

# Writing an Exegesis

*What is an exegesis? Simply put, an exegesis is a critical interpretation of a work. It will also include self-reflection and analysis on what you did, and why you did it in creating your work.*



The term comes from the Greek, to interpret and lead, thus an exegesis interprets a work and leads the viewer in understanding it. Kroll (7) describes an exegesis as allowing the audience "to listen to the author speaking to herself before, during and after the act of creation."

In this process of "talking to yourself" you should comment on not just the practical but also the theoretical "academic" aspects of your work. Therefore, you need to draw on relevant research publications and demonstrate your understanding of the principles and concepts relevant to the particular field. Kroll draws a parallel between an exegesis and a preface or foreword to a novel, or writer's diary, where the writer explains the origins of their ideas and the research involved in shaping and refining the plot. In the case of a dance performance, this would involve consideration of how a dancer researches theories of choreography and movement before and during devising a routine.

## What should an exegesis cover?

Here are some questions to get you started—

- What is the purpose of the work? What do I hope to achieve?
- How will my work fit into a wider cultural context?
- What influences will come from my personal background and culture (values, beliefs, ideas)?
- What works of other artists, past and present, will influence my performance?
- What do I see as the strengths and weaknesses in my work?
- What frustrations do I experience in achieving my goals for the work?
- What limitations are inherent in the process, both technical and creative?
- Where should the work be performed (the physical location), and why?
- How does my work make an original contribution to the field?

As you address these and other factors, don't forget to connect your reflections to the literature

## How can you tackle an exegesis?

The process of writing your exegesis can be tackled in a number of ways. For example, you might prefer to write it simultaneously with designing your performance, or keep a diary as a basis for later analysis, or create first and write second, or do turn and turn about: choose whatever method suits you best (Kroll 3). Write up your exegesis in essay format, with an introduction, body and conclusion (for essay writing guidelines refer to [www.otago.ac.nz/slc](http://www.otago.ac.nz/slc) click on "Writing".)

**See also:** Guide to writing a reflective journal

## Reference

*Kroll, Jeri. "The Exegesis and the Gentle Reader/Writer." TEXT Special Issue 3 (April 2004).*

For more information, contact the Student Learning Development