

How to Write a Critical Book Review

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First thing to keep in mind...

You are NOT writing a book report or a summary! In order to write a book review, you must develop your own opinions about the work. It's okay to disagree with the author, so long as you have an informed, well-developed opinion and evidence to back your evaluation up.

What are the goals of a book review?

1. Explain what the book was about.
2. Evaluate the contents of the book.

You MUST have a strong, clear judgement of the book's quality!

Getting Started

- You'll want to begin your book review in the same way you would start any other academic paper, with a strong introduction paragraph and thesis statement, explaining your stance.
- While the point of a book review isn't to summarize, you'll want to include a short summary **in your own words** of its contents, so that your reader is familiar with the gist of the book.
- Make sure to spend no more than a third of your book review on the summary.

The Critique

- There are many ways to go about critiquing the book.
- You may consider a number of questions when writing your book review.
- Remember, the most important thing to ask yourself while writing your book review is *did the book do what it set out to do?*

Questions to consider...

- Were my expectations of this book met?
- What was the author's goal in writing this book?
- How is the evidence presented in the book used? Is it used effectively?
- Is there any overwhelming bias?
- Are there any distortions on behalf of the author(s)?
- Who is the intended audience of the book?
- Do you recommend the book to others?

The Critique (Continued)

Remember, you don't have to answer every question listed on this presentation. Choose questions that you think will help bolster your argument and aid you in explaining your position on the text.

Conclusion

- As will the opening paragraph, you will conclude your book review in the same way you would conclude any other academic paper.
- Restate your thesis and go over the pertinent points you made in your review.
- Remember to not repeat yourself word-for-word.

It is okay to disagree with the author in your book review!

To Review

- Have a strong opening, complete with a thesis expressing YOUR personal judgement of the book and its contents.
- Include a short summary of the book's contents.
- Begin your evaluation, questioning different aspects of the book you picked and how it backs up your judgement.
- Explain if the book accomplished what it set out to.
- Have a strong conclusion, restating your main argument for whether or not the book's message was effective.

Works Cited

“How to Write a Critical Book Review.” Carleton College.

“How to Write a Book Review.” Los Angeles Valley College.