

How to Write a Book Report



by Jessica K.

Master in English Literature
Queen's University
QEA English Teacher

Book reports are one of the most common assignments given in English class. You will see them throughout elementary school and throughout high school, so it's important to feel comfortable with them. If you don't know what to include in a book report, don't worry. I have outlined three areas that you should focus on in order to write a successful one.

1. Discuss Character Development

In literature, there are dynamic characters and static characters. Dynamic characters are ones who evolve over the course of the text, while static characters stay the same. Pick 2-3 of the most significant characters in your book and make a chart for each of them. Write down 5-6 of their early traits (e.g. loyal, naive, deceitful) and then track the evolution of these traits throughout the book. After you have introduced your book, write a paragraph about what you discovered in your chart. What traits do the main characters possess in the beginning? How do they change by the end, if at all?

2. Focus on Common Themes

Themes are the key subjects or ideas explored in a literary work. After you are finished writing about character development, brainstorm a list of common themes that are relevant to your chosen novel. You could talk about such themes as "masculinity," "death and loss," "appearance vs. reality," or "identity" - there are lots to choose from. Pick just one or two common themes, and then write a paragraph on why each theme is important to your novel. Include examples (or actual quotations, if you can) of where these themes come up - your teacher likes to see actual evidence.

3. Incorporate your Opinion

In a book report, it is important to include your own opinion. Unlike an essay, you are allowed to use the word "I" and are encouraged to talk about what you enjoyed in the book, as well as what you did not enjoy. Was the story believable? Were you able to connect to it on a personal level? Which parts or characters frustrated you? Was the ending powerful, or disappointing? What lesson or message did you take away from it? Make sure to end your report with a recommendation: would you want others to read this book? Why or why not?