A quote should not normally exceed three lines of text (p.3).

It is instructive that the critics speak for their newspaper. Thus, it is advisable that the critic should avoid the first-person pronoun to make their review more factual and honest account. Against the fact that reviews carry greater weight when presented in impersonal terms, the critical reviewer should key into this idea and allow their review speak for itself. While it is advisable the reviewers use appropriate transitions, they should also not lose sight of simplicity in choice of words. Words help them to express themselves exactly and to convey sufficient distinctions. Their watchword is to avoid flamboyant phrases and esoteric words that could turn off most of the audiences.

Reviewing Different Works of Art

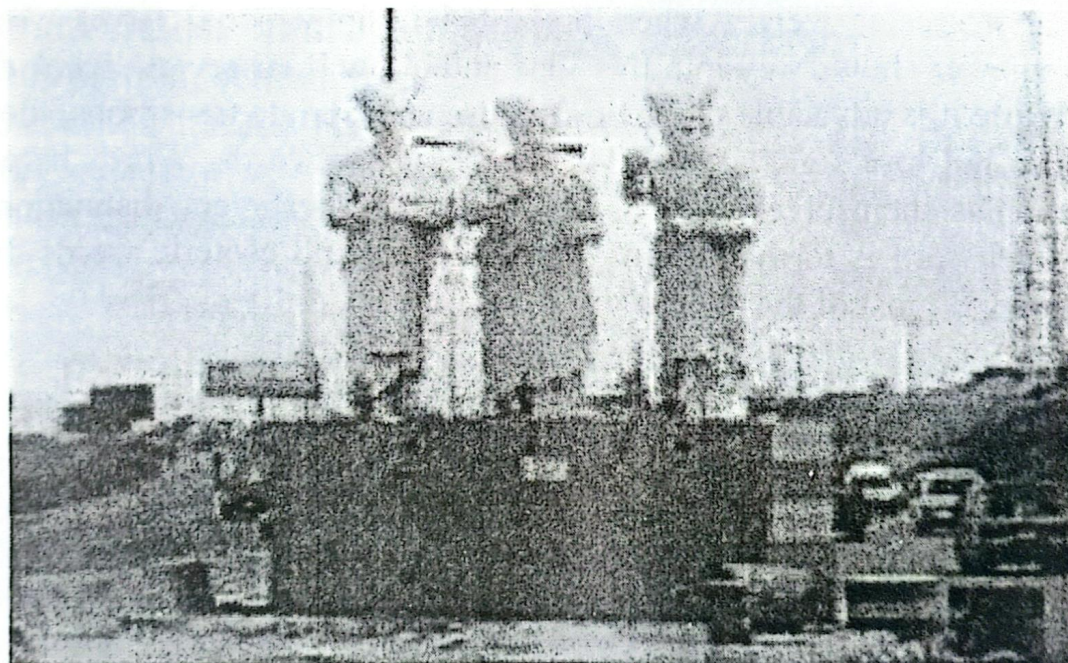
The reviewer is guided by thoughtful questions which are referred to as Critical Synopsis Questions advanced by Wallace and Wray (2016). These crucial questions presented below are all the reviewer will need as their starting point:

- a. Why am I reading this?
- b. What are the authors trying to do in writing this?
- c. What are the authors saying that is relevant to what I want to find out?
- d. How convincing is what the authors are saying?
- e. In conclusion, what use can I make of this?

Embarking on the review requires signposting what the reader, listener or viewer should anticipate. Thus, having resolved on the subject matter, reviewers necessarily need to open their review with identification. This is commonly referred to as Headed Technical Identification which alternative is Incorporated Technical Identification normally written at the

top left corner of the review. The numbers of items that make up the technical identification vary depending on the creative work of art. The following actual and hypothetical examples of how headed or incorporated technical identification appears will suffice.

a.	Sculpture	Headed Technical Identification
	Title	Welcome (Three white cap chiefs)
	Artist	Biodun Shodeinde
	Location	Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria
	Year	1991
	Medium	Fibre Glass
	Condition	Erect
	Owner	Lagos State Government



Welcome (Three White Cap Chiefs)

Source: Photograph by Sola Ogunfuwa, 2007 cited in Oladugbagbe (2016, p.123).

The Three White Cap Chiefs sculpture (*Agba-gba Meta*) is a famous monument in Lagos. The statue, represents three chiefs (*Idejos*) in traditional greeting mode. It was created by Biodun Shodeinde in 1991. Represented in realism, the figures are massive and muscular like works

of Michealangelo but without the master's stroke, expressive with ample anatomical details (Akintonde, & Kalilu, 2013).

