

Book Review Guidelines



Length:

- One handwritten page, or three-quarters of a double-spaced typed page.

Heading:

- Write your name and the date at the top of the page.
- Skip a line and write the title and author.

First Paragraph:

- Write an introductory sentence that includes one of these elements:
 - a short quotation from the book or magazine selection
 - a statement that gives the book either a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down evaluation, and a reason to support your position
- Write, from notes you've taken, a short summary of your selection; identify the genre: fantasy, science fiction, realistic or historical fiction, biography, autobiography, poetry, photo-essay, magazine story, play, or article.

Second Paragraph:

- Choose one to three of the questions for forming opinions about fiction or nonfiction and use these to inform readers about the strengths and weaknesses of your book or article.
- Use specific examples from the book or article to support each question you choose to respond to in your book review.

Closing Paragraph:

- Reread your second paragraph and decide who would enjoy this book or selection.
- Offer one or two reasons why the book is either a great read or a boring read.

How to Write a Book Review: Fiction



Use these questions and prompts to prepare for your written book review.

- Was the book a page-turner? Why, or why not?
 - ◇ Briefly, give an example of how the events, or what happened in the book, created excitement and kept you interested.
 - ◇ Or, discuss why a conflict or problem the character faced held your interest.
- Was it hard to concentrate on the story? Why or why not?
- Was it boring? Explain why.
 - ◇ Discuss one or more of these issues: the story contained little or no action; the events or plot did not make sense to you; you could not connect with the main character's problems, friends, or family.
- Did you personally connect with one character, event, or conflict? Explain why.
 - ◇ Explain how you and the character are alike. Do you have the same feelings? Worries? Problems? Hopes? Dreams? Thoughts?
 - ◇ Have you lived through similar events? Explain how your reaction to a similar event was the same as the main character's reaction.
- What about this book made you enjoy or dislike the genre?
 - ◇ Think about why you enjoy and usually choose a specific genre. Explain how this book or magazine selection met or failed to meet your standards.
 - ◇ Were there surprises in the story that held your interest? Explain one.
 - Show how the plot or the events contained twists and turns you did not expect. Was the author good at leading you along one path, then suddenly changing?
 - Explain how a character solved a problem or reacted to a conflict in a way that was different from what you thought this character would do.
 - ◇ Did any chapters end with cliff-hangers? Briefly discuss one.
 - Think about how each chapter left you wanting to go right on to the next chapter to find out what happened.
 - Explain why you do or do not enjoy cliff-hangers, using the one you chose to discuss.

- ◇ Was the plot believable or unbelievable?
 - Give one or two examples that show that the plot, or the events that happened, was realistic and could have happened to you or your friends.
 - Give one or two examples that show that the plot was not believable and explain why you feel this way.
- ◇ What new understanding about life, people, or a historical period did you develop?
 - Think about what the author was trying to tell you about how people, such as parents, friends, brothers, sisters, teachers, or relatives, behave and feel.
 - Show what life was like for children, soldiers, the rich, the poor, or adults during a specific historical period or in an imagined world.
 - Did you enjoy the fantasy and magic? Discuss one example.
 - Describe one example of magic or fantasy that made the piece exciting for you.
 - Explain why it was exciting.
 - Show how the fantasy was part of a reality that helped you connect with the fantasy and magic elements.

How to Write a Book Review: Nonfiction



Use these questions and prompts to prepare for your written book review.

- Did you enjoy specific nonfiction features?
- Discuss something terrific or unusual you learned from a sidebar, a photograph and caption, or a diary or journal entry.
- Was the writing interesting or boring? Was it hard for you to concentrate on the reading?
- Point out whether the author included stories or anecdotes to hold your interest. Briefly retell one of these.
- If the book or article is a list of facts, explain how you feel about this, and include whether it held your interest.
- Explain how the author used a story or a photograph to explain a tough concept.
- What new understandings about the topic did you develop?
- Discuss how your book or article gave you more information about the topic. Explain one or two things you learned.
- Explain one change you experienced in how you see and think about the topic.
- With biography or autobiography, did you connect with the person's experiences? What did you find fascinating about your subject's life and achievements?
- Explain what the person did that had an impact on history and/or the lives of other people.
- Explain why you admire or dislike this person. Discuss one to two characteristics of this person to help you respond.
- Show how other people affected and/or changed this person's life.
- Choose one key decision this person made and discuss how that decision affected the person's life.
- Were the photos or illustrations effective?
- Choose a photo or an illustration that you enjoyed, briefly describe it, and explain why it appealed to you. You might want to explain what you learned from it, or whether it showed you something you never saw before or could imagine.
- Did you make any personal connections with the photos or illustrations?