"Critical Book Review"

**A book review is not the same thing as a book report,** which simply summarizes the content of a book. When writing a book review, you not only report on the content of the book but also assess its **strengths and weaknesses.** You may feel unqualified to write a book review; after all, the author of the book is a professional historian. However, even if you cannot write from the same level of experience and knowledge as the author, you *can* write an effective review if you understand what the assignment requires. In writing a review you do not just relate whether or not you liked the book; you also tell your readers ***why*you liked or disliked it**. It is not enough to say, "This book is interesting"; you need to **explain *why***it is interesting. Similarly, it is not enough to report that you disliked a book; you must explain your reaction. Did you find the book unconvincing because the author did not supply enough evidence to support his or her assertions? Or did you disagree with the book's underlying assumptions?

To understand your own reaction to the book, you need to read it carefully and critically.

As a critical reader, you are not passive; you should ask questions of the book and note reactions as you read. Your book review then discusses those questions and reactions. Though there is no one "correct" way to structure a review, follow this example:

* 1. Summarize the book and discuss the author's main point, or thesis. (Somewhere early in the review, identify the author briefly.) [One paragraph]
* 2. Describe the author's viewpoint (POV) and purpose for writing; note any aspects of the author's background that are important for understanding the book. [One paragraph]
* 3. Note the most important evidence the author presents to support his or her thesis.  [One or two paragraphs]
* 4. Evaluate the author's use of evidence, and describe how he or she deals with counter evidence. [One paragraph]
* 5. Is the book's argument convincing? If so why, if not, why not. Cite examples from the text. [One paragraph]
* 6. Compare this book with other books or articles you have read on the same subject. [One paragraph]
* 7. Conclude with a final evaluation of the book. You might discuss who would find this book useful and why. [One paragraph]

*NOTE*: "Critical" does not mean negative; skeptical does not mean cynical. If a book is well written and presents an original thesis supported by convincing evidence, say so. A good book review does not have to be negative; it does have to be fair and analytical.

NOW FOR THE FUN PART:

You will be putting this review on AMAZON.com, so others can learn from you☺