The sculpture, which is about 12 feet (approximately 480cm) tall and cast in glass fibre (Oladugbagbe, 2016) is erected on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway bypass, near the M.K.O Abiola Garden Estate, perhaps welcoming travelers into the city. The images stretch their fists forward in the air possibly welcoming all categories of people from near and far to come and try their lucks in the business city of Lagos.

A careful examination of the sculpture reveals that the three manners of traditional greeting in *Eko* (Lagos) are portrayed and displayed by the images of the traditional high chiefs. These *Idejos* are in flowing white wrappers tied across their shoulders. They all have white caps on their heads signifying their official costume. All of them are in slightly varying standing positions. The figure on the right side stretches his fist forward in the air. The one in the middle holds his fist forward, inclined a little down, while the figure on the left hand clinches his two fists together, slightly touching each other in the air. These forms of greetings with clenched fists portrays the highest traditional way of greeting and acknowledging a respected person in the community going by the *Eko* greetings tradition. It also could be said to allusion to the greeting of highly placed traditional personality, especially the king of Benin Kingdom, accompanied with the words *oba atop aye*, meaning long live the king (Akintonde, & Kalilu, 2013).

Mounted upon an elevated and massive pedestal, the figures are imposing and can be viewed from any direction. In all respect, this monumental piece, strategically located is a centre of attraction and truly a figure to behold. By depicting an all-important culture of Lagos in form of respectful traditional greeting, there is no doubt Lagosians will eternally be proud of it.

bi.	Magazine:	Headed Technical Identification
	Title:	The Lens
	Publisher:	Mass Communication Department, Unilorin
	Place:	Ilorin
	Year:	2018
	Pages:	48
	Cover Price:	Not Fixed
	ISSN:	Not Available
	Contact:	masscomm@unilorin.edu.ng
	Reviewer:	Dr. R.M. Adisa

bii. Magazine: Incorporated Technical Identification

Introduction

The Lens Magazine is a publication of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Ilorin, Ilorin which is published annually to commemorate the late Pioneer Head of Department Mr. Doyin Mahmoud. The Lens Magazine that we are seeing today was put together in terms of contents, planning, design, layout and costing singlehandedly by the students of the Department of Mass Communication themselves.

Summary

Generally, a good magazine meets the needs of the target audience in a manner that is satisfactory - that is to inform, entertain, educate and grab their interest. I want the reading public to know that the Magazine has achieved that to a greater extent. In this edition are:

1. 48 pages filled with interesting contents;
2. No fixed cover price;
3. The total news contents;
4. Editorial and opinion contents;
5. Advertisements.

The Lens Magazine has become one of the most widely recognised and prestigious campus magazines in circulation today. Beyond this, it has extended the focus to some interesting things outside the campus. It has proved itself as a leader in campus journalism.

Main Body (Critique)

Although the publication covers a broad spectrum of topics, there are still some full and in-depth stories containing uncommon news events to our reading desire. Most of the news and articles in the magazine span two to three pages at most.

Just like any appreciative disciple will do, in the footsteps of the staff of the Department, the students of Mass Communication Department too have been continuously appreciating the role played by the Late Doyin Mahmoud on what has become the achievements and contributions of the Department towards the development of great minds in Journalism today. This is presented on page 1 of the magazine with the headline: Doyin Mahmoud: A patriot we always remember. May his soul continue to rest in peace. Amen.

The most important part of any story is the details. A good reporter notices things that nobody else does. In this regard the magazine has focused on the aspect of a prominent lawyer and philanthropist - Mallam Yusuf Ola-Olu Ali. Through the Magazine, we can get a detail but uncommon information about the erudite lawyer. His diversification into farming, his passion for football, his children and the law profession, all make very interesting reading for all.

To all parents, the magazine has decoded and exposed some of the lies and cunning ways through which our children in higher institutions drain off their pockets. We need to read that. How many of us parents spend up to #5000.00 on data for Internet every month? Hmmmm, our children doooo! Check page 45 of the magazine.

Yes, sometimes, if you don't blow your trumpet by yourself, other people might blow it wrongly for you. The students have deemed it fit to showcase themselves. So, in this edition, one of the brilliant students in the Department is "The Lens Man of this edition." Yes, still a student but with a lot to learn from. Apart from all these, there are many other interesting, captivating, educating and enlightening contents in the magazine.

