

Writing a Book Review

HOW CAN I BEGIN MY REVIEW?

If you begin your report with a detailed summary, you may lose readers. Here are some tips for grabbing readers' attention with your first sentence:

Make a general statement about one of the subjects in the book

Many people have been members of basketball teams, but few have been so dedicated to a team as Alan Williams.

State what the book is about, and give readers a reason for becoming involved in it.

In *Happily May I Walk*, Arlene Hirschfelder investigates the lives of Native Americans and takes readers on a journey through a world that few Americans see.

Make a personal statement about your reaction to the book.

I've never wept while reading a book—but *Picture Bride* by Yoshiko Uchida moved me to tears.

Compare and contrast the book with other books.

Of all the poetry books by African-American women that I've read, *Blacks* by Gwendolyn Brooks made the deepest impression on me.

Introduce the reader to a main character.

If you keep a journal, you'll identify with Julia, whose "Book of Strangenesses" helps her to figure out the world around her in *A Room Made of Windows* by Eleanor Cameron.

HOW CAN I DEVELOP MY REPORT?

After introducing the book and capturing your readers' interest, you'll want to answer the questions they might naturally ask:

Who are the main characters?

What subject is it about?

What happens to the main characters?

What is the setting?

What is the book's theme, or central message?

When organizing your report, follow these steps:**A. Introduction**

1. Attract your readers' attention.
2. Introduce your book.
 - a. Identify the title and the author.
 - b. Provide a 1-2 sentence summary.
3. Include a thesis statement that tells the reader what the theme (overall meaning) of the book is and why.

B. Body

1. **Briefly** discuss the book in 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences each.
 - a. Describe the setting, identify the main characters, and explain what happens. Only give the important details of the story.
 - b. Discuss the protagonist, and the central conflict.
2. Evaluate (criticize or praise) the book in 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences.
 - a. Explain to your audience if you thought the book was entertaining or boring, has good characters or unrealistic characters, has thorough information or inadequate information.
 - b. Use quotes or paraphrases from the book to prove your points and provide examples.
3. Discuss 1-2 main reasons why you think the theme is the overall meaning of the book.
 - a. This should also be 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences.
 - b. Use quotes or paraphrases from the book to prove your points and provide examples

C. Conclusion

1. Reword your thesis statement.
2. Review the main points of your argument.
3. Recommend or reject the book and give reasons why.

Checkpoints for revising:

1. Is the introduction attention-grabbing?
2. Are the title and author identified early in the book review?
3. Is my presentation of the plot or main idea **brief**?
4. Do I support my opinions with examples (quotes and paraphrases)?
5. Do I conclude with a recommendation and a summary of my reasons for making it?