

Are You Ready to Write a Review?



Take this quiz found on Scholastic's Writing with Writers page:

1. Before you begin writing, did you make a few notes about the points you want to get across? ____
2. While you were writing, did you try thinking of your reader as a friend to whom you're telling a story? ____
3. Did you mention the name of the author and the book title in the first paragraph? — There's nothing more frustrating than reading a review of a great book but not knowing who wrote it and what the title is! ____
4. If possible, did you use one paragraph for each point you want to make about the book? It's a good way to emphasize the importance of the point. You might want to list the main points in your notes before you begin. ____
5. Did you get the main theme of the book across in the beginning of your review? Your reader should know right away what he or she is getting into should they choose to read the book! ____
6. Think about whether the book is part of a genre. Does the book fit into a type like mystery, adventure, or romance? Did you mention this in your review? ____
7. Did you share what you like or dislike about the book's writing style? Is it funny? Does it give you a sense of the place it's set? What is the author's/narrator's "voice" like? ____
8. Did you try using a few short quotes from the book to illustrate your points? This is not absolutely necessary, but it's a good way to give your reader a sense of the author's writing style. ____
9. Did you make sure your review explains how you feel about the book and why, not just what the book is about? A good review should express the reviewer's opinion and persuade the reader to share it, to read the book, or to avoid reading it. ____
10. Did you research about the author and incorporate what you learned into the review? Biographical information can help you formulate your opinion about the book, and gives your review "depth." ____

How Ready Are You? Based on the number of questions you answered "yes" for:

0-4- You may want to take some more time reviewing other reviews available.

5-7- You are on your way to writing a great review. With a little bit of love and care, it will be ready in no time!

8-9- Sounds like you are ready to publish. Way to go!

10- Wow. Are you interested in a job in the writing field?

Book Reviews

Two sites I recommend for online book reviews:

www.bookloons.com and www.goodreads.com

Here are a few that I pulled up. I'd recommend finding books that are of high interest to your class for this discussion.

The Van Gogh Café by Cynthia Rylant

Harcourt, 2006 (2006)
Softcover

www.bookloons.com



Reviewed by Ricki Marking-Camuto

Cynthia Rylant's *The Van Gogh Café* is a short, simple read about the magic that occurs in everyday life. Ten-year-old Clara loves living in Flowers, Kansas with her dad. Every morning before school, she helps him serve breakfast at the Van Gogh Café.

The Van Gogh Café is located in what used to be a theatre, and Clara thinks that is why so much magic happens in her dad's café. Whether the odd occurrences are magic or just small, everyday miracles that are only really noticed by those looking for the fantastic, is debatable. But to Clara, everything that happens in the Van Gogh Café is extraordinary from an opossum that helps a widower get a new lease on life to a lost seagull that finally finds its way to California - and everything in between.

Although short, *The Van Gogh Café* is an uplifting read that offers readers a quick pick-me-up for those days when all the magic seems to have disappeared from the world. To Rylant's Clara, there is always magic at the Van Gogh Café. one just needs to step on in.

Claire rated it: ★★★★★ 11/28/07 www.goodreads.com (Personal review)

The Van Gogh Café by Cynthia Rylant

When I was seven or eight years old and home sick from school, my mom brought me two things in bed: a hot cup of Earl Grey tea and this darling book that I always keep nearby. Of all the books in the entire world, this is the one that stole my heart.

Clara is an imaginative, precocious young girl who lives in Flowers, Kansas with her dad. They own a cafe on the main street in town, a cafe that was once a theatre. The magic in those walls still makes funny things happen in the cafe, and Clara notices it all. Like the possum...

Barely 100 pages, this book can easily be read within an hour. Any time I feel upset, sick, depressed, or simply bored with life, I escape to the Van Gogh Cafe. It's a dream of a children's book that will certainly inspire and entertain any adult with an imagination...