Book Review Worksheet

This worksheet will help you gather the information necessary to write a review essay. Write down the requested information, and follow the writing instructions to complete the assignment. It should generally follow the traditional essay form, with a thesis (topic paragraph), body (arguments or evidence), and conclusion.

To find a book on US history, look in the Library for the books that have numbers starting with E or F. For more details about finding a certain type of book, ask a librarian for help.

Keep in mind: A book review is not just a book report. It includes both a description of the work and an evaluation of its merits. Your opinion needs to be supported by evidence, often in the form of a brief quotation from the book.

Place a header with your name, class, and date at the top of the first page.

Use bibliographic information as a title, usually in the following form:

Author’s name. Title: subtitle. Place: Publisher, copyright.

Your first (thesis) paragraph should include the following information:

What is the main idea of the book? Use this as the core of your paragraph. Include the author’s name and the title of the book.

Write a one or two page critical summary of the book.

Use the information you have collected as an aid to developing the body of your review essay.

However, avoid giving a chapter-by-chapter replay of the book in your review. Try to give a general description.

Points to consider including in the body of your essay, along with reasons or evidence to support them. You may not want them all; use your judgement on this.

Do you strongly agree or disagree with any points in the book?
Are there serious errors?
Are there new and unusual ideas?
Use one or two brief quotations to illustrate your points.

Other information that may be useful in some cases:

Is the book □ Fiction □ Biography □ Non-fiction?
# _______ pages.
Appendix, maps and illustrations, etc?
Author: brief biography, other works.

The conclusion of your review essay will point out the way in which the items you
included in the body will come together to support your views on the book. It must contain a statement relating to the value or usefulness of the book.

Things to avoid:

Rating the book by number scores, stars, etc. (I give this book a thumbs-up, a grade of 85, 3 out of 5 stars, etc.)

Discussing your personal feelings (I hated this book) as opposed to ideas (This book failed to make its case for three reasons...)

Referring to adults by a given name, except where it is necessary to avoid confusion between two persons with the same last name. [Dr. King, not Martin]

Beginning your last paragraph with the words “In conclusion...”

Calling any big book a “novel.” If you don't know it, look up the definition of “novel.”