

Steps to Writing a Book Review



You've read a great book, why not share your thoughts? This is a guide for writing book reviews. Following these steps will help you stay focused on writing an evaluative review, not just a book summary. **AND REMEMBER**, book reviews are terse – they are short but packed with information. A reviewer says a lot in a very short space. Your review needs to be LESS THAN 1000 typed characters, including spaces. That's about 170 – 180 words. Also, write in the present tense, not past tense.

Step 1: Think about your overall assessment of the book

Write a strong declaration reflecting your assessment of the book.

For example: “Readers will laugh out loud, even while taking in the poignant truth of what it’s like to be 15, Native American, and wanting a “normal” life, as they enjoy Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*.”

Step 2: Summarize the plot QUICKLY --- one or two sentences. Try following one of these formats:

**Who, what, where, when, why, or
The idea of conflict.**

Ex. “Despite Junior’s dysfunctional, poverty struck family, his never give up attitude pushes him to travel across town to attend a high school with better opportunities than the “res” can give him.”

Step 3: What did you like or dislike about the book? Add details as necessary to explain but don’t be too long winded. One example is good.

Ex. “Alexie’s cartoon drawings are a unique way to keep a reader’s interest.”

Step 4



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Step 4: Provide information about the literary qualities of the text. This may be about three sentences in length. One is usually not enough. Literary qualities you may have been working with include: Plot (exposition, rise in action, climax, falling action, resolution), irony, conflict, symbolism, flat vs. round characters, protagonists vs. antagonists. Others include humor, imagery, setting, foreshadowing or any more you know about.

Ex. “Alexie also pairs humor along side serious insights about his family and his role in it. This family conflict will resonate with teens and keep them reading to see how Junior turns out in the end. Readers should be aware that the rawness of Junior’s voice comes with occasional profanity and graphic references – not too over the top but enough to feel his real emotions.”

Step 5: Write a final sentence that states what type of reader would like this story and assist the reader in selecting or not selecting the book by providing a rating: Not Recommended, Additional Selection, Recommended, or Highly Recommended.

Ex. “Most teens will appreciate the honesty of Junior’s voice as he grapples not only with everyday drama, but also the in-your-face stereotypes of race and poverty that rock and motivate his soul. This is highly recommended for public and school libraries.”

Step 6: Reread your review and check to make sure:

- ✓ You have supported the rating you intend to give the book?
- ✓ Your sentences flow smoothly together.
- ✓ You have a variety of word choices (not repeating the same words over and over!)
- ✓ Check your “typed character” count. If you check the word count, it will usually give the typed character count too.