

Annotation Guidelines for Book Reviews

1. Introduction

This annotation aims to evaluate the usefulness of book reviews in assisting potential readers in making their decision on whether or not to read a book. It categorizes the usefulness of reviews into four labels: **excellent**, **average**, **good**, and **poor**. To assign these labels, each review will be given a **quality score** according to specific criteria outlined in the guidelines.

1.1. Quality score

Ranges from 0 to 14 with labels assigned as follows:

<u>Quality Score</u>	<u>Label</u>
1-4	Poor
5-9	Average
10-13	Good
14	Excellent

1.2. Criteria for the score

Scores are assigned based on five categories, each with a different maximum point value to reflect their significance in assessing quality.

1.2.1. Ideas (5 points)

Evaluated based on the quality of reviewers' claims and insights about the book.

1.2.1.1. Insightfulness

Insightfulness is assessed based on the complexity and specificity of the reviewer's claims about the book, especially in regards to the reasons why a book is considered good or bad. This involves evaluating the total number of arguments presented, but focuses on rewarding insights that go beyond general descriptions and utilize deeper thinking to provide detailed analysis of the book.

1.2.1.2. Strong arguments

Strong arguments are characterized by the reviewer's ability to make a clear, specific, and detailed claim.

1.2.1.3. Supporting evidence

Supporting evidence includes quotes, themes, characters, and references to the book, which serve to substantiate the reviewer's

claims and arguments. Supporting evidence is assessed by their relevance and quality.

1.2.2. Coherence (4 points)

Evaluated based on how understandable the reviews are, with a focus on clarity and logical flow.

1.2.2.1. Structure / Organization

Structure assesses whether each paragraph of the review is centered around a main idea, which contributes to the overall argument and effectiveness of the presentation. The logical flow and transitions between paragraphs are also taken into account.

1.2.2.2. Conventions

Conventions check for any major spelling or grammatical errors which cause confusion when reading the review. Minor errors, formatting, and stylistic choices that do not hinder comprehension are considered acceptable due to the more informal nature of the reviews.

1.2.3. Engagement (2 points)

Evaluated based on the strength of emotion in the tone of the review.

1.2.3.1. Disengaged / Objective

If the review maintains a neutral or professional tone and focuses on being more descriptive, it will be classified as Disengaged.

1.2.3.2. Engaged / Emotional

If the review contains emotive language or shows of emotion to express the reviewer's feelings and convey their personal sentiments, it will be classified as Engaged.

1.2.4. Ethos (1 point)

Evaluated based on the perceived credibility of the reviewer.

1.2.4.1. Additional Recommendations

This assesses whether the reviewer offers any further suggestions or recommendations which signal a level of experience with the book's genre or author.

1.2.4.2. Credentials of the Reviewer

This assesses any professional background that qualifies the reviewer to provide an informed opinion or analysis, such as relevant careers, awards, or endorsements.

1.2.5. Writing Style (1 point)

1.2.5.1. Lyrical

- A review will receive this classification if the writer uses imaginative grammatical structure and song-like writing to express emotions, especially through the use of poetic devices.
- 1.2.5.2. Humorous
A review will receive this classification if it incorporates humor to induce lighthearted laughter and amusement from the reader.
- 1.2.5.3. Sarcastic
A review will receive this classification if it uses sarcasm or irony to mock or convey contempt.
- 1.2.5.4. Figures of Speech
A review will receive this classification if it uses literary devices such as metaphors, similes, hyperboles, alliteration, personification, and onomatopoeia to enrich its text.
- 1.2.5.5. Imagery
A review will receive this classification if it uses descriptive words that engage the five senses, painting vivid pictures in the reader's mind.

2. Grading Guidelines for Ideas

The maximum score is 5 points. For each part, 2 points will be deducted for each criterion that is not met. A review will be assigned a score of 0 if it fails to contribute any information whatsoever.

There are 3 criteria for this section:

- Insightfulness
- Strong arguments
- Supporting evidence

➤ Example 1:

"This is a special book. It started slow for about the first third, then in the middle third it started to get interesting, then the last third blew my mind. This is what I love about good science fiction - it pushes your thinking about where things can go." → **They claim that this is a special book but do not provide specific reasoning or a more detailed claim about why it is special; this review lacks Insightfulness and Strong Arguments: minus 2 point off**

➤ Example 2:

Some of my favorite details from the book were simply about what it took to navigate a u-boat in WW1. For instance:

"In this day before sonar, a submarine traveled utterly blind, trusting entirely in the accuracy of sea charts. One great fear of all U-boat men was that a half-sunk derelict or an uncharted rock might lie in their path."

