

Jo Cotterill's Top Tips for writing reviews

Start and end with something positive. Think of the review like a burger: the bread roll is the soft padding with which you will cushion the meat of the review!

If you're stuck for what to talk about, try the following:

- Plot – Write a SHORT summary of the plot – see if you can sum it up in two or three sentences. Don't get carried away telling the story! Is it exciting? Does it move along at a good pace? Or does too much happen all at once? Did it seem believable within the style of the book?
- Characters – did you identify with any of them? Did you think they were believable? Were their relationships realistic?
- Quality of writing – did you get swept up in the story because of the way it was written? Was the writing style unusual or gripping? What about the dialogue – did it seem realistic? Were the descriptions vivid: did you feel as though you were actually there?
- Style and format – is the book written in diary format? Does it have short chapters? Does it make use of different font styles? Are there illustrations? Is there anything about this book that makes it visually interesting? Does the front cover do it justice? (remember that authors very rarely have anything to do with the front cover, so don't blame them if you don't like it!)

It's a good way to end by suggesting who might be interested in this book, e.g. 'If you liked Harry Potter, you'll like this...' or 'This book would suit readers of 10 upwards who like action adventures'

Be personal. Reviews are about YOUR response to the book. Say if this book changed your life. Or say if you just couldn't get on with it. But be warned – authors Google themselves and they read reviews of their own books! So don't put anything online that is nasty about the author him/herself. Criticise the book, not the author. We are real people too! But one of the NICEST things about being an author is reading a positive review, especially if it's from a young person. After all – you are the people we write for, and so we love it when you say you enjoyed our books!