

Critical Book Review Guidelines
7th Grade Social Studies
Coach Marsh

The book review is an extended essay based upon critical historical writing. In addition to requiring a demonstration of basic communication skills, it demands a certain proficiency in digesting and analyzing the complex thesis of a book. Although a review should never be a mere summary, some effort along this line is obviously required in order to explore the various aspects of the book.

Bibliographical Citation: At the beginning of the review, but separate from the narrative, give a complete bibliographical citation. A sample bibliographical citation is given below—

McCullough, David. *John Adams*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

The critical book review may include any or all of the following—

Synopsis: Defined as a general review, it should be brief. This is not a chapter by chapter summary. Rather, it should summarize the key points and reflect the core of the author's argument.

Scope: This refers to how broadly or narrowly the author treats his/her subjects. The chronological time period(s) and the topics included are two important aspects, but it is also helpful to know the choice of material explored (i.e. economic, political, religious, military, social, technological, etc.)

Critical review: This section is the heart of an effective review and should use most of the space. Critically analyze the book and evaluate the author's argument or point of view. What message or information was the author trying to communicate? What viewpoint did he/she bring to the subject? State this and demonstrate clearly how the author developed it by using examples from the book. Finally, were the theme and/or point of view convincing and were the objectives achieved? Why or why not?

Recommendation: The conclusion should include some type of evaluation. What contribution does the book make to the field of study or knowledge in this area? Is this work worth reading? Why or why not? Who should read the book? (NOTE: Do not use the first person in formal writing—"I liked the book very much" and "I would recommend this book for every college student" are unacceptable.)

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

A key purpose of the book review is to require the student to evaluate an author's work and to communicate this information in clear, concise prose. After completing the review, ask the following questions—

1. Did I inform the reader of the subject and how the author treated it?

2. Did I evaluate the work in an academic manner by including enough summary to explain the book but by giving greatest attention to critical analysis and commentary on the argument or point of view?
3. Can the reader make an intelligent assessment of the book based upon my review?
4. Have I produced clear and readable narrative?

Plagiarism: Defined as stealing another’s work without giving proper credit to the source, plagiarism includes both “borrowing a writer’s words as well as his ideas. In preparing a book review, put the information in your own words or, when necessary, use quotation marks. When using a direct quotation from the book, simply put the page number in parentheses at the end of the quotation. For example, “Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.” (127)

Requirements

1. Review will be a minimum of 500 words (max. is 525)
2. Use 12 point Times New Roman Font
3. Margins will be 1”
4. Double Space
5. Title Page (include name, date, name of book, teacher)

	Synopsis/Scope 30%	Critical Review 40%	Recommendation 10%	Word Count 20 %
5	Clearly and accurately summarized the key points of the book and offered a general reflection of the author’s argument. (x8)	Thoughtful and perceptive, demonstrating complete command of the material. (x8)	Gave concise evaluation and a recommendation based on a clear understanding of the material and the author’s purpose. (x2)	500 + words (x4)* *anything over 525 words will be penalized.
4	Briefly and accurately summarized the key points of the book and offered a somewhat general reflection of the author’s argument.	Thoughtful, demonstrating good command of the material.	Gave an evaluation and recommendation that demonstrated general grasp of the material and the author’s purpose	475-499 words
3	Gave a basic summary of the key points of the book and offered a limited reflection of the author’s argument.	Demonstrates basic understanding of the material, sometimes resorts to summarizing rather than analysis.	Gave an evaluation and recommendation that demonstrated limited analysis of the material or author’s purpose	450-474 words
2	Gave a brief summary of the key points of the book and offered little to no reflection of the author’s argument.	Shows spotty understanding of the material, very limited analysis.	Gave a weak evaluation and/or recommendation	425-449 words
1	Gave little to no summary of the key points of the book and little to no reflection of the author’s argument.	Lacks basic understanding of the material, little or no analysis.	Gave almost no evaluation and/or recommendation	<424 words