

Does the prospect  
of writing a  
book/article review  
make you feel like this...?



# Book/Article Review

- Book/Article reviews are usually one of the first assignments given in the course of the semester.
- A book/article review looks at the quality, meaning, and significance of a work of literature. It is a reaction paper – focusing on purpose, content, and authority – in which strengths and weaknesses of the material are analyzed.
- It should examine what the author has tried to do, evaluate how well the author has succeeded, and presents evidence to support this evaluation.

# Book/Article Review

- The first step is to *READ* the book/article.
- Allow yourself enough *TIME* to be able to thoroughly read and evaluate the book/article.
- Read *ACTIVELY* and *CRITICALLY*!
  - Engage with the text
  - Highlight and Underline passages
  - Write in the margins
  - Make predictions (and test them)
  - Ask questions (and answer them)

# Book/Article Review

- Typical book/article reviews consist of two parts:
  - Summary & Analysis
- Occasionally a professor will want additional info.
  - Bibliographical Material
  - Personal Opinion
  - Career/Ministry Application
- There is no standard, discipline-specific way to write a book/article review.
  - Often a professor will provide guidelines and format.
  - Otherwise, you may create your own outline.



# Book/Article Review



## Sample Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Summary
- III. Analysis
  - A. Strengths
  - B. Weaknesses
- IV. Conclusion

# Book/Article Review

- Summary
  - A summary is a brief, concisely written synopsis of the book/article.
  - A summary restates the author's main point, purpose, intent, and supporting details in your own words.
  - Summaries are written to help you gain a better grasp of the original, as well as show that you have read and understand the assigned material.



# Book/Article Review

- Summary Tips
  - Summaries should be no longer than a quarter of your paper.
    - Usually a page or a two of summary is sufficient.
    - The majority of your paper should be devoted to the analysis.
  - Avoid a chapter-by-chapter summary.
  - Avoid quoting heavily from the source.
    - The summary should be in your own words.





*I have made this letter longer than usual,  
only because I have not had time  
to make it shorter.*



*Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)*

# Book/Article Review

- Analysis
  - An analysis is a detailed evaluation of the thesis (arguments) presented by the author.
  - Relate the strengths and weaknesses of the book/article.
    - What is good and what is bad?
    - What did the author do well? Not well?
    - This does not communicate if you liked it or not.



# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Tips

- You do not necessarily need to work chronologically through the book/article as you discuss it.
  - You can organize your paragraphs more usefully by themes, methods, or other elements of the book.
- Keep comparisons to other books/articles brief so that the book under review remains in the spotlight.
- Avoid excessive quotations or block quotes.



# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Tips
  - Review the book in front of you, not the book you wish the author had written.
    - Do not criticize the book for not being something it was never intended to be.
  - Present a balanced analysis.
    - Avoid voicing strong agreement or disagreement.
    - Harsh judgments are difficult to prove and can give readers the sense that you were unfair in your assessment.





# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Tips
  - Don't be afraid to disagree with the author.
  - Cite specific examples to back up your assertions.
  - A good analysis requires time and critical thinking.
    - You must look “below the surface” and focus on the deeper issues present in the book/article.
    - As you read, constantly evaluate what you have read and make notes of your questions and thoughts.





# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Questions:
  - Who is the audience? Did the author communicate effectively to that audience?
  - What sources were used? Does the author use many quality academic sources to support what was written?
  - What are the authors presuppositions/preconceived notions? Does the author assume his/her readers to have a certain background or information?



# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Questions:
  - Does the author have the necessary expertise to write the book/article?
  - How does this book/article relate to other sources on the same topic?
  - Does the author define and use appropriate, academic terminology?

