

#38) Historical Book Reviews

Answer the following questions about your book before you actually begin your review:

Thesis

What is the thesis and how is it proven -- how does the author argue his or her position? Usually what will be addressed, the **explicit thesis** or point of the text, is in the introduction, but if the work has an **implied thesis**, you must deduce it from the overall work.

What are the major points the author makes? Give examples used to prove these points.

What type of material is used to prove the points? -- Are primary or secondary sources used -- or both? See the footnotes, works cited, or index to quickly evaluate.

Organization

How is the work organized? Topical or chronological range or both? Is the work a complete history or thematic account of one particular subject?

How is the book arranged? Year by year or theme by theme or country by country or . . .

What does the author think is the most important information of the material presented?

Are political, economic, intellectual, religious, or other elements emphasized?

Critique

How do you evaluate the author's bias, internal validity, and literary ability?

Author's bias or point of view

Is the author impartial and objective or subjective and sympathetic to any social class or group or economic and political practices? (Left or Right wing? Moderate?)

Why did the author write this? All authors have opinions, biases, and experiences they bring to their work. Bias will be obvious in the introduction or deduced from all you find in the work.

Internal Validity

Is the stated thesis (that you wrote down at the top of this worksheet) proven to your satisfaction? Is the work a sound and convincing argument? Are there questions raised that aren't answered? If the author doesn't "hit the mark," that's a flaw in the text. Give examples of how it's flawed.

And if it has merit, give examples of how the author goes about proving the stated thesis.

Literary Quality

Is the work well-written? Is it interesting or boring?

Why? Give specific examples about your evaluative, critical choices.

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