

Four-Step Critical Analysis

Art criticism is the process of describing and making judgments about a piece of art, and using evidence to back up your ideas and claims.

- **Step 1: Describe -- *What do you see?***

- Credit line information such as title, artist, date created, size, medium, location, genre.
- What do you see in the art work? Use objective observations and identification skills. All descriptions must be observable facts.

- **Step 2: Analyze -- *How is the work organized?***

- Focus on how the Elements of Art and Principles of Design have been used in the artwork. You are still collecting clues, not guessing! How do the Principles organize the Elements? Use specific evidence from the art. This will help you discover how the artist might have created moods, messages, or ideas.

- **Step 3: Interpret -- *What is the artist saying?***

- Using the information from the description and analysis, explain what the artist might be trying to communicate. What is the mood or the meaning of the artwork? Make some guesses and provide some evidence for your thinking using the Elements and Principles. Your interpretation might be different from someone else's.
- Answer the question, "I think _____, because I see _____."

- **Step 4: Judge -- *Is this a successful piece of art?***

- Now you can finally express your own personal opinion about the piece of art. Your opinion, however, is still based on what you've discovered through description, analysis, and interpretation, all backed up with visual evidence and the language of art. This is a carefully thought out decision in which you decided if the art was successful or not successful, not necessarily a like or dislike.
- Answer this questions, "I think this work is (not) successful because _____."

