

# Summary of a Novel / Book Review

## 1. Before you write, read

There's no substitute for reading the book. Choose a book you'll enjoy—reading should be fun, not a chore! Read with a pen and paper at your side. Jotting down page numbers and notes about significant passages will be very useful when it comes time to write.

## 2. Use a book report outline

You'll find writing easier if you follow the proven steps of the writing process: prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing.

Start your book report outline with the following five ideas. Each idea should correspond to a paragraph:

1. Introduction
2. Summary of Book
3. Book Details: Characters
4. Book Details: Plot
5. Evaluation and Conclusion

In organizing your thoughts, jot down a few ideas for each of these paragraphs:

## 3. Introductory Paragraph

Begin with the basic information about the book: the book's title, author, genre, and publication information (publisher, number of pages, and year published). The opening paragraph is also your opportunity to build interest by mentioning any unusual facts or circumstances about the writing of the book or noteworthy credentials of the author. Was the book a bestseller? Is the author a well-known authority on the subject? Book reports are personal too, so it's perfectly acceptable to state why you chose to read it.

## 4. What's the Book About?

In the body of the book report—paragraphs 2, 3, and 4—you'll describe what the book is about. This is your chance to show you've read and understood the book. Assuming you've read a fiction book, here are helpful writing tips:

### Summary:

Start this paragraph by writing an overview of the story, including its setting, time period, main characters, and plot. Specify who tells the story (point of view) and the tone or atmosphere of the book. Is it a creepy tale of suspense or a lighthearted adventure?

### Character Details:

In this paragraph, describe the main characters and identify the major conflict or problem the main characters are trying to solve. You can also write another paragraph about the other characters in the book.

### Plot Details:

In writing about the plot, you don't need to tell every detail of the story. Instead, focus on the main sequence of events. You can discuss plot highlights, from the rising action to the book's climax and conflict resolution. Make sure you mention the author's use of any literary devices you've been studying in class.

## 5. Personal Evaluation and Conclusion

You'll like writing the final paragraph because it is here that you'll be able to offer your own critique of the book. What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? Did the book hold your interest? What did you learn from the book? If you read a work of fiction, how did the book affect you? If you read non-fiction, were you swayed by the author's arguments? Try to be balanced in your opinions, and support your statements with examples from the book. Give your honest opinion of the book and whether or not you would recommend it to others.

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## 6. Revising, Editing, and Publishing

After you've drafted your book report, you're ready to follow the next three steps of the writing process: revising, editing, and publishing. Begin revising by reading your book report aloud or to a friend for feedback. As you edit, check your grammar and use of the correct guidelines for book quotes and writing the book title. Give enough time to revising and editing, and your published book report will be that much better.

## 7. Book Reports on Non-fiction

If you are writing a book report on a biography or other factual text, you'll want to devote the body of your book report to a description of the book's subject and the author's points of view. Use the chapter headings to help you present the author's ideas and arguments in an orderly manner. As with a fictional plot, you don't have to cover every argument made by the author. Instead, choose the main ideas and the ones most interesting to you. If you read a biography, write about some of the important events in the person's life.

**The title includes the name of the book. The book title appears in italics.**

### **My Book Report on *Charlotte's Web***

Do you like stories about animals, friendship and life on a farm? If so, you should read *Charlotte's Web*, by E.B. White.

• **The writer starts with a question.**

**The writer summarizes the plot.**

In the beginning of the book, a little girl named Fern saves a piglet named Wilbur. But Wilbur soon learns that he is still in danger. Pigs on a farm, the old sheep tells him, often become Christmas dinner. Wilbur's best friend, a spider named Charlotte, comes up with a clever plan to save him. Does it work? You'll have to read the book to find out.

• **The writer includes the title and author of the book.**

**The writer shares a connection between the book and his or her own life.**

Although the main characters are animals, I was able to make connections between the story and my own life. For example, Charlotte helps Wilbur even though she has nothing to gain from doing so. She helps him because she is a true friend. My best friend is there for me whenever I need her, too.

• **In the summary, the writer tells about the problem the main character faces in the book and what the character is doing to overcome it.**

**The writer states his or her opinion about the book.**

In my opinion, *Charlotte's Web* is a touching and entertaining book. The lovable characters and interesting plot make it a story you won't want to miss.

### **Marks are awarded as follows:**

1. Process writing – planning & editing – **5 marks**
2. Structure: effective introduction & conclusion, use of paragraphing, development of ideas – **5 marks**
3. Content: main ideas and key words; necessary information included, own words used – **5 marks**
4. Sentence structure & vocabulary – **5 marks**
5. Spelling & punctuation – **5 marks**

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	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Process writing: planning, editing</b>	Excellent use of the writing process has produced a refined final draft. Proof reading has eliminated mistakes	Good use of writing process; evidence of progressive improvement in writing piece, mistakes still evident	Has used the writing process but has not translated it into a well-developed piece of writing	Some use of parts of writing process (very basic planning or evidence of editing of first draft) but many errors still remain	Little or no proof reading or editing done: writing still has many uncorrected errors
<b>Structure: introductory paragraph development of ideas</b>	Effective introduction and conclusion. Excellent use of paragraphing. Progressive development of ideas	Coherent, good introduction and conclusion. Good use of paragraphing. Logical flow of ideas	Functional introduction and conclusion. Paragraphing adequate. Sequence of ideas can be followed	Poor introduction and conclusion. Paragraphing in essay poor. Ideas sometimes not sequential	No introduction or conclusion. Little or no paragraphing in essay (solid text). Ideas muddled
<b>Content: main ideas and key words</b>	Succinct summation of original text. All necessary information included. Own words used	Well-structured summation of original text. Finer detail missing or point not clearly expressed. Own words used	Adequate summation of original text. 20% or points missed. Mostly uses own words	Poor summation of text. 50% of points missed and/or frequent use of original text	50%+ points missed. Original text copied. Summary shows lack or understanding of original text
<b>Sentence structure and vocabulary</b>	Excellent use of language; sentences correctly structures. Extensive vocabulary	Creative use of language; mostly correct sentences. Well-developed vocabulary	Most sentences are correct; some errors in language use. Good vocabulary	Sentence structure fair. Basic vocabulary several errors in language use	Poor sentence structure; vocabulary below expected level
<b>Spelling and punctuation</b>	Punctuation and spelling correct. No errors in subject-verb concord	Few punctuation and spelling errors. One or two errors in subject-verb concord	Some errors in punctuation and spelling. Spelling errors in subject-verb concord	Several errors in punctuation and spelling. Has not grasped subject-verb concord	Many errors in punctuation, spelling and subject-verb concord; understanding compromised