



# DIGITAL THEATRE+

## EVALUATION TEMPLATE

### *Design/Technical Theatre*

Written by Julie Ann Hawk

---

This pack shows you how to write an evaluation of design and technical theatre elements in a play.

In this pack, you will find:

- [Design and Technical Theatre Evaluation Essay – Graphic Organiser Instructions](#)
  - [Design and Technical Theatre Evaluation Essay – Graphic Organiser](#)
  - [Design and Technical Theatre Evaluation Essay – Guidance](#)
- 





## DESIGN & TECHNICAL THEATRE ESSAY GRAPHIC ORGANISER INSTRUCTIONS

In preparation for completing the Design and Technical Theatre **Evaluation Essay**, use **Graphic Organiser** as a notetaking guide to help you to write your essay.

You will be evaluating the technical elements employed by theatrical designers.

Watch your chosen play or scene. If it's a short scene, you may want to just watch it all the way through once without taking notes, then watch it again taking notes as you go. If it's a longer scene or play, you can take notes on the first watch. Remember, you can pause and skip back if you need to.

As you watch, pay close attention to the environment of the production and note specific elements that contribute to the success of a particular scene. You should focus on a selection of the areas of design below.

### AREAS OF DESIGN

- Lighting
- Scenic
- Costume
- Properties (props)
- Wigs/Make-up
- Puppet
- Video/Special effects
- Music composition\*
- Sound design\*





*\*While music and sound are frequently thought of as separate from the other areas of design, they can be described using some of the same terms as visual design mediums and contribute to the overall environment of the play.*

## OBJECTIVES OF THEATRICAL DESIGN

CONSIDERATIONS	QUESTIONS THE DESIGNER ANSWERS IN THEIR WORK
<b>The setting:</b> Time Period Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When does the play take place?</li><li>• What time of day?</li><li>• What year or historical era?</li><li>• What is the immediate environment (e.g. house, apartment or park)?</li><li>• What is their geographic location (e.g. town/city, country, etc)?</li></ul>
<b>Theme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does the play mean?</li></ul>
<b>Mood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the overall emotional atmosphere of the play?</li><li>• How does it make us feel?</li></ul>
<b>Revealing character</b>	What kind of person is the character <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• physically</li><li>• temperamentally</li><li>• spiritually</li><li>• financially</li><li>• emotionally?</li></ul>



<b>Style</b>	<p>Is the production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• abstract</li> <li>• futuristic</li> <li>• realistic</li> <li>• period?</li> </ul>
--------------	---

**EXAMPLE FOR DISCUSSION:**








***All My Sons*** | Digital Theatre (0:00:51–0:01:38)

In this brief scene, lighting, sound, costume and scenic design all contribute to setting the mood and can help the audience know the answer to most of the questions listed above. What can you infer from what you saw and heard? Try to describe it using the design vocabulary listed below.



## THE DESIGNER'S TOOLS

<p><b>Line:</b> a continuous mark produced by a moving point</p>	
<p><b>Shape:</b> when two ends of a line meet and enclose a defined space; two-dimensional</p>	
<p><b>Form:</b> when a shape takes on dimension and depth making it three-dimensional</p>	
<p><b>Colour:</b> colour can enhance meaning and mood for an object</p>	
<p><b>Texture:</b> the surface quality of an object and its relative smoothness or roughness</p>	

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

<p><b>Balance/Symmetry:</b> an element of equality</p>	<p><i><b>Things I Know to Be True</b></i>, Digital Theatre, 0:45:05–0:46:15</p> <p>The symmetry and balance in this scene, specifically at 0:46:15, help us to know that the two characters are going to have some sort of confrontation but that the power between the two is even. Their symmetry of movement also helps the audience to understand how similar these two women are to each other.</p> <p><i><b>True West</b></i>, Digital Theatre, 0:01:29–0:01:35, 0:12:43–0:12:50, 0:22:20–0:22:32, 0:30:10–0:30:28, 0:48:36–0:49:36, 1:03:07–1:03:28, 1:19:30–1:20:05</p>
--	---

