

Book Review Guidelines

The book review can be written as either an academic 'dry' essay or a 'vivid' Internet article for a larger audience. Despite differences, there are some general rules to follow.

1. When you want to make it personal, don't write about yourself, your family, and tastes in music or food. Write about the book.
2. Don't give information just because you have it. Don't make general statements that lead to nothing. Wasting your reader's time is a crime (that will be prosecuted within A-F grade system).
3. The essay must say something to your reader. It's not a description on a book per se. You pick only the most important issues and address them to make one solid point about the book.
4. Never say that you don't know or didn't know about the subject. You write a review to inform about the things you understand.
5. Know what you want to say about the book before you start writing. Have a plan. You need to see connections between paragraphs and see how they gradually prove your point.

Introduction

The title and the opening paragraph must catch the reader's attention. This is not the first part you write. This is the first thing people read. Therefore, you have to introduce the subject and show its relevance to the audience. In the introduction you say about the point you are going to make.

Here are some good examples of how to start an essay.

The book *In Lithuanian Wood* could be misunderstood to talk about problems that emerged from the Soviet nations of the Eastern Europe after the Totalitarian regime collapsed in the year 1990.

The book *A Market out of Place?* is about the economy and the social reconstruction of Lithuania after the fall of communist Russia in 1989 and the observation of the quick transition from socialism to capitalism within such a short period of time.

Between Shades of Gray is a book about a Lithuanian family's struggle during the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin.

The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania written by Stanley Vardys is a complex text regarding the Lithuanian Catholic church and Lithuanian nationalism during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.

Here are the introductions that aren't working well:

The novel *The Forest of Gods* was written by Balys Sruoga. Sruoga was a Lithuanian professor, poet, playwright, dramatist, and critic.

These are minor details that you can leave for an encyclopedia. Focus on the subject.

In this book the author, Ellen Cassedy sets up every chapter in different parts to prepare us what she will be talking about or who she will be interviewing.

This sounds too general and doesn't give any sense of what the book is about. Moreover, any academic book starts with such an overview.

You can use different tactics to attract readers. The following paragraph, for instance, puts you in a very familiar situation, so it creates a bond between you and the character of the story.

Imagine your life as a child. The nonchalant world you exist in is so small and delicate because you have not had the chance to reach outside of your boundaries. There is war, famine, sickness, and corrupt people out there, but luckily you are lovingly shielded away from all of it by your parents. There is no reason for a child to know about such things because most of the time they cannot comprehend such large complicated concepts that the world bestows on everyone else. With age comes wisdom and a multitude of paths that one takes and learns from which eventually allows them an understanding of themselves and all the misfortunes in the world in front of them. What happens when an innocent child is forced to grow up just too fast? What happens when they are forced to endure death in the family, sickness, starvation, torture, and being overworked? All of this grief is a lot to handle for anyone, but especially for a fifteen year old. In the novel, *Between the Shades of Gray*, by Ruta Sepetys, we will explore concepts and thoughts throughout the whole story about some of the main characters.

Body of the essay

The first paragraph after the introduction may include a brief summary of the story. Don't spend all 5 pages to retell the book.

Tell about the most interesting and important parts of it in the way that it builds an overarching statement. Your topic sentences must be a brief summary of what you are going to say in the paragraph.

Here are good examples of the condensed topic sentences:

By forcing a communist ideology among populations within the nations Soviets were occupying, they had created an internal enemy that they could not overcome.

The Lithuanians were so disrupted by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia that after the several invasions their lives started to decline slowly.

Here are less successful ways to phrase your topic sentences:

This novel really opened my eyes to the activities of the Holocaust and I found it very interesting in many different ways.

This could be a topic sentence for your summary but not for a paragraph on Holocaust.

National symbols are important not only in the United States, but also in Lithuania.

It is true for any state in the world, isn't it?

Delete truisms right after you put them on the paper:

While making major communication and building new relationships, Lithuanians do not prefer the use of modern methods of communication like use of phones and emails.

Lithuanian culture promotes love and peace.

There were many other small depictions with large meaning in this entire novel.

Another main theme is nature. Milosz described everything in such details to entail that not only did he catch everything but so did the reader.

Here is a good example of how you write a paragraph.

The incredible numbers of Lithuanians immigrating to the United States were largely a reaction to the persuasions of American industry.

The coal industry took the biggest portion of the large Lithuanian labor force. The mining industry not only occupied the mines, but also was responsible for building the railways to transport its contents throughout a country deep into

The topic sentence perfectly sums up the main point expressed in the paragraph.

an industrial age. Employees of the coalmines who were from countries of with a quickly emigrating population were encouraged by their employers to write home to tell tales of prosperity and opportunity. **The mining companies credited this propaganda for spurring the arrival of immigrants from Slovakia, Galicia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Poland Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania.** (...) Emigrants were determined to leave their homelands despite the plight of Russian government and frequent criminalization of emigrating.

The details come later to illustrate the point made in the topic sentence.

Summary

It is good to address the question of who's your audience once again. Explain why people will benefit from reading the book. 'I would recommend this book to people...' is a good opener. Once again underline the point you are making about the chosen book.

NB. The examples are taken from the student's works with minor shortenings.