

How to Write the Best Book Report

- With Examples

Specific tips for writing effective book reports

Write better book reports using the tips, examples, and outlines presented here. This resource covers three types of effective book reports: plot summaries, character analyses, and theme analyses. It also features many specific examples of how to structure each type of report.

Writing a Book Report

Book reviews can take on many different forms. Three types of effective book reports are **plot summaries, character analyses, and theme analyses**. Writing a book review helps you practice giving your opinion about different aspects of a book, such as an author's use of description or dialogue. You can write book reports of any type, from fiction to non-fiction research papers, or essay writing; however, there are a few basic elements you need to include in order to convey why the book you read was interesting when writing a good book report. **Always** include the following elements in any book report:

- The type of book report you are writing
- The title of the book
- The author of the book
- The time when the story takes place
- The location where the story takes place
- The names and a *brief* description of each of the characters you will be discussing
- Many quotations and examples from the book to support your opinions
- A thesis statement
- The point of view of the narrator
- Summary of the book
- The main points or themes discussed in the work of fiction or non-fiction
- Headings
- The first paragraph (introductory paragraph), body paragraphs, and final paragraph
- The writing styles of the author
- A critical analysis of the fiction or non-fiction book
- Citations.

Three Types of Book Report Formats

A Plot Summary

When you are writing a plot summary for your book report you don't want to simply summarize the story. You need to explain what your opinion is of the story and why you feel the plot is so compelling, unrealistic, or sappy. It is the way you analyze the plot that will make this a good report. Make sure that you use plenty of examples from the book to support your opinions. Try starting the report with a sentence similar to the following:

EXAMPLE

Try starting the report with a sentence similar to the following:

The plot of *I Married a Sea Captain*, by Monica Hubbard, is interesting because it gives the reader a realistic sense of what it was like to be the wife of a whaling captain and live on Nantucket during the 19th century.

A Character Analysis

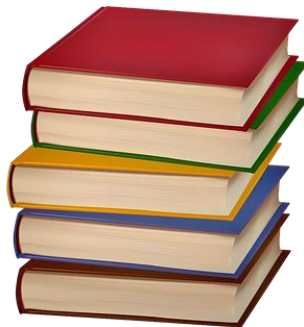
If you choose to write a character analysis, you can explore the physical and personality traits of different characters and the way their actions affect the plot of the book.

- Explore the way a character dresses and what impression that leaves with the reader.
- What positive characteristics does the character possess?
- Does the character have a "fatal flaw" that gets him/her into trouble frequently?
- Try taking examples of dialogue and analyzing the way a character speaks. Discuss the words he/she chooses and the way his/her words affect other characters.
- Finally, tie all of your observations together by explaining the way the characters make the plot move forward.

EXAMPLE

Try starting the report with a sentence similar to the following:

In the novel *Charlotte's Web*, by E. B. White, Templeton the rat may seem like an unnecessary character but his constant quest for food moves the plot forward in many ways.



Themes

Exploring the themes (or big ideas that run throughout the story) in a book can be a great way to write a book report because picking a theme that you care about can make the report easier to write. Try bringing some of your thoughts and feelings as a reader into the report as a way to show the power of a theme. Before you discuss your own thoughts, however, be sure to establish what the theme is and how it appears in the story.

- Explain *exactly* what theme you will be exploring in your book report.
- Use as many examples and quotations from the book as possible to prove that the theme is important to the story.
- Make sure that you talk about each example or quotation you've included. Make a direct connection between the theme and the example from the book.
- After you have established the theme and thoroughly examined the way it affects the book, include a few sentences about the impact the theme had upon you and why it made the book more or less enjoyable to read.

EXAMPLE

Try starting the report with a sentence similar to the following:

In the novel *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, by Mildred Taylor, the theme of racial prejudice is a major catalyst in the story.

No matter what type of book report you decide to write, ensure it includes basic information about the main characters, and make sure that your writing is clear and expressive so that it's easy for audiences in middle school, high school, college-level, or any grade level to understand. Also, include examples from the book to support your opinions. Afterward, conduct thorough proofreading to complete the writing process. Book reports may seem disconnected from your other schoolwork, but they help you learn to summarize, compare and contrast, make predictions and connections, and consider different perspectives & skills you'll need throughout your life.

