

## Reviewer Guidelines

The ideal book review should be approximately 250 words in length-

- a. Summarizing the content of the book
- b. Explaining your opinion or response to the book
- c. Gauging its appeal or lack of value to a general or specific teen audience

Each review will contain the following major elements:

1. A plot summary for fiction books and a content summary for nonfiction books.
  - a. **In fiction**, the summary should be the “bones” of the story identifying main characters and what those characters seek to accomplish. To find the “bones” of the story, first try writing a one sentence annotation defining the protagonist and his or her challenge, significant others, and setting of the story. Then expand that sentence with a few details, to bring the story alive to someone who has not read the book. Do not give a blow by blow retelling of every fact in the story.
  - b. **In nonfiction**, give an overview of the main topic of the book. This is not a listing of the table of contents or a list of the chapter headings. Select the highlights of the book conveying the author’s viewpoint and philosophy of a subject with one or two well-chosen examples. *Do not overuse author quotes or exact phrases from the book.*
  - c. **In short story collections**, identify at least some of the authors included and the titles of the stories that they have contributed. Include a one sentence summary of a few of the more interesting out of the ordinary stories in the collection. Make sure to add some evaluative sentences to the content summary such as the style of writing and interest for teens who read science fiction, fantasy etc.
2. The critical evaluation or appraisal of the book is the most important part of your review.
  - a. Does the author fulfill the “promise” of what he or she set out to do, which is usually outlined in the first few chapters of a fiction book and stated in the introduction of a non-fiction book. Comment on the writing style, the flow of the plot or information, and the author’s expertise or feel for a subject. Are there flaws in the story? Does the content of the book outweigh the flaws?
  - b. Does another book on a similar topic do a better job at presenting the subject than the book you read? If you reference another book that deals with a similar topic make sure to mention the title and author of that book.
  - c. What is the book’s teen appeal? Will teen readers feel involved in the book or topic? What is the audience- middle school or high school?
  - d. Is the title worth having in the library collection?
3. Reviews should not contain judgmental language when describing a sensitive subject. It is not your task to decide the “appropriateness” of a book or convey the presence of certain material as a warning to others not to read the book.
4. Reviews should not need extensive editing for spelling, grammar, content, understanding, or style. **Proofread your work!**