Critically Analyzing the Work

by Sophia

	WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you'll learn a few strategies that critique participants use for analyzing a piece of work. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Critical Analysis Overview

The critical analysis step of the critique is very important, and it serves the purpose of evaluating a body of work, be it a painting, website, video, or other media.

Critical analysis is a way to break down a piece in order to study its parts and figure out what works, what doesn't, and why.

2. Leading Questions

Leading questions are sometimes posed to initiate a discussion about a piece, so they are meant to generate more than a simple yes or no answer.

These questions can get at topics such as what does and doesn't work in the piece and what aspects could be different.

Posing leading questions in a critique will generate discussion so the participants can consider their opinions and get the chance to speak out about the piece.

	TERM TO KNOW

Leading Question

A question posed during a critique in order to generate discussion or give each participant the chance to speak.

3. Strengths and Weaknesses

It's very important at this stage to discuss a work's strengths and weaknesses to really find out what's working within a piece.

Some of the aspects that are often discussed during the analysis portion of a critique are the visual principles and elements of a design:

- Is it a good design?
- Does it follow design principles and elements?
- What materials or software were used?
- Is the medium appropriate for the problem at hand?
- Does the visual style align with the research and design briefs? Is it appropriate for the audience and the client?
- Is the craft up to professional standards? Are there any technical issues with aspects like color and resolution?
- Is the solution unique, or is it common? Have we seen this done already? How does it stand out from the competition?
- Does the product look finished? Are there elements missing?
- Does it communicate the message it sought out to?
- Does it effectively reach the people that it's trying to reach?

4. Example of Critical Analysis

Let's take a look at an example of an industry project. Below is an iOS app. This particular app is a touch game that works on iPhones and iPads.

You can see that it uses some visual principles and elements that make it easy to navigate. The sense of repetition, use of contrast, application of complementary colors, etc. are all things that we would pinpoint in a critique that may or may not be working as far as visual principles.

Some questions about this design that we might explore during a critique are:

- Is important information relatively simple to find? It is pretty easy to see. A heart might indicate the number of lives a player has remaining, and maybe those three colored dots in the top right corner are the player's points.
- What type of medium is used? This is a digital medium.

- Was the appropriate software used for this stylistic approach? It looks like it was. The graphics were most likely created with tools like Photoshop and Illustrator, as is typically standard practice for applications in iOS.
- Does the visual style align with the target audience? The target here may be children and teens. Judging by some of the comparable games that you see out there for this audience, the design here seems to be appropriate.
- Is the craftsmanship or technical execution up to professional standards? Do you see any technical issues? This is just an image of the app, so we aren't able to see the details as well as we would if we were running it on an actual iPad or iPhone. However, it looks like the resolution is appropriate for the size of those devices, and there are no noticeable issues with the graphics or color.
- Is it original? It seems fairly unique as far as the visual style goes. You want your projects and designs to feel original, but you also want them to feel comfortable to users.
- Does it effectively convey a **planned message** and reach the people that it's trying to reach? Again, since this is just an image of one page of the app, answering this question may be difficult. What is the message here? Is it simplicity? Is it microbes or bacteria? It's safe to say that the app could have the potential to reach its target audience, but we'd need to explore that avenue further.

There is a lot to potentially discuss in critiques, especially during the critical analysis stage. But as you can tell, this stage is a very important part of the process towards the successful completion of a project.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Planned Message
The communication objective of a visual communication; this message should be identified in the planning stage of a project.

☑ **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you received an **overview of critical analysis** during the critique process. Specifically, you learned that a good critique will involve asking **leading questions** and identifying **strengths and weaknesses** in the design. Finally, you looked at an **example of critical analysis** in action.

Keep up the learning and have a great day!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR MARIO E. HERNANDEZ

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Planned Message
The communication objective of a visual communication; this message should be identified in the planning stage of a project.