

Book Report Guidelines – 5 Paragraph Essay

Heading, Title, and General Format

Identify student, class, assignment, due date, and page number as illustrated in the grading paradigm below.. Put the last name and page number in the header function of your computer.. Create an original title, uniquely relevant to this essay (not the book's title). Center it on the page, not underlined, below the heading and above the first paragraph. Double space and use a legible 12-point font and one-inch margins throughout. Staple multiple pages together.

Introduction (first paragraph)

Begin with a catchy opening statement. Go on to identify the book's title (underlined or italicized), author, type of work (eg. historical novel, not "fictional novel" or just "book"—all novels are fictional, all novels are books), genre (look it up!), and major themes. Briefly introduce the main characters and describe the setting (time and place). If you wish, you may also mention other titles by the author and /or pertinent details of the author's background. The last sentence of the introduction **MUST** be a thesis statement that previews the ideas you will explore in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. Be certain that there is a direct connection between this statement and the topic sentence of each of your three body paragraphs (below).

Synopsis (second paragraph)

Begin this paragraph with the book's main idea in a single topic sentence. Go on to present a complete but concise synopsis of the book in one paragraph. This is a brief sketch of what happens: the beginning, the middle, and the end. Think about the major conflict, the rising action, the climax of the story, and the resolution. Keep it brief.

Observations (third and fourth paragraphs)

In each of these two paragraphs, narrow the discussion to a significant topic. Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that makes an observation about a particular aspect of the book: a character, a feature of the plot, an element of style, or a theme. Go on to support and expand upon your idea with specific examples, incidents, details, and at least one relevant quote from the book. Write in flowing sentences, weaving these elements from the book into your writing, not simply listing them. (Cite the page number for each quote used.) End each paragraph with a wrap-up sentence that ties your examples and details together in support of your topic sentence; show how they add up to your main point, what they have in common. The paragraph that makes the most important point should be the fourth one, right before your conclusion.

Conclusion (fifth paragraph)

Begin this paragraph with your reaction to this piece of literature, your response to it as a reader. Avoid writing, "I think," "I feel," "I believe," or "In my opinion," but do try to express how the work has affected you, deepened your understanding, alerted or enlightened you (or even a wider audience) in some way. Go on to integrate the themes of your three body paragraphs and your essay's unique title, revealing how they relate to one another. End with a thoughtful closing statement: a concluding remark for the whole report. This could be your most important evaluative point, an intriguing twist on your title, a fitting quote, or a compelling question.

Things to be Careful of with Book Reports

1 – Always double space. The teacher needs room to make comments.

2 – Always underline book titles (or italicize, if you have a computer). Book titles never, never, never go in quotation marks. Other things that are underlined are the names of newspapers, magazines, movies, operas, record albums, etc.

3 – Don't switch tenses in the middle of a report. Stick with either the present or the past. Too many students switch tenses within the same sentence; e.g. "The girl fell down but Dr. Cradock comes and helps her."

4 – Watch out for run-on sentences that just go on and on and even if your idea changes to something else that might be in another paragraph, such as a story about Joan of Arc, you just can't stop that sentence from running all up and down the page, which, by the way, should always be double spaced.

5 – Fragments. Don't. Writing in fragments, which don't have a subject and a verb. Causing much confusion in the reader. Because your sentences need to breathe, and have a beginning, middle, and end.

or

Don't write in fragments. Be sure that every sentence has a subject and a verb. In addition, a sentence will only under special circumstances begin with "because."

6 – Always proofread everything you have written. Expect to write a first draft. Then expect to read it and edit it – cutting out unnecessary words, fixing spelling, etc. Then write the new draft and proofread it. If you find more errors, or areas that need fine-tuning, rewrite the paper again. **DON'T EXPECT YOUR FIRST DRAFT TO BE THE FINAL DRAFT – IT NEVER IS!**