
Book Review

A book review is a scholarly research essay based on a particular book. Since book reviews are generally required to be concise, they are a good genre for students to hone their analytic abilities. The purpose of the review is to:

1. Analyze and evaluate the main points of a book;
2. Suggest its usefulness to other research; and
3. Evaluate its method, conclusions, and/or reliability.

What is the purpose of writing a book review?

A book review is a scholarly essay; it is not a mere report on the contents of a book. Reviews are mainly descriptive or critical in nature. Descriptive reviews provide expository and descriptive information about the book and author whereas critical reviews provide evidence to support critical evaluations of the book. The thesis of your review should answer the question “What is the significance of this book?” The rest of the review should defend the thesis.

What format should I use in a book review?

For a university course, you’ll likely be writing critical reviews using formal academic writing. Generally, this includes the following:

1. **Introduction** (One paragraph)

One or two sentences should clearly express the thesis of your review.

Questions you could consider answering include:

-  What is the book about?
-  What is the author’s purpose? Is the central theme or argument stated or merely implied?
-  What kind of audience is she or he writing for?
-  How does this book relate to others in its special field of interest? To other aspects of the same field?
-  What credentials and authority does the author have? Are there any special circumstances connected with the writing of this book?
-  What sources has the author used?

2. **Summary** (A paragraph or two)

You may choose to present a condensed version of the book’s contents as a separate section, followed by your evaluation; or you may prefer to integrate the two, assessing the author’s arguments as you present them.

The following guidelines are useful when summarizing:

-  Give the same relative emphasis to each area that the author does.
-  Follow the book’s order of presentation and chain of arguments.

-  Include the key evidence supporting the author's arguments.
-  Tailor the length to fit your needs. Critical book reviews require minimum summary, maximum evaluation.

3. **Evaluation** (The bulk of the review)

This section includes the presentation and defense of your thesis.

Questions you could ask include:

-  How is the book organized? Are the divisions valid? Does the author neglect certain areas? Is anything left out?
-  What kinds of assumptions does the author make in presenting the material? Are they stated or implied? Are they valid?
-  Does the book accomplish what it sets out to do? Does the author's position change in the course of the book? Are there any contradictions or weak spots in the arguments?
-  What kind of evidence is presented to support the author's ideas? Is it reliable and up to date? Are any of the data distorted or misinterpreted? Does the book leave out any important evidence? Is the author's position convincing?
-  Does the author agree or disagree with other writers who have dealt with the same material or problem? In what respects?
-  Is the book clearly written and interesting to read? Is the writing repetitious? Too detailed? Do you have to read between the lines?
-  Does the book raise issues that need further exploration? Does it present any challenges or leave unfinished business?
-  To what extent would you recommend this book? Why?

4. **Conclusion** (A short paragraph)

Briefly, restate your thesis and your main points in a new and interesting way.

What makes a good review great?

Good reviews briefly report basic information about the argument of a book and evaluate it.

Great reviews also:

-  Place the book in the context of previously published works on the same topic or in the same time frame; these may include suggestions for further research.
-  Indicate how other scholars have reviewed the book.

Reference

https://libraries.dal.ca/writing_and_styleguides/style_guides/book_reviews.html