

APSU Writing Center

Book Review Essay

Book Review Essay

- A **book review**
 - acts as a **summary, analysis, and critique**
 - provides **crucial evaluation** and connection to other relevant literature.
 - gives a sneak peak, **personal insights**, and **recommendations**.
 - informs the reader of the quality, purpose, and argument of a book.
 - helps the audience decide if they should read or not.
- A book review is **NOT**
 - A book report, literature analysis, or annotated bibliography as these focus more on summary.

Consider these elements and take notes

- **Before Reading**
 - Author
 - Genre
 - Title
 - Main themes and ideas
 - Argument
 - Writing Style
 - Plot
 - Characters
 - Literary devices
 - Quotations
- **While Reading**
 - Characters
 - Themes/Motifs/Style
 - Argument
 - Key Ideas
 - Quotes

Potential Questions to Answer

- What is the overall thesis? Is it interesting, memorable, entertaining, instructive? Why?
- Does the argument make sense?
- Is the author's style effective, hard to perceive, engaging, and/or powerful?
- How can we evaluate the overall impression from the text (did you find it dull, engaging, fun, or moving?) What possibilities does the book suggest?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the text, are the author's arguments convincing?
- Would you recommend this book? Did the book enhance your understanding of the issues?
- What is your ultimate judgment of the style, format, contents, and historical value of each book?
- Has the author achieved the purpose, explicit or implicit, for writing the book?

Book Review Structure

- Title
- Introduction
- Body
- Analysis and Evaluation
- Conclusion

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Book Review Essay - Structure

Introduction

- Book Title & Author name
- General overview and main points
- Thesis Statement
- **Potential topics:**
 - Genre
 - Representation in the novel
 - Publisher
 - Page count
 - Plot summary

Body

- Critical Evaluation & Analysis
- Transition Sentences between topics
- **Potential topics:**
 - Personal thoughts/Book rating
 - Main selling points
 - Character relationships
 - Favorite lines of text
 - Plot strengths
 - Plot weaknesses
 - interviews/book club questions/outside research (cited)

Conclusion

- Wrap up your key points
- Share your final opinion
- Give recommendations

Sample phrases to use

- The book would benefit from...
- A nice addition to the book would be...
- The only/main/greatest weakness/drawback of the book is...
- This text is divided into four main chapters focusing on...
- Section one of the book details...
- The opening chapter focuses on...
- The book is particularly interesting for...
- This book is highly recommended to...

Example Outline

1. Introduction (Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice)
2. Elizabeth Bennet
3. How Elizabeth is different from her sister Lydia
4. How Elizabeth is different from her mother
5. Conclusion
6. Work Cited

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Book Review Outline

Introduction

Book Title:

Publication Year:

Author:

Genre:

Your opinion of the book: (*amazing, thrilling, thought-provoking, etc.*)

Body: (Paragraph 1)

Brief Plot Summary: (*One key moment/turning point/your reaction*)

Body: (Paragraph 2)

Explore minor principles: (*explain the relationships between characters, arguments, themes, etc.*)

Body: (Paragraph 3)

Discuss your evaluation: (*What did you enjoy? How does this work compare to others of the same genre, characters, emotional appeal, themes, etc.*)

Conclusion

Provide a one or two sentence summary: (*offer recommendations (or not) on the book*)