

Guidelines for Writing Book Reports

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The following is intended to provide basic guidelines for preparing a report on a book of your choice that has the approval of the course instructor. The book report should be at least 2 but not more than 3 double-spaced pages. These guidelines are not meant to be the only way to write a book report but merely a model to get you started. Different books require different expertise and thus different approaches. After you have read the book you intend to write your report on, proceed as follows:

- I. On the top right hand side of the page, provide the following information: **your name, title of the course, course instructor, and date the report is due.**
 - II. On the left hand side, slightly lower than the previous information, provide the following: **author, title in full, volume(s), publisher, and date of publication.**
 - III. Write a paragraph including the following information about the book: **number of pages, whether the book includes an appendix, maps, bibliography, and index; include the cost of the book (if known).**
 - IV. Write a few paragraphs about the conceptual frame of the book, its content, scope, etc. For example:
 - a. area of coverage: Islam in Europe
 - b. subject of study: treatment of Muslim immigrants
 - c. focus: the situation of the youth
 - d. illustration: stories told by young Muslims from Somalia.
- Do not analyze the book chapter by chapter unless absolutely necessary. Instead, explain the following question: what did the author have in mind when she/he decided to write this book?
- V. Write a paragraph or two about the method that the author employs to convey his/her ideas. For example:
 - a. analytical, descriptive, journalistic
 - b. chronological, i.e., provides historical background and discusses the issues involved as part of a development
 - c. thematic, i.e., examines aspects of the subject as separate entities and relates them via synthesis
 - d. comparative, i.e., examines the subject in comparison with similar cases he/she knows about
 - VI. Write a paragraph on the perspective from which the author views the subject. For example:
 - a. the book is written from a subjective point of view
 - b. the book is written from a male, Middle Easterner's perspective
 - c. the book is written from a Western female's perspective
 - d. the author is objective, states facts as he/she sees them

- VII. Write a paragraph about the audience for which the book is intended and comment on whether the author reaches the intended audience. For example:
- a. the book is for general consumption but is full of technical jargon
 - b. the book is for scholarly use but pays too much attention to obvious details
 - c. the book is tedious due to the author's inability to focus on the subject and is, consequently, incoherent and boring.
- VIII. Write about your own background and needs and comment on whether the book was useful for the purpose you employed it. What are some of the strong and weak points of the book? Would you recommend the to someone as interested as yourself in the subject?

As mentioned above, not all books fall under the same categories and not all criteria are applicable to a given book. The chances are, however, that a good number of these criteria would fit the book you would like to write your report on. The rest may come in handy later on in your studies as you read more and more books. Good luck!