

# Critical Response Protocol Overview

## When to Use It

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1. Presenting teacher, artist, or student(s) wants a group of responders to deeply investigate an artwork, text, lesson, or performance.
2. A community needs safe space for all voices to come forward at the beginning of a shared inquiry—a class, a seminar, an artist residency.
3. An artist or teacher wants to find out about the prior knowledge of a group of learners.

## Presenter Duties

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Presenting teacher or artist presents an artwork/lesson/performance—their own or someone else's.

## Responder Duties

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Observers describe without judgment. They make connections with the work to their own lives and share any emotional response the work elicits in them. Observers raise questions and speculate on the meaning or understanding they might construct from the work.

## Analogous Activities

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- Shared deconstruction/reconstruction of experience
- Making meaning
- Shared inquiry in Junior Great Books
- Paeideia or Socratic discourse
- Surfacing the “wisdom of the crowd”
- Critique
- Collaborative Assessment
- Understanding Experience

## Related Tools/Protocols

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- Descriptive Review
- Looking at Student Work
- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)
- Artful Writing Perceive Card (Weisman Museum)

# Critical Response



70-85 minutes

Protocols need enough time to allow for meaningful, in-depth observation and reflection. An experienced facilitator can adapt the protocol to the needs of the group.

## Getting Started

10-15 Min.

Facilitator introduces all participants to each other if needed and explains steps of protocol. We can better understand any complex work or experience when we slow down and first pay attention to what we notice, remember, feel, and wonder about it.

### 1: What do you notice?

10 Min.

**Facilitator:** Ask the group to describe what they see/hear without judgment. If judgment emerges, ask for evidence on which the judgment is based: *What did you see that makes you say that?*

**Responders:** Answer using descriptive terms, without making judgments about the quality of the work or offering personal preferences: *I notice that . . .*

### 2: What does it remind you of?

10 Min.

**Facilitator:** Ask the group to consider how they can connect this work to their own life: What do they recall when they consider this work?

**Responders:** Respond with any memory, experience, story, music, or other work that this example triggers. When people access and share their prior knowledge they build more connections to the work. There are no wrong answers or associations.

### 3: How do you feel?

10 Min.

**Facilitator:** Ask the group to share what feelings the work evokes in them.

**Responders:** Describe your feelings in one or two words. People tend to better remember those things that they can connect to an emotion. Again, no wrong answers.

### 4: What questions does it raise?

10 Min.

**Facilitator:** Ask the group what questions the work triggers.

**Responders:** Raise any questions about the work: *I wonder . . .*

### 5: Speculate

10 Min.

**Facilitator:** Ask the group to speculate about what the work helps them to understand. What do they think was the artist's intent?

**Responders:** Respond with what meaning you take away: *I speculate that . . .*

## Respond/Open Dialogue/Reflect

10-20 Min.

**Presenter:** If you presented your own work, reflect out loud on the process, respond to any of the questions raised (if you want—you don't have to answer every question), or comment on anything surprising or unexpected that you heard. During this time the other participants are silent.

**All Participants:** Participate in an open dialogue about the work in question. This is time for everyone present to share new ideas for next steps and respond to one another directly about what they heard, what they still wonder about, etc.

**Responders:** Reflect on how the protocol went and how it affected your understanding. Discuss implications for the work in question. Consider where and when this tool might be useful. Possible questions:

- *What habits of mind does it draw upon?*
- *What is gained or lost by withholding judgment?*
- *How might the combined perceptions, connections to prior knowledge, emotional responses, questions, and speculations differ depending upon the size and make-up of the group?*