

Biography Book Review

Directions:

Read a dedicated biography of your person, at least 200 pages long. As you read, focus on the author's attitude toward your person. You will analyze the book, just as if you were a reviewer for *The New York Times Book Review* or *School Library Journal*. That means you will judge biographer's bias in light of your expert knowledge of your person's life. Your thesis sentence for your review must include the title of the biography, the name of the reviewer, and at least three opinion words to describe the biographer's attitude. You are the judge of the accuracy, authenticity, and bias of the reviewer.

Your review must be at least five paragraphs, with at least three main body paragraphs, each of which has at least three integrated quotes from the review. You will be required to submit your thesis and plan page for approval before writing. Typed, double-spaced, properly cited title footnote and integrated quotations.

Thesis Sentence due _____.

Plan page due _____.

Book Review due _____.

Name _____ Block _____ Date _____

Plan Sheet for a Book Review

Your **Book Review** should be approximately 750-1000 words long (three double-spaced typed pages OR eight moderately sized handwritten pages).

I. Choose a thoughtful, precise title.

Title: _____

II. Write a precise thesis statement, *one sentence* which states *exactly* the controlling idea to be developed in the entire paper. Three *opinion* words, please.

Thesis: _____

III. In *complete sentences*, list the main points to be developed in the *body* of the paper (continued on back if necessary)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

IV. Write a *complete* bibliographical entry for the book(s) you are reviewing.

Biographical Book Review Rubric

Name _____

Person _____

Thesis Sentence Approved _____
(Attached)

Plan Page Approved _____
(Attached)

Remember this is an analysis, *not* a summary. You will receive no credit for a summary of the book. Your focus is the author's attitude toward your person. That means you must read the book in light of your expert knowledge of your person's life. Your thesis sentence for your review must include the title of the biography, the name of the reviewer, and at least three opinion words to describe the biographer's attitude. You are the judge of the accuracy, authenticity, and bias of the reviewer.

	A	B	C	D/F
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, focused, purposeful thesis statement with strong evidence • Creative, original ideas, enjoyable to read • Goes beyond the obvious or predictable • Insightful connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and focused thesis statement, but lacking strong evidence • Most of the details relate to the main idea • Believable, reader is interested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is expressed clearly, but simply, and is less developed • Some details, but may be too general or not related to the main idea • Reader is not interested but understands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a thesis? I'm not sure! • Either very few details or too many details that aren't connected • Reader unsure about the topic
Evidence/ Citations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three opinion words are insightful and intriguing • At least three carefully selected quotes are integrated gracefully into each body paragraph. • Clear statement of the <i>biographer's</i> attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three opinion words are included • At least three selected quotes are integrated into each body paragraph. • Adequate statement of the <i>biographer's</i> attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three opinion words do not discriminate ideas well • At least three selected quotes are included in each body paragraph, awkwardly integrated • Unclear statement of the <i>biographer's</i> attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does <i>not</i> support three opinion words • Does <i>not</i> include three quotes in each body paragraph. • Does <i>not</i> integrate quotes. • Does not state the <i>biographer's</i> attitude
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well organized and purposeful • Ideas are clearly linked to support • Compelling introduction and convincing conclusion • Carefully selected, sophisticated transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good organization • Ideas are connected and supported with detail • Strong lead and appropriate conclusion • Strong, clear transitions, occasionally sophisticated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader can follow the organization of ideas • Details are connected to the main idea • Includes a lead and conclusion • Transitions are present but repetitive and obvious. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to follow • No clear main idea • Too many or not enough details that don't match the main idea • Poor introduction and/or conclusion • Transitions missing, points aren't connected
Diction Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses strong verbs and precise nouns • Uses unexpected phrasing, including alliteration, analogies and metaphors • Varied, original, yet appropriate vocabulary for audience and purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses clear but predictable language • Attempts to use alliteration, similes and metaphors • Appropriate vocabulary, sometimes varied and original 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on only simple, common language • Words are very general (e.g., stuff, nice, said, fun), repetitive vocabulary without much attention to writing purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words are overly simple or used incorrectly • Words get in the way of meaning • Minimal variety of different words used
Syntax/ Sentence Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses variety of sentence lengths and structures, including parallelism • Different sentence openers used • Smooth, natural writing • Clearly second draft writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sentences begin differently and vary in length • Some variety in structure • Writing is easy to read and clearly has been proofread, though not revised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences begin with little variety; predictable • Same sentence structure is used repeatedly • Some run-ons or choppy sentences • Careless composition, clearly needs proofreading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences often begin the same • Some sentences are hard to understand even if reread • Many incomplete or run-on sentences • Difficult to read

