

Book Review

The difference between a book *report* and a book *review* is significant: A book *report* aims to inform readers of the content of a book, while a book *review* is a critical analysis of a work. A good review should make an argument and provide commentary rather than just a summary. Keep in mind, you are not developing an argument about the subject of the book. Your argument pertains to the author's take on the subject. A book review should, therefore, include a thesis.

Steps:

1. Read the book for content, making notes on any important terms. Also make notes on the author's arguments and main points.
2. Take note of your opinions and reactions to these points. Do you agree? Disagree? Was the argument persuasive? Why or why not?
3. Reread your notes - both the author's points and your reactions - in order to synthesize the author's points into one or two concise statements (working thesis).
4. Use the working thesis to develop your actual thesis.

The goal of a book review is to decide the book's value for its intended audience. If you were searching for more information on the subject, would you find this book valuable?

Examples of thesis statements:

This statement provides only the content of the book (suitable for a book report).

"Judith Bennett's *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300 – 1600* investigates how women used to brew and sell the majority of ale drunk in England."¹

This statement provides a thesis, an argument (suitable for a book review).

"One of feminism's paradoxes – one that challenges many of its optimistic histories – is how patriarchy remains persistent over time. While Judith Bennett's *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300 – 1600* recognizes medieval women as historical actors through their ale brewing, it also shows that female agency had its limits with the advent of beer."²

Points to ponder:

- Has the author achieved their purpose?
- Have any areas of interest been overlooked?
- Is the evidence reliable?
- Is the argument consistent?

The structure of a book review:

Book reviews are short, usually not over 1000 words.

Introduction:

- Name of the author, the title of the book and the subject
- The author's credentials
- The intended audience
- The author's thesis
- Your own thesis

Summary paragraph:

- Briefly summarize the contents of the book. This should be objective. Your position does not belong here.
- State the author's purpose.
- Comment on the evidence the author provides.

Body paragraphs:

- This is where you develop your argument.
- Dedicate a paragraph to each of your points.
- Be sure to back up your opinions.

Conclusion:

- Restate your position.
- State the strengths and weaknesses of the work.
- Comment on whether or not you would recommend the book to those seeking information on the subject.
- Finally, be careful not to criticize a book for not being something it was never intended to be.

Material quoted from:

^{1, 2} <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/book-reviews/>

Material adapted from:

[Article-Review-and-Critique-rev2018.pdf](#)

[Book Reviews.pdf](#)

