

This book fills a much-needed gap.

Moses Hadas

HOW TO WRITE A BOOK REVIEW

A book review tells not only what a book is about, but how successfully the book explains itself. It is an opportunity to develop and display your skills in careful, analytical reading as well as clear, persuasive writing.

The first responsibility of the reviewer is faithfully to convey the essential aspects of a given work. What questions or problems does the book address? What are its major arguments? What evidence does it use to back up its arguments? The second responsibility is to form a judgment concerning the book's strengths and weaknesses. How convincing are the major arguments? Does the book adequately confront its stated subject? Be sure to base your criticism on reasoned objections, rather than on some variation of "I disagree." Finally, you should assess the book's significance for our time and for the relevant field (in most cases, the course for which you are writing the review). Why is the book important now?

In other words, reviewers answer not only the WHAT but the SO WHAT question about a book.

At the top of the first page of your review, give the following information in the format indicated:

Author, *Title* (Place of publication, year of publication). Number of pages.

Your review should be typed or printed, double-spaced, stapled, and no more than 5 pages long. Pages should be numbered. If you quote passages from the book, give the page reference in parentheses at the end of the sentence, before the final period (no need to repeat the author's name or the book's title). Example: Smith claims that Russia's phenomenal expansion was driven above all by "the collective urge to take a dip in the Pacific ocean" (55).

If possible, read a draft of your review out loud to yourself, or even better, to a classmate or friend, before submitting the final version. This will help you significantly improve your writing style. And don't forget to proofread for spelling and other mistakes! They influence your grade - as do the clarity and elegance of your prose.

SPELLBOUND: A POEM

I have a spelling checker,
It came with my PC,
It plainly marks four my revue
Mistakes I cannot sea.
I've run this poem threw it,
I'm sure your please too no,
Its letter perfect in it's weigh,
My checker tolled me sew.