FINAL GRADE: _____ out of 100 points

Wilma Wildcat

Honors 10

8thPeriod

13 December 2021

Documented Essay on a Biography and *What the Biographer Wrote*

Your essay on *What the Biographer Wrote* should focus on a topic narrow enough to be covered adequately in 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages. Your essay should not summarize, but rather reveal careful thought and analysis. The effective, attention-getting first paragraph should end in a thesis like the following: “In *The Russian Revolution*, Richard Pipes has redefined Lenin’s destructive genius, pensive personality, and historical impact.”¹ Notice how dual thesis components sound “smarter” than genius, personality, and impact.

In writing an analytical review, you must document everything that you borrow – not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas. Common sense, as well as ethics, should determine what you document. For example, you do not need to give sources for familiar proverbs, well-known quotations, or common knowledge, but you must indicate the source of any appropriated material that readers might otherwise mistake for your own.

An exact quote shorter than three lines is set off by quotation marks and integrated within the paragraph. For example, “Power emanated from the little bald man” as if he were really a giant (123). Parentheses are at the *end* of the sentence no matter where the quotation appears and the end punctuation comes *after* the parentheses.

Exact quotes longer than three lines are indented and set off from the text of the paper, but are not enclosed in quotation marks – the *inset* itself distinguishes the lines as quotes. Note:

Lenin bequeathed his personal style to the Soviet state: disciplined and conspiratorial, comfortable with violence. While exhorting other people to take up a gun, revolver, bomb, knife, brass knuckles, or rag soaked in kerosene, Lenin himself had a cowardly side (29).

Any quote worthy of such prominence should be set up beforehand and explained afterwards

¹Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, New York: Knopf, 1990, 21. Page references to this edition will be noted in text.

within your own paragraph. The paper might continue by giving specific examples to prove the contradiction between Lenin's violent and cowardly sides. The paper would include "exact quotes as relevant and necessary" throughout the text, documenting exact page numbers in parentheses (120).

The previous page has a *real* footnote which can be used if the majority of your quotes come from one source. You can cite your source the first time, and then cite only page numbers after that. A second use for footnotes is for more elaborate explanation of something in the text. Everything else is parenthetical.

If you include quotes from critics or reviewers, cite those sources parenthetically. For example, I could refer to Carl Niemeyer's review "*The Russian Revolution Revisited*" in *College English* by citing the title and all particulars in the same sentence as a quote from the review, but that would become burdensome and awkward. Better to say, Niemeyer states that "Pipes uses juxtaposition to express sophisticated, balanced reflections on Lenin's true nature" (241). If the author's name is not in your sentence, include it in the parentheses. I could also say Pipes uses juxtaposition to reveal Lenin's personality (Niemeyer 241). Even though the previous sentence does not quote the review word-for-word, I took the idea of juxtaposition from the critic and need to give credit to avoid plagiarism.

If you cite such additional works, acknowledges those sources in a works cited page; however, this report may focus exclusively on the *one* approved biography.

Essentially, your book report is an essay – thesis sentence and all – with at least three major components -- and represents a critique of a biography. In approximately 500-750 words, a good review must prove the thesis, cite specific evidence, and include at least one quotation per body paragraph. Your review should demonstrate that you read *and* understood. Your grade will depend on the quality of your writing, the skill with which you support your opinions, and the appropriate use of textual references.

Notice some other MLA style details, such as heading on the left first page, last name and page number on following pages, 12-point Times font, with one-inch margins. No *I*'s, no *you*'s, no contractions. This paper is spaced 1.5 to fit on one page; yours should be double-spaced.