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Capstone Project

Students do not always learn in the same manner. For this reason, teachers need to incorporate activities into the classroom that are original and interesting. Students are usually required to write a critique essay in the English 101 classroom. This is most often a critique of an academic article. However, many students feel that at their beginner writing level they are not in the position to critique academic articles. They first need to develop skills for critiquing other forms of communication before truly understanding how to critique a piece of writing from a professional/academic writer.

Most students are already familiar with the idea of critiquing something. They critique music and movies all the time by saying, "That movie was horrible!" or "That album was great!" Now, the idea is to take those skills already instilled in them by a society that demands that you pass judgment on something and write them down. This starts the ball rolling in thinking and reading critically.

While some class time is still dedicated to the concept of critiquing academic articles, we have also developed innovative alternative activities and an assignment to get students started in thinking critically. These activities involve, instead, critiquing music and television shows and the assignment involves critiquing a movie or album. These activities and assignment include the key ideas that are important in writing a critique essay, however they use material that relate to the students' experiences. In practice, these activities and assignment have had positive results as they have sparked students' interests and conveyed the central concepts to the students.

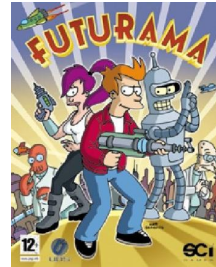
Music Critique Activity

1. Class Discussion
 - a. Start by asking students to come up with a list of five criteria they would use to evaluate a song. Have students write the list down or post a message to D2L.
 - b. Criteria
 - i. Create a list of criteria for a good song on the board. Ask students for their reasons why a certain song is their favorite. The list could include:
 1. Tempo
 2. Lyrics
 3. Beat
 4. Does the song have a message
 5. Does the song tell a story
 6. Voices of singer(s)
 7. Use of instruments.
 8. Etc.
2. Activity Explained
 - a. Explain that the instructor will play five songs for the class. After each song, ask the students to write 50 words about whether that song was a good song based on the criteria they came up with.
 - b. Make sure students understand the importance of basing their decision on their criteria, not on other outside factors. Make sure they stick to evaluating each song based on the criteria they came up with.
 - c. Ask students to pay attention to the song, making notes if they need to.
3. Play songs
4. Evaluation & Discussion
 - a. Start by talking about each song.
 - b. Ask students to read their evaluation of each song. Take time to have three or four students read their evaluations, noting the differences between the students and pointing the differences out to the students. Explain that everyone can evaluate something differently.
 - c. Finally, talk about how this can apply to academic article and how articles/essays can be critiqued in much the same way. Encourage students to think of the activity when developing critical reading skills.

Cartoon Critique Activity

1. Class Discussion

- d. Set up criteria for cartoons such as South Park, The Simpsons, or Family Guy (students already understand the concept of criteria).
- e. The list of criteria is written on the board.
 - i. Examples
 - 1. Acting (voices)
 - 2. Animation/Technology
 - 3. Plot
 - 4. Creativity
 - 5. Moral/purpose
 - 6. Humor
 - 7. Appropriateness
 - 8. Accuracy
 - 9. Etc.



2. Activity Explained

- f. You will be writing a 1-2 page critique of an episode of "Futurama".
- g. This will be completed with a partner.
- h. Take notes during the show, focus on one criterion.

3. Watch "Futurama"

4. Lecture and Activity

- i. The instructor reminds the students about the various parts of a critique essay (intro, summary, critique, personal response, conclusion)
- j. Students then work with their partner on writing a 1-2 page critique paper on the show.

Essay #2: The Critique

The Assignment

- Write a critique of one of the following movies or albums that analyzes and evaluates its various stylistic elements.
- Audience: a group of individuals who is vaguely familiar with the album or movie.

Your Choices:

Movies

- "Hotel Rwanda"
- "Iron Jawed Angels"
- "Super Size Me"

Albums

- "Ray" Soundtrack
- "Ride the Lightning" Metallica
- "By the Light of the Moon: Campfire Songs and Cowboy Tunes" Charlie Daniels
- Or an album of your choice, approved by the instructor.

Things to Ponder

- Do not devote too much of the paper to summarizing the plot or the album as a whole. Instead, I want a detailed *analysis* of the work. Give enough background to orient the reader, then run with your evaluation of the work.
- Break down your evaluation into distinct criteria. For example you could discuss the plot organization, the acting ability another, and the directing for a movie. For an album, criteria could include tempo, lyrics, theme, or others. **Note: these are not the only things you should discuss.**
- Remember to refer to the artist, actors, director, or whoever applies throughout your paper, whenever you include ideas that are not your own.
- Here is a list of key parts that should be included in your essay:
- Introduction-introduce the movie or album with the title artist/director/writer/actors. State the main purpose and the point(s) you intend to make.
- Summary-summarize the movie or album in about 1-3 paragraphs, depending upon your choice.

- Critique-evaluate the movie or album based upon the criteria you have established.
- Response-respond to the album or movie, you may use your own opinion.
- Conclusion-state your conclusions from the critique and response sections.

Submission Guidelines

- The finished essay should be from 2½-4 pages. Essays must be at least 2½ pages!
- Typed, 12 point font, Arial or Times New Roman, Double-spaced, 1" margins.
- Follow MLA format for the layout of your essay. That means that you need a works cited page!
- See the syllabus for the revision policy
- Please bring a paper copy of your first draft on _____ for peer editing. You will also be turning in this draft to me on the same day.
- Please staple a yellow essay grade sheet, your rough draft, and any prewriting to your final version when you turn it in. The grade sheets are located on D2L.

1st Draft Due
Final Version Due