

WICKED

ACTIVE LEARNING

Wicked Theatre Review Guidance

Many exam boards at GCSE level will ask learners to write a review of a live performance that they have seen in person while they are studying Drama. The purpose of the theatre review is to develop skills to recognise the meaning behind the piece and creative choices, to lead to more critical thinking and analysis as creators. These will be written about in exam conditions so it's a good idea to have really clear notes on the production and also to practice explaining what they saw and experienced. It's also a good skill to have, as you can explain why you enjoy things on the stage, and you will be able to share them with others.


This is a guide to writing a really good review of your visit to **Wicked**.

Some reminders for Learners:

- You are NOT being asked to retell the story of the production; you should refer to specific moments to explain your point, but don't spend time telling the story.
- It doesn't matter whether you enjoyed the production or not. The purpose is to discuss the skills and theatrical elements that were used and to assess them. Although your own opinions really need to come through.

There are 4 areas to consider.

 **STAGING** and **COSTUME**

 **LIGHTS** and **LIGHTING**

 **MUSIC** and **SOUND**

 **ACTING** and **PERFORMANCE**


Let's talk about what we are looking for in a performance. You might find it useful to have a mnemonic to remind you of what to look for.

For ACTING AND PERFORMANCE

 For **MOVEMENT** use the mnemonic

SIPPED

Space, Intention, Pace, Power, Efficiency, Direction and you could add Skill

 For **VOICE** use the mnemonic

EPPA TV

Pitch, Emphasis, Pace, Pause, Accent, Tone, Volume

 For use of **SPACE** use the mnemonic

CLAMS

Contact, Levels, Angles, Movement, Space

Let's look at an example of one of the characters from Wicked to use as a model.

GLINDA

Glinda becomes Elphaba's best friend, but the character of Glinda needs to be a contrast to Elphaba. The actress playing Glinda is full of energy and uses a lot of fluttery movement. This is particularly noticeable when she is trying to attract the attention of Fiyero, when she uses her characteristic hair toss and giggle to give off a light-hearted impression.

Vocally, the actor playing Glinda tends to use a higher pitch and a more rapid pace than the other characters. The lyrics of the song 'Loathing' play with this vocal technique when she describes Elphaba as

"Unusually and exceedingly peculiar
And altogether quite impossible to describe".

which the actor sings all on one note.

Glinda fills the space whenever she is on stage as she wishes to draw attention to herself as much as possible. She circles around the other characters and also appears to be heading away from them as though there is something much more interesting elsewhere. This is particularly highlighted during her interactions with Boq. She is also aided in this use of space by her costume as Glinda the Good witch, as she wears a large pink ruffled crinoline dress which uses up a lot of space all on its own!

And for design elements think about these ideas and questions:

For SET DESIGN

- Stage shape, period, colour
- Naturalistic, Stylised, Minimalistic
- How many settings were there? If there were set changes, how were they achieved?
- How did the set achieve a sense of location/period?
- How well did the set contribute to the mood/atmosphere/theme of the play?

For COSTUME

- Shape, period, colour, proportion, fit, state, style
- Hair and make-up
- Which characters have costume changes? Is there a reason for this change?
- How does the costume reflect the character? Does it do it effectively?
- For **Wicked**, you should also consider the masks and prosthetics used by some characters such as Doctor Dillamond, Chistery or the other animal characters.
- Tip! Take a look at the supporting resources on the **Wicked Active Learning** website for more information.

For SOUND

- Does it help establish period or mood?
- Recorded or live? (Diegetic or non diegetic?)
- Is it important to the plot? E.g., a gunshot
- Do the actors react to it in some way?
- Was it appropriate?
- Was it well done?
- Did it add to the performance?

Let's look at an example for design – in this case costume.

Throughout **Wicked**, the costumes have an influence of steam punk sensibility. They are based on a late Victorian profile, which is quite common for fairy tale stories and pantomimes. So, characters have crinolines and bustles and top hats.

Focusing on the costume for the Wizard himself, the designer Susan Hilferty takes influence from the 1900s when the Wizard of Oz was written and the designs from the film and has built upon that. When the Wizard makes himself known to Elphaba and Glinda in Act 1, he is dressed like a Victorian gentleman, but with a twist. He is wearing a grey frock coat, but it is longer than the historic version and asymmetrical to give an impression of being an outsider and a typical portrayal of what a 'wizard' might look like in popular culture. He has a spotted waistcoat underneath with white piping to make it stand out. He also wears a shiny grey top hat, which gleams in the stage lights. He has also been given a pair of wireframed glasses to add to the effect of someone with learning and wisdom. The overall impression is one of prosperity and power, which is exactly the effect and façade the character wants to create and runs contrary to the truth.

Concluding your review

When you get to your conclusions don't forget the following:

- Don't forget to make your views clear. If you make a statement, give an example to back it up and explain yourself. Your opinions are important, but you need an example to back it up.
- Remember to discuss the actors' performances – vocal and physical skills (Use the mnemonics!).
- Discuss the look of the piece – set, costume (in this case think about the way it's being worn too) and the lighting.
- The sound of the piece – sound effects and music.

Some useful hints

Plan ahead for the exam; create a set of notes that you can revise from within the word count.

Work with someone else; they will have spotted things you missed, and you can also assess them together.

Use "I" in your responses. But back it up with an opinion. Look at the model examples.

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