

How to Write a Book Review:

In defending his seminal work *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche quipped, "Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows." I, however, am more optimistic. A book can also teach—is that not why we read them, along with the pleasure derived from doing so?

To review means to see again. So a book review is a chance to summarize what one has learned from reading a book, as well as to evaluate it based upon one's knowledge and critical intelligence.

The first requirement is actually to read the book. That means reading it carefully, not simply skimming it.

The next injunction is that the reviewer state, more or less up front, what the book's author sees as his or her task.

As part of the description of the authors' intentions, we need also to be informed, as neutrally as possible, how the author carried out the task. How do they organize their material? What resources do they bring to their exposition? How do they write? There are many such questions that a thoughtful reader of a review might like to have answered to guide to whether she or he wishes to read the book.

In the end the reviewer has the right, and the duty, to stand back and evaluate the particular approach and execution adapted by the book's author. As long as the author receives a fair hearing the reviewer can be sharp or benign, highly critical or laudatory.

By the end of a well-constructed review, the reader of the review will thus have a fair chance to review the reviewer as well as the book under review.

Book Review Format:

Record the preliminary information: List the complete bibliographical citation for the book (full title, author, place, publisher, date of publication, edition, pages, special features, and ISBN) at the top of the page. Then write your review.