→ **One of the reasons they enjoyed the book was due to the level of detail about the day-to-day operations. The quote they chose directly supports their argument and therefore fulfills the criteria of Supporting Evidence.**

3. Grading Guidelines for Coherence

The maximum points for Coherence is 4. This section evaluates two criteria: organization and conventions. If a criterion is not met, one or two points will be deducted.

➤ **Example 1:**

"Recommended by Don Katz. Avail for free in December:
<http://www.audible.com/mt/ellison2?so...>" → **0 of 4 points**

➤ **Example 2:**

"That being said, it was very imaginative and entertaining. Hrun the Barbarian was one of my favorites, as was anything the Luggage did." → **Confusing syntax: minus 1 point**

4. Grading Guidelines for Engagement

A review characterized by a disengaged or objective style, maintaining a neutral tone and focusing on descriptive content, will receive 0 points. Conversely, a review that utilizes word choices to demonstrate the reviewer's sentiments, showing an engaged or emotional tone, will be awarded 2 points.

➤ **Example 1:**

"I read it in 2 nights and couldn't put it down." → **2 points**

➤ **Example 2:**

"I *tore through* The Pillars of the Earth, and *couldn't wait* to pick this up" → **2 points**

➤ **Example 3:**

"This *sounds awesome*." → **plain word: 0 point**

➤ **Example 4:**

"A *quick* read, and *probably better* than The Da Vinci Code" → **0 point**

➤ **Example 5:**

"I. LOVED. THIS. BOOK" → **2 points**

5. Grading Guidelines for Ethos

A review will be awarded 1 point if it meets any of the following criteria:

- Additional Recommendations
- Credentials/Expertise of the reviewers or other people

➤ **Example 1:**

"If you want to really minimize regret, you have to live your life to avoid it in the first place. Regret can't be hacked, which is kind of the point of the book. *My favorite book about regret is Remains of the Day.*" → **Additional Recommendation +1 point**

➤ **Example 2:**

"But what would happen if our SETI stations received a message - if we found someone was out there - and the person monitoring and answering the signal on our side was disillusioned? That part of the book was a bit dark - I would like to think the human

reaction to discovering an alien civilization that is hostile would be more like *Ender's Game* where we would band together.” → **Mention of Ender's Game (another science fiction book) = some expertise or knowledge of the sci-fi genre: +1 point**

➤ **Example 3:**

“Recommended by *Don Katz*.” → **Credentials of other people mentioned +1 point**

➤ **Example 4:**

“It is a 2015 Hugo winner, and translated from its original Chinese, which made it interesting in just a different way from most things I've read. For instance the intermixing of Chinese revolutionary history - how they kept accusing people of being "reactionaries", etc. “ → **Background knowledge of book: expertise +1 point**

6. Grading Guidelines for Writing Style

A review will receive no points if it does not incorporate any of the following styles or literary devices. If it employs one device, it will earn 1 point, and if it utilizes two or more, it will receive 2 points.

The styles are:

- Lyrical
- Humorous
- Sarcastic
- Figures of Speech
- Imagery

➤ **Example 1:**

“I think my favorite part of this book is the word 'grok'. I would bet that there are deep discussions over the true meaning of this word - but I will contend that its closest meaning in English is 'to be enlightened about something'. If you grok God you have reached enlightenment. If you grok music you truly understand in the way that Mozart understood it. If you grok another person you love them. If you grok programming then you truly love and are really good at programming - that, and you're also a probably a pretty big nerd for using a word like 'grok' :) I used it in front of my girlfriend and she still hasn't forgiven me, since I had to explain that it was "a Martian word"!” → **Humorous**

➤ **Example 2:**

“Well if Melanie says its her BBE, I gotta check it out...” → **Humorous**

➤ **Example 3:**

“This book was pure Gold - it was impossible to put down, and its clear to see why its a classic. Watching Holmes apply his methods to each case and unravel it to the eternally baffled Watson was entertaining and even inspiring. I only wish I was as smart as Sherlock. I actually think we can all learn a lot from Sherlock - even if he is fictional :)” → **Figures of Speech**

