

## GUIDELINES FOR A BOOK CRITIQUE

- I. A book critique is a to-the-point summary/evaluation of the book

The material should be typewritten, and double-spaced. It should not be more than four pages in length. (Note: the length may vary with the course and the assignment/lesson within a course.)

Documentation: When you refer to any of the author's points in either the Content Summary or Evaluation, paraphrase, but do not quote. Then document by putting the page number of the comment to which you are referring (p.70).

- II. The book critique is to include (a) the biographical entry, (b) author information, (c) content summary, and (d) an evaluation.

- A. Bibliographical Entry

**Example, single author:**

Kentz, Edgar. *The Historical-Critical Method*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

**Example, book, edition other than the first:**

Anderson, Bernhard W. *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.

See the Turabian form and style manual for other examples of bibliography forms.

- B. Author Information

The purpose of this section is to identify the author (translator or editor) of the book. If available, present the author's background, academic training, and practical experience. You can help a reader understand a book by describing the author. *Contemporary Authors* or other biographical sources may provide author information.

- C. Content Summary

This section should be no more than two pages in length. The first sentence should be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. Summarize the book in one sentence. The remainder of the summary will then be an elaboration of this sentence, sharing your understanding of what the book is all about.

Be sure the summary covers the entire book. Do not be so detailed about the first part of the book that subsequent sections are not adequately dealt with. To avoid this problem, organize the summary carefully and logically. Also, do not get bogged down in specifics. The task is to summarize the entire book, not to focus on selected details.

- D. Evaluation

The evaluation is the most crucial part of the critique. This is not a summary of the book's content but a critical evaluation of what the author has to say. React to the book both positively and negatively.

Because books, like people, are different, one cannot impose predetermined critical questions on the book. The following questions are often used for evaluation:

- Does the author achieve his intended purpose?
- Is the main theme convincing?
- What presuppositions (i.e. with what ideas does he approach the subject) or basic assumptions does the author reveal in the work? Are they legitimate and valid?
- Are his arguments logical, well supported, or convincing?
- What evidence does the author provide to sustain his main theme?
- What are his conclusions?
- What is unique, significant, or interesting about the book?
- Does it contain unusual historical, theological, or literary traits?
- What biases (theological, philosophical, denominational, etc.) are evident?
- What does the book/author teach us?
- What is good about the book?
- What is bad about the book?
- Who should read the book?
- What concepts can be implemented in ministry (teaching, etc.)?

Avoid generalities such as “Every person (minister, teacher, etc.) should read this book”; or “this is a (good, bad) book.”

Do not assume anything. Write as though the reader knows nothing about the author, the author’s point of view, or the book’s contents.

- III. The following is an outlined example of the first page, and the headings, for a book critique. Note the placement of personal information in the upper right hand corner of the page, and the centering of the headings.

David Smith  
Old Testament Synthesis  
GBIB 551-48A

Dr. Cheryl Iverson  
Book Critique  
Cracking the Old Testament Code

### **Bibliographical Entry**

Sandy, D. Brent, and Ronald L. Giese. Cracking Old Testament Codes. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995.

### **Author Information**

### **Content Summary**

### **Evaluation**