

Tips for writing a Book Review

A book review describes, analyzes and evaluates. The review conveys an opinion, supporting it with evidence from the book

Before reading, consider:

- Title - What does it suggest?
- Preface or Introduction - Provides important information about the author's intentions or the scope of the book. Can you identify any limitations? Has the author ignored important aspects of the subject?
- Table of Contents - Shows how the book's organized -- main ideas, how they're developed (chronologically, topically, etc.)

Points to ponder as you read the *entire* book:

- What's the general field or genre? Does the book fit?
- From what point of view is the book written?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author's point of view?
- Make notes as you read, passages to quote in your review.
- Can you follow the author's thesis, "common thread"?
- What is the author's style? Formal? Informal? Suitable for the intended audience?
- Are concepts well defined? Is the language clear and convincing? Are the ideas developed? What areas are covered, not covered? How accurate is the information?
- Is the author's concluding chapter, the summary, convincing?
- If there are footnotes, do they provide important information? Do they clarify or extend points made in the text?
- If relevant, make note of the book's format - layout, binding, etc. Are there maps, illustrations? Are they helpful?
- Is the index accurate? What sources did the author use -- primary, secondary? Make note of important omissions.
- What did the book accomplish? Is more work needed? Compare the book to others by this author, or books in this field by other authors. (Use the books listed in the bibliography.)

Writing the Review:

- Include title, author, place, publisher, publication date, edition, pages, special features (maps, etc.), price, ISBN.
- Hook the reader with your opening sentence. Set the tone of the review. Be familiar with the guidelines -- some editors want plot summaries; others don't. Some want you to say outright if you recommend a book, but not others.

- Review the book you read -- not the book you wish the author had written.
- If this is the best book you have ever read, say so -- and why. If it's merely another nice book, say so.
- Include information about the author-- reputation, qualifications, etc. -- anything relevant to the book and the author's authority.
- Think about the person reading your review. Is this a librarian buying books for a collection? A parent who wants a good read-aloud? Is the review for readers looking for information about a particular topic, or for readers searching for a good read?
- Your conclusion should summarize, perhaps include a final assessment. Do not introduce new material at this point.
- To gain perspective, allow time before revising.

Writing a Fiction Book Review

Note: You don't have to answer every question -- they're suggestions!

Points to Ponder:

- What was the story about?
- Who were the main characters?
- Were the characters credible?
- What did the main characters do in the story?
- Did the main characters run into any problems? Adventures?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?

Your personal experiences

- Could you relate to any of the characters in the story?
- Have you ever done or felt some of the things, the characters did?

Your opinion

- Did you like the book?
- What was your favorite part of the book?
- Do you have a least favorite part of the book?
- If you could change something, what would it be? (If you wish you could change the ending, don't reveal it!)

Your recommendation

- Would you recommend this book to another person?
- What type of person would like this book?

Things to Bear in Mind:

- Don't be intimidated by famous authors -- many have written mediocre books.
- Don't review books by people you know, love, or hate.