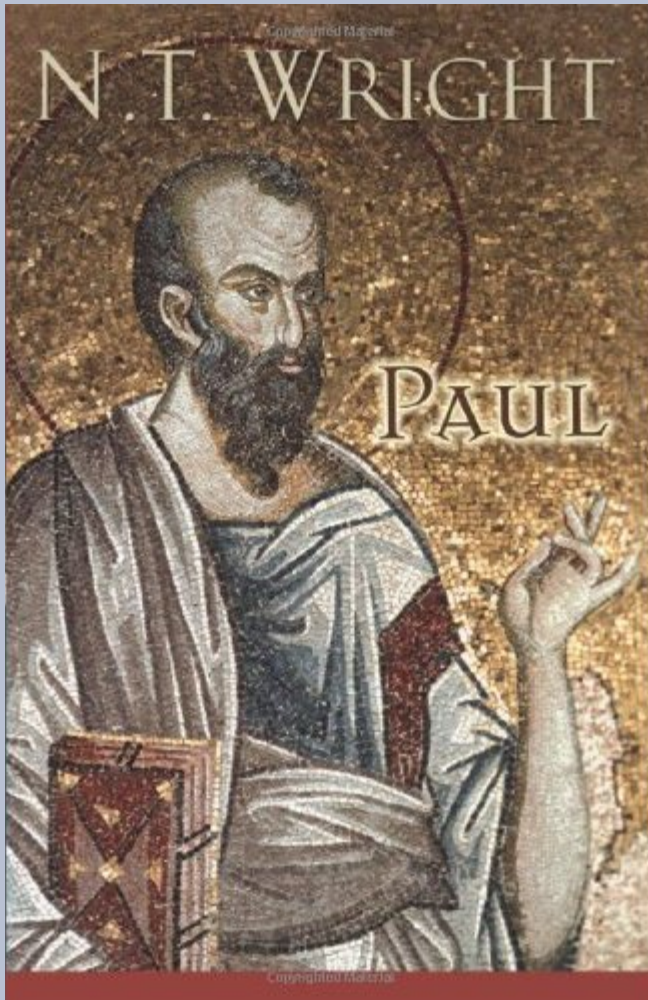


# Book/Article Review

- Analysis Questions:
  - Does the author present a clear thesis (argument)?  
What is the purpose of the book/article?
  - Does the author contribute anything new to the field?
  - Does the author exhibit any bias? Does the author have an inclusive worldview/writing style?
  - Are there errors in the author's logic?



# Sample Book Review



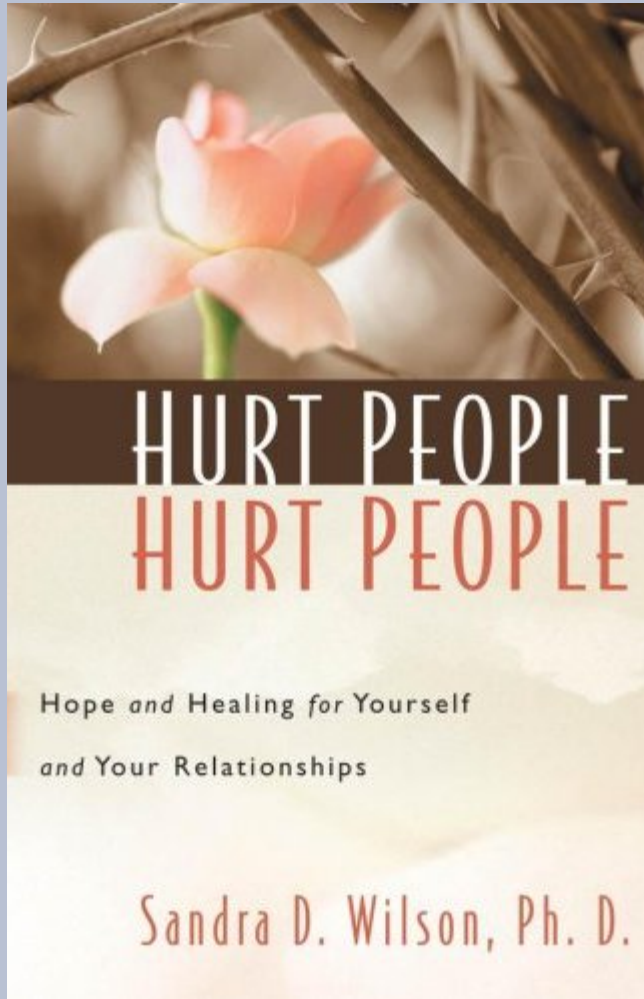
N. T. Wright

*Paul: In Fresh Perspective*

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press

© 2006

# Sample Book Review



Sandra D. Wilson, Ph. D.

*Hurt People Hurt People*

Grand Rapids, MI:

Discovery House Publishers

© 2001



# Sample Article Review



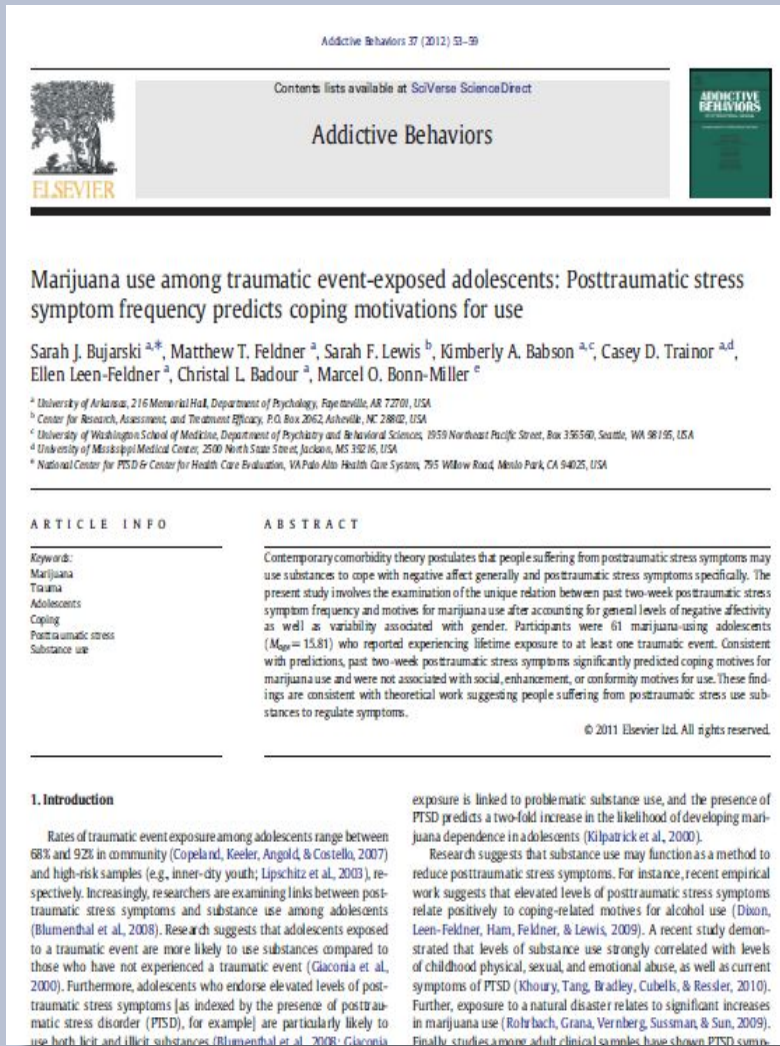
Mark Driscoll

*Answers to Common Questions  
about Creation*

TheResurgence.com

© 2006

# Sample Article Review



S. J. Bujarski, et al.

*Marijuana use among  
traumatic event-exposed  
adolescents: Posttraumatic  
stress symptom frequency  
predicts coping motivations for  
use*

Addictive Behaviors

© 2012

# REFERENCES

- Belcher, Wendy, “Writing the Academic Book Review.”  
[http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli\\_bookreviewguidelines.pdf](http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf)
- Lee, Alexander D., Bart N. Green, Claire D. Johnson, and Julie Nyquist, “How to Write a Scholarly Book Review for Publication in a Peer-Reviewed Journal.” *The Journal of Chiropractic Education*. <http://www.journalchiroed.com/2010Spring/JCESpring2010Lee.pdf>
- Purdue OWL, “Writing a Book Review.” <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/1/>
- The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, “Book Reviews.”  
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/specific-writing-assignments/book-reviews>
- The University of New South Wales, Learning Centre, “Writing a Critical Review.”  
<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/critrev.html>
- Columbia University Writing Center,  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/write/handouts/summary.html>
- Los Angeles Valley College Library, <http://www.lavc.edu/library/bookreview.htm>
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center,  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/review.html>  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/fallacies.html>