Writing about Theatre

I. General Purpose
People write about theatre to understand their own responses to a play; to convince others of a position; to explain or introduce new concepts, artists, directors, or plays; to compare plays, directors, actors, or eras; or to connect to a culture or field. Audiences include theatre professionals (actors, writers, directors, producers, technicians, musicians), teachers, administrators, school personnel, students, audiences, and the general public.

II. Types of Assignments
• Review response
  o Recommendation and opinion
• Production Response
  o Evaluation of quality of play or production
  o Critical Analysis (of plot, direction, acting, design, venue)
  o To demonstrate an understanding of stagecraft involved
• Analytical Theatre Essay
  o Form and content of a play (conflict, plot, pace, mood, style, theme, language, symbols)
  o Theatrical history (social/ political / historical/ artistic contexts, author’s background, history)
• Character/ Scene Analysis
  o Objectives of character, action, rhythm, tempo, obstacles, climax
  o Structure of plot in a scene
• Research paper
  o Theatrical history (social/ political/ historical/ artistic contexts, material conditions of past theatre events)
  o History of productions of a particular play
• Audience interpretive materials
  o Webpages and lobby displays with information about plays, playwrights, themes, and production histories
  o Program notes describing the concept and rationale for a production

III. Types of Evidence
• Observation, research
• Primary sources (play scripts, firsthand performance accounts)
• Secondary sources (critiques, reviews, historical documents)
• Textbooks, biographies and memoirs, critiques, reviews, historical documents, posters, handbills, scripts, firsthand accounts, newspapers, photographs, video recordings, museums

IV. Writing Conventions
• Create a “grabber” introduction.
• Include a description of play and production.
• Create a strong, clear focus/ thesis statement.
• Provide an opinion, evaluation, or argument (question of taste vs. opinion).
• Writing should flow and be organized.
• Support an opinion or evaluation with relevant details and evidence.
• Tone, style and language should be “relatively formal.”

V. Terms/ Vocabulary/ Concepts

• Genre
• Tone
• Style
• Diction
• Plot
• Climax
• Dénouement
• Tragedy
• Comedy
• Tragicomedy
• Opposing force
• Protagonist
• Antagonist
• Farce
• Satire
• Tragic flaw
• Soliloquy
• Stage directions
• Blocking
• Realism
• Expressionism
• Gesturing
• Empathy
• Parody
• Burlesque
• Objective
• Tactic
• Obstacle

VI. Citation Style
Usually MLA (Modern Language Association)

Source: