Writing a Book Report or Critical Review

What is a Book Report/Critical Review?
A book report or critical review is a detailed summary and “reader response.” You simply summarize the book that you read and then explain your reaction or response to it (hence, “reader response”).

You Should:

- **Read the book carefully and take notes on it before, during, and after your reading**
  - Take notes on the book’s author, title, chapter titles (if it has them), and cover
  - Before you start reading, what do you expect the book to be about?
  - Take notes on the book’s plot, characters, setting, point of view, tone, and theme.

- **Decide what you think the author’s purpose, message, or theme was supposed to be**

- **Do outside research to help you understand the book and its author**
  - Background information on the book’s subject, plot, characters, setting, and author can be very helpful for better understanding the book
  - For example, if the book is about a Native American Indian tribe, it might be helpful to know something about the tribe. You can then determine the accuracy of the book.

You Should NOT:

- **Retell the plot of the book**
  - If your reader wanted to know the book’s story, he or she would read the book.
  - Therefore, you should explain the theme or purpose of the book, how the author communicated the theme, and your opinion of the book/theme.

- **Try to include every single event, character, or detail from the book**
  - If you do this, you will accidentally retell the plot of the book.
  - And you will accidentally include a lot of details that are not relevant to the book’s theme.

An effective Book Report or Critical Review will have

- **An Introduction that**
  - Identifies the author and title of the book being reviewed
  - Briefly summarizes the book AND states its theme, message, or purpose
  - States your reaction to the book and its theme, message, or purpose
    - Did the author do a good job communicating the book’s message? Do you agree with the message? Did you like the book overall? Explain your opinions.

- **Body Paragraphs that**
  - Begin with Topic Sentences that relate to your reaction to the book’s theme or message
  - Support your reaction to the book with specific details, examples, and quotes from the book
  - Cite and introduce ALL examples and quotes from the book
  - Explain why you are using these examples and quotes to support your reaction (your thesis)

- **A Conclusion that**
  - Restates the book’s theme, message, or purpose
  - Restates your reaction to the book
  - Summarizes the reasons for your reaction