

Book Review/Report



Levels 5, 8

Writing Aids includes helpful companion sections to this one: “Finding the Main Idea” and “Summarizing.” Your student may also need to review “Narrative Writing.”

Introduction

This assignment is another exercise in summary writing. The student reads a book and then writes either a review (where he critiques the book) or a report (where he tells what the book was about). This assignment is designated for two learning levels: 5 and 8. There is a significant difference of sophistication between these two levels, so be sure to refer to the appropriate Talking Points for each level before proceeding. For either a review or a report, below are general instructions.

Prewriting

Determine whether you will emphasize reviewing or reporting in the week's assignment. In either case, the student should start by summarizing the book.

- * Start by showing the student the summaries of books on the outside covers (back) or inside fly leaves. These will give him an idea of how an entire book can be summed up quickly, in a single paragraph. If he doesn't see such examples, the concept may boggle his mind.
- * Next, ask the student to outline or cluster ideas for his summary. (Typically, you'll need to help Level 5 students with prewriting their summarizations.)
 - The student should briefly outline the main themes of the book.
 - You might use our Story Map supplement to help him briefly outline the plot as well.
 - If the student is writing a review, have him also jot down notes about his opinion of the strengths and weaknesses of the book and one or two lines about why others might find it a good read.
- * Finally, work with the student to develop an overall plan for putting the above components of the paper together.
 - Reviews should generally seem more interactive: the author is giving his opinion of the book to the reader, as well as informing him of the book's contents.
 - Thus, if you think of a five-paragraph paper, the **introduction** would give the book's title and author, set out the criteria by which the review author judged the book, and contain the overall impression the review author has of the book.
 - The three **body paragraphs** would explain the content (story) of the book and perhaps discuss writing style and characterization.
 - The **conclusion** would then return to the theme of why or why not the review author recommends the book.
 - Reports are a little simpler and more straightforward.
 - The **introduction** simply introduces the book in an interesting way. It gives the reader the title and author of the book and then introduces the rest of the report's contents by telling the reader, for instance, that the report will discuss the plot, characters, and theme of the book.
 - The three paragraphs that constitute the **body** of the report then share the report author's summary of the book's contents.
 - The **conclusion** of a report should contain the report author's opinion of the book, and whether or not he recommends the book to others.

Drafting the Book Report or Book Review

Once the prewriting is done, drafting should be fairly straightforward. Have your student think about using clear and interesting words to convey his message. Because we are Christians, your student's words should be gracious and kind, even if he did not like the book he is showcasing.



Editing

As always, students should self-proof their work, then hand it to you for your inspection.

- * Your input for this project should first focus on summary skills. How well did your student capture the themes and plot of the book?
- * If it's a report, does his account flow well from paragraph to paragraph, leading the reader clearly from idea to idea?
- * If it's a review, by what criteria did the student judge this book? Were these valid criteria, and did he make his criteria clear in his introduction?
- * How clearly and graciously did he convey his opinion of the book?
- * In either a report or a review, your student will employ summary skills and some narration as well. Therefore, transition words will be important. Be sure to look for these and help your student to smooth out any rough areas.

Polishing and Presenting

Once the review or report is edited, the student should enter changes and print a fresh copy. Help him to think about ways that his review or report can find a wider audience.

- * Would he like to form a book club? If there are others his age using *Tapestry*, perhaps they could team up and meet once a quarter to read their book reviews or reports aloud? Alternately, you could set up a free website for them to publish reviews or reports in an ongoing way.
- * Could you use some of the above ideas in your local support group?
- * Perhaps your state organization publishes a newsletter. How about suggesting that they add a book review/report section to that publication?
- * Don't forget our Gallery pages! They make a great place to mount any kind of student writing.