

# Guidelines to Writing a Short Story Critique

An analytic or critical review of a book or short story is not primarily a summary; rather, it comments on and evaluates the work in the light of specific issues and theoretical concerns in a course.

## **THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH:**



The introductory paragraph for the short story critique has 3 major elements: the background, your opinion on the work as a whole, and the thesis. The background includes all of the relevant information (especially who, what, when, where, and why) leading up to the thesis. The thesis includes the subject and opinion of the paper followed by the main points.

The most important element in writing a critique is a workable thesis statement, which appears near the end of the introductory paragraph. Below is a sample thesis statements:

**SUBJECT:** The Blind Assassin

**OPINION:** show's Atwood's skills as a writer

**MAIN POINTS:** because of the visual imagery, the strong characters and the memorable message.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT PARAGRAPHS:**

These can vary in length and in number. If you state 3 main points in your thesis, you should have 3 development paragraphs. For this assignment you should have from 3-5 main points. Here are a few ideas to choose from:

### 1. Opening

**Hooks** - Is the story grabbing from the first line? Does it make you want to read on?

**Introduction of Central Character** - Is the Central character introduced early in the story.

**Scene Setting** - Can you picture the scene early enough in the story or have you already imagined your own?

**Problem Description** - Can you tell what problem confronts the central character soon enough or are you left wondering what the story is all about?

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## 2. Characterisation

Central Character - Does he/she appear in the first few lines?

- Is it clearly defined who the central character is?
- Do you have sympathy with the central character? (This does not mean likable).

Other characters - Are they easily definable or do they get confused with others? Do they seem authentic? Can you easily tell who they sympathise with?



## 3. Dialogue

Does the dialogue sound authentic?

Is it all meaningful?

Does it read well? (If when spoken aloud the reader changes it, this might mean it needs some attention.)

## 4. Setting

Does it seem the right place for the story?

If it is a real place, has the author researched it enough.

If it is a fictitious place, has the author planned the setting(s) carefully, making it seem alive and real.

## 5. Conflicts

Are the conflicts in the story authentic or do they seem artificial?

Are the conflicts original?

## 6. Suspense Value

Do you want to know what is going to happen next?

Does the story go well from action to action.

## 7. Ending

Is the ending concise or does it ramble on?

Does it need a lot of explanation?

Is it clear what has happened?

Does it seem flat?



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## 8. Structure

Has the plot been developed well throughout the story?  
Are the characters described in time or after you've imagined them for yourself?  
Are the actions well planned and run well in sequence?  
Do flashbacks seem well placed and relevant?  
Is the time span suitable for the story or should it take place over a longer or shorter period of time?  
Is the time span feasible? (Could the events have taken place in the given time span?)

## 9. Plot

Is it original?  
Does it sound authentic?  
Is it contrived?

### **THE CLOSING PARAGRAPH:**

Here you give your general impression of the story. Did you enjoy it? In general are the descriptions clear, over emphasized or not clear enough. You should also briefly summarize all the issues under discussions. Any additional opinions on the subject would be appropriate at this time as well as any final conclusions.

