

Writing a Book Review of a Nonfiction Book

Assignment: You are going to write a book review of a nonfiction book or a section of a nonfiction book. If you are reading a narrative nonfiction book, such as How They Croaked or Chew on This, you can choose one section or chapter to focus your review on. If you are reading a picture/photo-based nonfiction book, such as Inventions or Feats and Failures, you need to do the review on the book as a whole. (There are two example book reviews at the end of this document.)

Guiding Questions and Ideas:

When reviewing a book of nonfiction, you will want to consider these questions:

- What was the author's purpose in writing the book? Did the author accomplish that purpose?
- Who is the target audience for the book?
- What do you think is the book's greatest value? What makes it special or worthwhile?
- Are the facts shared accurate?
- Is the book interesting and hold your attention?
- Would it be a useful addition to a school or public library?
- If the book is a biography or autobiography, how sympathetic is the subject?
- Is it easy to understand the ideas?
- Are there extra features that add to the enjoyment of the book, such as maps, indexes, glossaries, or other materials?
- Are the illustrations helpful?

Reviewing a book can be fun, and it's not hard at all. Just ask yourself these questions:

- Do you think other people would like it?
- Did you learn something from the book?
- Did you think it was interesting?
- Would you want to read it again?
- Would you want to read other books by the same author or about the same subject?
- What was your favorite part?

GENERAL TIPS & IDEAS: Use a few quotes or phrases (keep them short) from the book to illustrate the points you make about the book. If there are illustrations or photographs, be sure to comment on those. Are they well done? Has the illustrator/photographer done other well-known books?

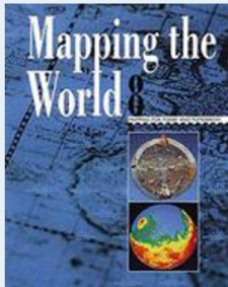
Make sure you include a conclusion to the review — don't leave it hanging. The conclusion can be just one sentence (Overall, this book is a terrific choice for those who...).

You can use the transition word handouts you have from previous writing cycles to find ideas for words to connect the ideas in your review. If you would like to read some well-written reviews, look for reviews of books for young people at [The New York Times](#) or [National Public Radio](#).

Examples:

Mapping the World

Review by Umar A., age 10, Central New Jersey Mensa



Every day, people around the world use maps. Whether it is an airplane pilot or businessman, housewife or museum group, maps have always and will continue to provide useful information for all.

Mapping the World talks about the uses of maps, as well as how to differentiate between the type of map projection and type of map.

In this series, we travel to the past and learn about historical mapmakers, from Claudius Ptolemy (who stated the idea that the Earth is at the center of the universe) to Gerardus Mercator (who created one of the most widely used map projections) and more. This series goes into tremendous detail on the cartographer's life and maps. We then journey to the present era to learn about map projections and the diverse types of maps used today. You might ask, "What is the difference between the two? They sound the same to me." No map projection is perfect, because you cannot really flatten a sphere into a rectangle. An uncolored projection could be used in many ways. We could use it for population concentration, highways, land elevation, and so many other things!

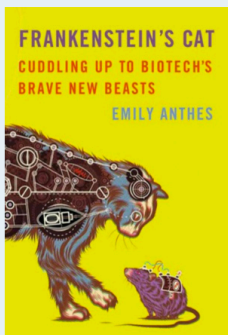
For example, we could make a topographic map of the U.S., which shows land elevation. We could make it a colorful map that shows the amount of pollution in different areas, or it could be a population map, or it could even be a map that shows the 50 states, their capitals and borders! Our last step in this amazing excursion is the near future, where we see some hypothetical solutions as to what maps will be used for. Currently, we are working on better virtual map technology.

Now, scientists have been able to put maps on phones. Back in the early 1900s, people had to lug a lot of maps around to find your way from place to place, or just keep asking for directions. Now, all the information is on a phone or global positioning system (GPS). It is amazing how much maps have changed technology and the world in this century.

The Mapping the World 8-book set goes into amazing levels of detail. It is a long read, but it gives an immense range and amount of information that you would not find in any other book or series on maps. The flowing way the chapters and books are organized makes it easy to link passages from different books in this series together. Mapping the World is a treasure box, filled with the seeds of cartography. Collect and plant them, and you soon will have the fruits of cartography, beneficial to those who want to be cartographers. Use this series to the utmost, then the fruits of mapping will be sweet for all who endeavor to succeed in cartography.

Frankenstein's Cat

Review by Zander H., age 12, Mid-America Mensa



I appreciated Frankenstein's Cat for its fascinating explanation about the often baffling subject of bioengineering and its sister sciences. Emily Anthes explains the many sides of today's modern technology, such as gene modification, cloning, pharmaceutical products (from the farm), prosthesis, animal tag and tracking and gene cryogenics. This book provides a well-rounded summary of these complicated sciences without being boring or simply factual. Her real world examples take us on a journey from the farm, to the pet store and then from the pharmacy to the frozen arc.

Have you ever wondered if the neighborhood cat is spying on you? Read about Operation Acoustic Kitty and find out if this feline fantasy fiction or fact. Do you think bugs are creepy? What about a zombified cyborg beetle? Is Fido so special that you want two of him? Money can buy you an almost exact copy of your pooch BUT don't expect the same personality. Emily Anthes makes you crave more information. She makes you want to know the future of Earth's flora and fauna, as well as humanity itself.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who desires a guide to the future of biological science and technology. Frankenstein's Cat is best read by the light of a glow-in-the-dark fish, while cuddling your favorite cloned dog and drinking a glass of genetically modified milk.