

WRITING A BOOK CRITIQUE

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What is a Book Critique?

A book critique¹ is a critical evaluation of the content/purpose of a book in which you will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the book. This analysis will cover such aspects as the competence and credentials of the author to write such a work, any biases that the author might display, the effectiveness of the author's style and delivery, the appropriateness of the author's use and interpretation of evidence or data, the validity of the arguments, any significant gaps or lapses or inconsistencies in the content or arguments, and any other element that might influence your reading and understanding of the work or its overall effectiveness. You might also comment, with your reasons, on the relevance/usefulness of the book to you and your particular circumstances and/or profession, and how the book might inform your profession.

A Suggested Outline for a Book Critique

1. Begin with a very brief overview (just a line or so) of the book and its general thesis and purpose. Here you are simply establishing the context for your critique; you are not trying to summarise the book. In this first section you will also briefly introduce the author and say a little about his/her competence/credentials to write the book.
2. Here you will focus on the book's strong points and weak points. You will also examine the author's approach to his or her subject, especially in terms of any possible bias.
3. Here (in what is the *personal heart* of your critique) **you will interact with the content of the book**. What did you find most helpful? Why was it helpful? What did you learn from the book? How will you apply this to your own life/profession/practice/training? Were there any aspects of the book that you found troublesome/disappointing? If so, why?
4. Here, if appropriate, you might include a brief paragraph or two that compares/contrasts this book with other significant works in the genre. How does this book contribute to that area?
5. Conclude your critique with a brief summary of your findings, particularly in terms of the book's impact on YOU. You might also include a brief recommendation about who might benefit from reading the book.

¹ A book critique is not to be confused with fault-finding or criticism. Rather, it is an objective evaluation of a book, in which you analyse the overall impact or worth of the book, identifying both its strong points and weak points. To *analyse* a book is to do two things: firstly, you will identify the significant features of the book (the writing style, the validity of its arguments, its comprehensiveness, its coherence, its relevance and currency, etcetera) that influence the overall impact and worthiness of the book; and, secondly, you will carefully examine/assess those features to see how effectively they perform.