On the other hand, and in view of the general belief that, there is no perfect work anywhere, because no matter how meticulous one can be, there will be one or two mistakes. So, in this magazine too, there are mistakes that we should not blame on printers' devil because, if doubly checked, they can be seen and corrected.

Therefore, for the next edition, I will advise that the incoming editorial board should start early, move out on time for news gathering, and let the eagle eyes be truly eagle eyes. Just like in the larger society, there is no excuse for mistakes, inaccuracy etc. So, avoid rushing to the press. Very importantly, also, they need to step up on investigative journalism. That is one area where the society can also benefit from their skills. Luckily, the works of Dapo Olorunyomi (in his Premium Times) are enough to spur them into action on investigative journalism.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this information will help readers to make a more rewarding choice when they pick a copy of the magazine. I, therefore, strongly recommend The Lens Magazine to everybody both within and outside University of Ilorin because it is worth reading.

ci.	Book:	Headed Technical Identification
	Title:	Doowuese Udende
	Author(s):	Reward of Kindness
	Publisher:	Unik Publishers
	Place:	Ilorin
	Year:	2019
	Pages:	2190
	Cover Price:	#2500.00
	ISBN:	9002-209x
	Contact:	www.doowebooks. web.com/
	Reviewer:	Precious Daud

cii. **Book: Incorporated Technical Identification**

The novel, *Reward of Kindness* published by Unik Publishers, Ilorin, which seeks to reinforce the need to recognise kindheartedness, is a 2,190-page book. Authored by Doowuese Udende, the book, which is online, is sold at two thousand five hundred naira (#2,500.00) only.

d. **Music: Incorporated Technical Identification**

“Ocean Songs,” first released by the Australian trio Dirty Three in distant 1997, is the fourth major album of this band and in many ways a turnaround in their musical legacy. Known for magnificently combining still waters with boiling whirlwinds (of course metaphorically), Dirty Three seemed to have decided to slow down a little bit for this album, and transmute their bursting energy in seemingly calm instrumental flows. “Ocean Songs” may seem like a relaxing album, but it’s akin to the deceptive calm of the Pacific Ocean. Nevertheless, in 2010, this album was included in the list of 100 best Australian albums, though personally I would include it in the world’s top 100 list.

So, what do we have? We have 10 tracks—a bit more than 60 minutes. **The title of each song is somehow related to water, seas, oceans, skies above them, or shores around them.** The titles of the tracks are already pure poetry—read them out loud to see why:

- a. Sirena
- b. The Restless Waves
- c. Distant Shore
- d. Authentic Celestial Music
- e. Backwards Voyager
- f. Last Horse on the Sand
- g. Sea Above, Sky Below
- h. Black Tide
- i. Deep Waters
- j. Ends of the Earth

With no vocals, the entirely instrumental “Ocean Songs” conveys a wide range of emotions with violin, guitar, drums, and sometimes

piano and harmonium. This is not even music—it's more like a flow of naturally matching sounds, whose overall shape is sometimes mysterious, or sometimes sincerely open in melody. You may have the same feeling if you sit by a lake at dusk; cicadas, whispering grasses, and splashing water would also shape out a melody.

What I like the most of all about the album is its hidden energy. In the beginning of this review, I wrote about how Dirty Three's usual boiling energy has been transmuted to a calm flow in this album. It is true; however, underneath this calm you can still see its origin, its true source. It's like when a huge, strong man holds his tiny child in his arms for the first time... restrained force, I'd say.

The album is perfect. Restless Waves, Distant Shores, and Black Tide are a 100% match for melancholic evenings spent in an old armchair, with a glass of wine, and an unfinished book. Other songs on the album are no worse than these. It seems like Dirty Three never fails expectations. Bravo!

Culled from

<https://academichelp.net/samples/academics/reviews/music/ocean-songs.html>

Conclusion

Critical review and writing is an essential form of writing relating to creative works of art. Ability to effectively review and write critically depends on the reviewer's preparation, ability to understand the chosen subject, understanding of the structure and flair to convey meaning. This calls for use of appropriate terminologies associated with a work of art.

Learning Outcomes

In this chapter, you would have learnt:

1. The nature of criticism and meaning of critical review and writing.
2. Functions of critical writing.
3. Qualities of critical writer.

4. Guidelines for critical review and writing.
5. Different types of review.
6. How to review different works of art.

Discussion Questions

1. Differentiate critical review from critical writing.
2. State and explain the functions of critical writing.
3. List and explain the types of review you know.
4. Make a review of any creative work of your choice.

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