	<p>The sound design on <i>True West</i> follows the journey of the brothers and balances the action of the play; both reflecting the action of the previous scene and foreshadowing the intensity of the scene to come. It starts with simple crickets, then as the brothers' situation becomes more intense, the sound of the coyotes in the night becomes more and more crazed, mirroring their conflict and completing the sensory environment of the play.</p>
<p><b>Proportion:</b> the scale of objects as they appear in relation to each other</p>	<p><b><i>Don Giovanni</i></b>, Digital Theatre, 2:25:47–2:30:00</p> <p>As this scene begins, the focus is on Don Giovanni and Leporello, and they appear to be in a normal size room. When the Commendatore appears above him, the proportion changes, making the room look larger and Giovanni smaller (2:28:25).</p> <p><b><i>The Tempest</i></b>, RSC, 1:13:38–1:18:22</p> <p>This scene includes the use of levels, with Prospero on a platform above the others, overseeing the action. At 1:14:03, the action is downstage, with the spirits dancing for the noblemen; the focus of the lighting is downstage, near centre, while the upstage area is dark. This helps with the illusion of the size of the beast in the projections at 1:15:46. When the beast appears, the men are small in</p>



	<p>proportion, due to the changes in the perspective.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Rhythm:</b> ordered repetition or pattern; it can be a physical, audio or visual experience</p>	<p><b><i>Don Giovanni</i></b>, Digital Theatre, 2:25:47–2:30:00</p> <p>We see several applications of rhythm: in the music (note how the lighting in some places matches the stressed beats at around 2:26:35); visually, we also see the spirits appear, disrupting the dark rhythm of the space, Don Giovanni and the Commendatore. The spirits of the women that he has hurt become the strength in the scene (2:29:32).</p> <p><b><i>Indecent</i></b>, BroadwayHD, 0:00:00–0:03:40</p> <p>As the play opens, with the players seated in their chairs and suitcases between them, there is a sense of rhythm in the arrangement. All of the actors are wearing a similar costume: dark/muted colours, a hat or head covering of some sort and a long coat. There is slight variation between the actors, based on the types of roles that they will portray throughout the play.</p>
<p><b>Variation:</b> changing the form, position etc. of any of the design elements, while still remaining similar</p> <p><b>Contrast:</b> similar to variation; drawing the eye to what is different</p>	<p><b><i>Things I Know to Be True</i></b>, Digital Theatre, 0:45:05–0:46:15</p> <p>The lighting transition from warm tones to blue tones (0:45:31) helps the audience to understand that Pip is not actually present. She represents the text of the letter. The contrast in lighting helps us to know</p>



	<p>what is happening in real time and what is happening outside of time.</p> <p><b>Ghosts</b>, Digital Theatre, 0:01:51–0:02:18 and 1:33:00–1:33:30</p> <p>In these two moments, we see the contrast of two very different emotions created by a variation in lighting. In the first moment, the ghosts of the past are in the upstage area and look clouded by the scrim used to create the wall of the parlour. In the second moment, the ghosts of the past have come into the present, through the use of lighting, to make the actors in the downstage area appear as ghosts.</p> <p>*Also see <i>Indecent</i>, listed above.</p>
<p><b>Unity:</b> the concept that all of the designs belong to the same world of the play and appear to be telling the same story; a feeling of one-ness</p> <p><b>Harmony:</b> similar in meaning to unity, the concept that the elements combine in a <i>pleasing</i> way</p>	<p><b>The Woodsman</b>, BroadwayHD, 0:18:00–0:25:00</p> <p>Despite the contrast between these two scenes, there is unity between them. The choice of costumes for the ensemble allows them to both portray their characters and blend into the background when they assume the role of puppeteer. The use of body percussion as sound effects, such as fire, combines pleasingly with the handmade rustic look of the puppets and set, as well as the overall look of the production.</p> <p><b>The Container</b>, Digital Theatre, 0:12:12–0:14:18</p> <p>In this piece, the audience is immersed in the world of the play by</p>



