

Guidelines for Book Review

HI 201 – US History -- W. Sirmon- Instructor

The review should be approximately 2,000 words in length. This will be about eight double-spaced pages. The heading is similar to the article reviews. However now you can give your review a title. Please place the full citation for the book you're reviewing (Chicago style) at the head of the paper, right below the title. Below the title and citation, write the body of the book review in essay form without subtitles. When referencing something from the book, indicate this by putting the page number in parentheses. For other references, use endnotes. A separate bibliography is not needed.

There is no definite correct way of writing a book review as long as the major parts of this format is followed. A book review is a reflection of the student's opinion, evaluation, and analysis of the book and not just a mere summary of the entire text. It may be personal since the points of view of a student are given as well as their criticisms.

As you write your book review, remember that your goal is to analyze the text by discussing the strengths and weaknesses—as opposed to summarizing the content. You should also note that it's best to be as balanced as possible in your analysis. Include both strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, if you think the book was either dreadfully written or ingenious, you should say so!

Begin with a brief summary of the book. This should take no more than THREE pages.

After the summary is the evaluation of the book. This includes identifying the point of view of the author in a certain event. Issues that may be subject of discussion in this part include whether or not the book has obtained its objective, or the particular points that the author failed to convince the reader. In the process of doing so, the student should be very distinct in separating his own point of view from that of the author's to avoid confusion. Sources used by the author may also be indicated; did he use primary sources only, or secondary sources, or a combination of both.

The final portion of a book review format is wherein the dislike or approval of the student is written, as well as the favorite and least favorite portion of the book. The critical analysis or the opinion made by the student in certain points of the book should be justified by the student and explain the disagreement with the author. The student writer's recommendations conclude the book review. It states whether or not the student will highly recommend the book to others.

Here are some other important elements to include in your analysis:

Date/range of the book. Define the time period that the book covers. Explain if the book progresses chronologically or if it addresses events by topic. If the book addresses one particular subject, explain how that event fits into a broader time scale (like the Reconstruction era).

Point of view. Can you glean from the text if the author has a strong opinion about an event? Is the author objective, or does he express a liberal or conservative viewpoint?

Sources. Does the author use secondary sources or primary sources, or both? Review the bibliography of the text to see if there is a pattern or any interesting observation about the sources the writer uses. Are the sources all new or all old? That fact could provide interesting insight into the validity of a thesis.

Organization. Discuss whether the book makes sense the way it is written or if it could have been better organized. Authors put a lot of time into organizing a book and sometimes they just don't get it right!

Author information. What do you know about the author? What other books has he/she written? Does the author teach at a university? What training or experience has contributed to the author's command of the topic?