Book Reviews

Purpose
Book reviews encourage or discourage someone from reading a certain book. They briefly summarize the story and lend criticism about whether the author upheld their promise. Basically, if the book is science fiction—does it contain the elements of science fiction? If it is a teen romance novel—does it contain the elements of young adult romance stories? Understanding a literature is a necessary component of reviewing literature. Other factors of a review are simply the elements of literature: character development, language, plot, setting, theme, etc. It is important to remember that a review is a criticism, not a summary of the book. Too often writers get caught “telling” (summarizing the story) instead of “critiquing” (making a case for whether or not it was good and why).

Length
Book reviews vary in length. Though, a good review done for an assignment is usually between 2-4 pages. Reviews for newspapers and magazines are shorter because of the venue.

Format
Book reviews should be formatted like an essay. This means that you need to write an essay with an introduction, body and conclusion.

The introductory paragraph of a book review usually includes . . .

- **the main idea** for a non-fiction book or the **theme** for fiction;
- **identify** the author, the title of the book and publisher (some teachers prefer the book information at the top of the paper using an MLA citation);
- **author’s background** (this is optional);
- **your thesis** (your opinion why other people should read the book).

The body of your essay must include . . .

- your **summary** of the main points of the book;
- your **evaluation** of the book where you explain to your reader why they should read the book or not.

The conclusion of your essay . . .

- **should remind your reader of your thesis.**
- may also review the main points of your essay.

Questions to get you thinking:

1. Who is telling the story? (*point of view*)
   a. The **point of view** is the perspective from which the author tells the story. The person telling the story, the narrator, is your guide.
2. Who are the main characters, and what are they like? *(characters)*
3. Where and when does the story take place? What is this place, culture, or historical period like? *(setting)*
4. What happens? *(plot)*
5. What is the author’s central idea or message? What are the big ideas of the book? *(theme)*
6. How does the author express his or her ideas? *(style)*
7. How do you connect to this book? 
   a. **Connecting** – All good readers connect what they read with themselves and the world in which they live. The following questions can help draw connections.
      1. What do I think of these characters?
      2. What was the most interesting moment or event in the story?
      3. Which characters interest me the most?
      4. Which characters do I like or dislike?
      5. What experiences or people in my life can I compare to this story?