

## Book Review Guidelines Birbery - Derby

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph - Introduce the book.

- Write about the setting, (where the story takes place, usually time and place).
- Introduce the main character or characters in the story.
  - What are the character's names, qualities, etc.
- Tell about the book, but **don't give away the ending!** Summarize what happens up until the high point of the story, (where the character resolves the problem). Discuss what conflict/problem the main character faces in the story. If you're still having trouble starting, you can answer the questions who, what, when, where, and how.

Use some of these transition words to help you write your review.

first	also	because	another
second	between	next	as a result
third	finally	then	later
last	after that	for example	during

2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph - My Thoughts

Tell about your favorite part of the book or make a connection. Write about why you liked or dislike the book. Be honest and narrate your thoughts.

Give details, for example:

- Was the book confusing?
- Was it too easy to read or too hard?
- Was it predictable/ believable?
- Did you like the ending?
- What was your favorite part?
- What connections did you make with your life or other books?
- Advanced: Talk about the author's style of writing and give examples from the book.

### Now, for some examples to help get you started!

#### Two professional examples from School Library Journal:

##### Circus Mirandus by Cassie Beasley

Gr 4–6—Fifth-grader Micah Tuttle has been living with his Grandpa Ephraim since his parents died when he was very young. The two are close; Grandpa Ephraim teaches Micah how to tie complicated knots and tells him fanciful tales about the magical Circus Mirandus and its many performers, including a powerful illusionist called the Lightbender. When Grandpa Ephraim becomes gravely ill, his sister, the strict and dour Aunt Gertrudis, comes to take care of the household. She severely limits Micah's time with his sick grandfather, and the boy is distraught at the idea of losing the only important person in his life. In a stolen moment, Grandpa Ephraim surprises Micah by revealing that the Circus Mirandus is real and that the Lightbender promised him a miracle when he was a child. The protagonist begins to hope that his grandfather will get well. The Circus Mirandus arrives in town on the wind, and Micah, with the help of his classmate Jenny Mendoza, seeks out the Lightbender and tries to retrieve the miracle that Grandpa Ephraim has requested. During a whirlwind adventure in the Circus, Micah learns about his family and discovers that the miracle that Grandpa Ephraim asked for might not be the one that Micah had in mind. Circus Mirandus is not a simple story, but readers will be rewarded for delving into its intricacies. VERDICT: This gripping fantasy tale will have readers hooked from the opening scene to the breathtaking—and unexpected—conclusion.

-Sarah Reid, Broome County Public Library, Binghamton, NY

##### The War That Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Gr 4-6-Bradley turns her keen historical eye from Monticello (Jefferson's Sons, Penguin, 2011) to the British home front during World War II. Ada isn't exactly sure how old she is; for as long as she can remember, she's been a

virtual prisoner in her mother's third-floor one-room apartment. She was born with a clubfoot and her mother uses her disability as an excuse to abuse her both emotionally and physically. Ada watches the world through the narrow confines of the apartment window, waves to neighbors in the street, and carefully gauges the danger of being beaten during each encounter with her hateful mother. She envies the freedom of her little brother, Jamie, who goes to school and generally roves the neighborhood at will. When her mother prepares to ship Jamie out to the countryside with other children being evacuated from London, Ada sneaks out with him. When the two fail to be chosen by any villagers, the woman in charge forces Susan Smith, a recluse, to take them in. Though Susan is reluctant and insists that she knows nothing about caring for children, she does so diligently and is baffled by the girl's fearful flinching anytime Ada makes a mistake. Though uneducated, Ada is intensely observant and quick to learn. Readers will ache for her as she misreads cues and pushes Susan away even though she yearns to be enfolded in a hug. There is much to like here-Ada's engaging voice, the vivid setting, the humor, the heartbreak, but most of all the tenacious will to survive exhibited by Ada and the villagers who grow to love and accept her.

-Brenda Kahn, Tenakill Middle School, Closter, NJ

**An example written by YA blogger from**  
<https://youngadultbookreviews.com/category/adventure/page/3/>:

### The Raft by S.A. Bodeen

Robie lives in the Midway Atoll with her family, but often goes to stay with her aunt in Honolulu. One summer, her aunt is called away unexpectedly and Robie decides to take the shuttle plane home to her parents. The phones are out so she cannot call her parents and tell them she is coming and in the commotion, she forgets to get weighed before her and her bags climb aboard the plane. A major storm knocks out one of the engines and the plane goes down. Robie ends up struggling to survive in the middle of the ocean with only a raft and a few supplies. Can she survive out there by herself? Will anyone come to look for her?

This survival story realistically portrays exactly what it would be like to be drifting on a raft for days including symptoms of dehydration, starvation, and environmental dangers. The details of the region including geography, animal life, and weather are all perfectly accurate which helps this story to feel even more realistic. The story itself is very exciting and moves quickly so it is recommended for reluctant readers.

**An example of a student-written review from**  
[http://www.teenink.com/reviews/book\\_reviews/article/1539/Holes/](http://www.teenink.com/reviews/book_reviews/article/1539/Holes/)

### Holes by Louis Sachar

Because of the just-released movie with the same title, many are rushing to read Holes by Louis Sachar. I recommend doing this - Holes is a wonderful book whether you are 18 or 85.

Holes is a combination of three stories. The main one is about Stanley Yelnats, who is found guilty of stealing even though he didn't. He is shipped off to Camp Green Lake, a boot camp with a twist. There, Stanley bonds with the boys in his tent, who all have wacky nicknames and personalities to match.

Every day, the boys must dig a large hole in the "lake," which is now more of a desert. The counselors tell the boys they must dig holes to build character, but is there something more? The stories of Stanley's no-good, dirty-rotten, pig-stealing great-great-grandfather who cursed Stanley's family, and the story of Kissing Kate Barlow and how she turned from a sweet woman to the feared bandit who robbed Stanley's great-grandfather, will help them figure out the truth.

This book is wonderfully bizarre. The plot and setting are strange, but then the author throws a barrel of peculiar characters into the mix.

If you are looking for a great read that is out of the ordinary, dig into Holes. Just beware of the poisonous lizards.