7. Examples of Final Labels:

- "Recommended by Don Katz. Avail for free in December:
<http://www.audible.com/mt/ellison2?so...>" → **Poor**
- "A beautiful story. It is rare to encounter a book that does such a good job painting the scenes in your mind - you really felt like you were there and got to know the characters and the people they came across. I generally love WWII books and movies, but wasn't sure if I'd like one featuring a blind girl and a young Nazi radio operator - but he brings a lot of life to them.
That said, the novel drifts around a lot, and the plotline jumping forward and backward in time drove me nuts.
I thought a lot about if there is a theme to the book. One was the diamond and if it was really cursed (based on the Hope Diamond perhaps?). Another is that 20K Leagues is an awesome book. But I think the book was a lot about fear and the unknown, and how people deal with it. Marie-Laure was blind and couldn't tell what was happening around her - yet she was the bravest one. Werner was afraid of ending up as a miner, which drove him to join the army, and learn about radios. And Uncle Etienne was afraid dying from a sniper he couldn't see, so he didn't leave his house and he created a radio transmitter. So the moral of the story is... don't be paralyzed by your fears.
This, she realizes, is the basis of his fear, all fear. That a light you are powerless to stop will turn on you and usher a bullet to its mark." → **Average**
- "This is a special book. It started slow for about the first third, then in the middle third it started to get interesting, then the last third blew my mind. This is what I love about good science fiction - it pushes your thinking about where things can go. It is a 2015 Hugo winner, and translated from its original Chinese, which made it interesting in just a different way from most things I've read. For instance the intermixing of Chinese revolutionary history - how they kept accusing people of being "reactionaries", etc. It is a book about science, and aliens. The science described in the book is impressive - its a book grounded in physics and pretty accurate as far as I could tell. (view spoiler)[Though when it got to folding protons into 8 dimensions I think he was just making stuff up - interesting to think about though. But what would happen if our SETI stations received a message - if we found someone was out there - and the person monitoring and answering the signal on our side was disillusioned? That part of the book was a bit dark - I would like to think human reaction to discovering alien civilization that is hostile would be more like Enders Game where we would band together. I did like how the book unveiled the Trisolaran culture through the game. It was a smart way to build empathy with them and also understand what they've gone through across so many centuries. And who know a 3 body problem was an unsolvable math problem? But I still don't get who made the game - maybe that will come in the next book.
I loved this quote:
"In the long history of scientific progress, how many protons have been smashed apart in accelerators by physicists? How many neutrons and electrons? Probably no fewer than a hundred million. Every collision was probably the end of the civilizations and intelligences in a microcosmos. In fact, even in nature, the destruction of universes must be happening at every second--for example, through the decay of neutrons. Also, a high-energy cosmic ray entering the atmosphere may destroy thousands of such miniature universes...."
(hide spoiler)]" → **Good**

- “An amazing and unique creation: JJ Abrams and Doug Dorst created what reads like a classic work of fiction - something you can easily imagine having read in English class - and then wrote an intriguing side story in the margins. A grad student (Eric) has left his annotated copy of SOT (Ship of Theseus) in the library, and an undergrad (Jen) finds it and replies to his annotations. This leads to them making exciting discoveries about the book, and also falling in love.

The first thing is this book is just beautifully printed. It looks and feels like a classic book, to the point where people would ask me why I'm reading such an old book. The marginalia feels real, and I can only imagine how hard that was to print. This is one that will be cool to keep on the shelves. Only complaint is the inserts are a cool idea, but they fall out all the time, and at this point I have no idea which pages they were supposed to be on.

The most interesting thing about this book to me is that it's a blueprint for how people discuss books. Sometimes they discuss the content of the book. Other times they use the content as a jumping off point to have a personal discussion. The nature of this book shows both, almost split 50/50. A key difference with this book - and the genius of it - is that most of us have to rely on memory to start a conversation with someone about a particular event or passage in the book. Here, our characters can literally underline a phrase like "relationships" and then talk about what is happening in their relationship at the moment.

One thing I didn't realize until later in the book is that the ship of Theseus is a real thing - it's an ancient Greek philosophical question - if you replace all the parts of something, is it still the same object? This inspires the ship that S is captured on, which sails through the mists of time, always getting fixed when needed. It's a ship that can't die. Or a series of ships :)

I found the story of Jen & Eric a lot more compelling than the SOT story. They were real characters that you could relate to. SOT felt like books you read in English class - a bit obtuse - and I still don't understand it all. But don't get me wrong - it's a pretty cool story. I particularly enjoyed the themes - like how it all begins and ends with water, and also how it was a lot about Straka's regret to fulfill his mission instead of living his life with his true love. Kind of like how S was on a mission, but didn't really know why - he just found himself caught up in it.” → **Excellent**