	<p>being placed inside the shipping container with the actors. By immersing an audience in the environment, they became part of the experience. The sound of traffic outside the container, the use of flashlights as the only lighting source, the contrast between the lack of light inside and when the door opens to a flood of light all help to create a unity of purpose for every piece of the production.</p>
<p><b>Visual Composition:</b> the way that the elements of the design are arranged</p>	<p><i><b>Negative Space</b></i>, Digital Theatre, 0:04:30–0:06:06</p>
<p><b>Positive Space:</b> the performers and objects that are in the space are called positive space</p> <p><b>Negative Space:</b> the blank space where there are no objects or performers</p>	<p>In this scene from a production exploring the concept of negative space, we see the effects of light and dark in creating positive and negative space. Prior to the exit of the woman in blue and the man, the audience is unaware of the space surrounding the platform, as it is in darkness. As the action leaves the positive space, we begin to expand our focus and with the help of low light on the chairs R and L, we become aware of the negative space. You might also note the absence of sound effects and music; the silence acts as a negative space and highlights the sound the actors make in their movement.</p>
<p><b>Value:</b> the lightness or darkness of a colour</p>	





**DESIGN & TECHNICAL THEATRE ESSAY  
GRAPHIC ORGANISER**

<b>DESIGN AREA</b>	<b>PRINCIPLE OF DESIGN</b>	<b>WHAT OBJECTIVE DOES IT SERVE?</b>	<b>WHEN IS IT USED?</b>





## DESIGN & TECHNICAL THEATRE ESSAY GUIDANCE

### INSTRUCTIONS

You will now use your completed **Graphic Organiser** to write your evaluation essay.

Make your points clear, thoughtful, specific, and support each point with examples from the performance. Remember your reader is a generally intelligent person, though one who perhaps is not as familiar with the scene or play as you are.

Here are two suggestions for approaches and titles:

#### **Topic Choice 1:**

Select one area of design (lighting, scenic, costume, props, puppets, etc.) in the production you viewed. Discuss three objectives of design, giving examples of how the designer used the elements of design to achieve those objectives.

#### **Topic Choice 2:**

Discuss how three different areas of design (Lighting, Scenic, Costume, Props, Puppets, etc.) worked together to achieve a single Objective of Theatrical Design.

### GUIDANCE

Below you will find specific guidance on how to format and construct your essay. Remember, this is guidance only. You may find that your essay requires more paragraphs to accurately cover the example you are writing about.





**Hint:** Use the suggested structure to make an essay plan before you start writing.

## ESSAY OUTLINE

<b>INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: INTRODUCTION OF THE PLAY AND YOUR THESIS (SAME FOR BOTH TOPICS)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the name of the play, playwright and designers for the production you viewed.</li><li>• Background information: tell the reader what the play is about, without giving a summary of the entire plot.</li><li>• Introduce the specific topic. Make sure to include the three objectives of design or areas of design that you will be discussing in the essay.</li></ul>	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #1:</b>	
<p><b>Topic Choice 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the first design objective that you will be discussing.</li><li>• Describe how the designer in the area you chose addressed this design objective and the tools that they used to address it, citing specific moments and scenes in the play where they used it.</li></ul>	<p><b>Topic Choice 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the first area of design that you will be discussing.</li><li>• Describe how this area of design addressed the specific objective of design that you chose.</li></ul>





**BODY PARAGRAPH #2:**

**Topic Choice 1:**

- Introduce the second design objective that you will be discussing.
- Describe how the designer in the area you chose addressed this design objective and the tools that they used to address it, citing specific moments and scenes in the play where they used it.

**Topic Choice 2:**

- Introduce the second area of design that you will be discussing.
- Describe how this area of design addressed the specific objective of design that you chose.

**BODY PARAGRAPH #3:**

**Topic Choice 1:**

- Introduce the final design objective that you will be discussing.
- Describe how the designer in the area you chose addressed this design objective and the tools that they used to address it, citing specific moments and scenes in the play where they used it.

**Topic Choice 2:**

- Introduce the final area of design that you will be discussing.
- Describe how this area of design addressed the specific objective of design that you chose.





**CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH: SUMMARISE YOUR ARGUMENTS AND  
RESTATE THESIS (SAME FOR BOTH TOPICS)**

- Wrap up/summarise the arguments of the body paragraphs.
- Give your opinion of the design and how it impacted your enjoyment and understanding of the play.

