

2 **Description**

3 The book review is a short **genre** that typically summarizes and then evaluates a recently
4 published book (Belcher, 2019). The **summary** portion follows the key principles of summary:
5 to extract the most important points from the original book by paraphrasing its contents. In
6 general, authors of book reviews avoid using many quotations, with a few carefully chosen
7 exceptions. The evaluation or **critique** portion of a book review provides the writer's opinion
8 based on particular criteria or perspectives (Nicolaisen, 2002), which may relate to the stated or
9 implicit aims of the book. One of the grounds to evaluate a book may be whether its author(s)
10 have accomplished the aims they articulate in the book.

11 As an example of the combination of summary and critique, the reviewer of a book in the
12 field of anthropology, *Returned: Going and coming in an age of deportation* (Boehm, 2016), a
13 reviewer, Sarabia (2018) summarizes the book as primarily describing the consequences of the
14 deportation of undocumented immigrants from the United States. She then critiques that
15 Boehm's book did not systematically organize the stories of the deported families and
16 undertheorized some terms: "Boehm talks about 'disappearances' in Chapter Three, but not all
17 deported migrants are disappeared. To use such language, in the context of Latin America, it
18 must be theorized and contextualized" (p. 305).

19 **Variations and Tensions**

20 The length of a book review depends on the journal in which it will be published. For
21 example, the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* publishes book reviews of 1,400-1,800
22 words (Scandinavian Journal of Management, n.d.).

23 Book reviews may be commissioned by a journal’s book reviews editor, who invites
24 certain scholars to write reviews. For example, the website of the journal *Artificial Intelligence*
25 explains, “The review editors solicit reviews from researchers assessed to be expert in the field
26 of the book” (Artificial Intelligence, n.d., p. 2). Other journals accept unsolicited reviews
27 proposed or submitted by potential reviewers. Some journals and disciplinary listservs publicize
28 a list of books available for review.

29 Writing book reviews can be a way for graduate students to get experience with academic
30 publishing because it take less time to write and publish reviews than articles (Hyland & Diani,
31 2009). However, student writers may find it difficult to evaluate a book if they are not deeply
32 familiar with the field or are concerned about the power relations involved in critiquing senior
33 scholars (Belcher, 2019).

34 **Graduate Student Voice**

35 One challenge in writing my first book review was to discuss the book’s contributions to
36 the knowledge base. To do so, I had to increase my knowledge of the field. – Ting Zhang

37 **Reflection Questions**

38 1. Do journals in your discipline publish book reviews? If so, have you found any of
39 them useful?

40 2. Locate a few book reviews in academic journals or popular magazines or and identify
41 where the author(s) of the review uses both summary and critique.

42 **For Further Reading**

43 Belcher, W. (n.d.). *How to write an academic book review*. [https://wendybelcher.com/writing-](https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/how-to-write-book-review)
44 [advice/how-to-write-book-review](https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/how-to-write-book-review). This website introduces the steps of writing a book
45 review, from choosing a book to making a plan to **drafting** the text.

46 Nicolaisen, J. (2002). The scholarliness of published peer reviews: A bibliometric study of book
47 reviews in selected social science fields. *Research Evaluation*, 11(3), 129–140.
48 <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154402781776808>. This article describes the common
49 **rhetorical moves** of the book review in social sciences.

50 **References**

- 51 Artificial Intelligence. (n.d.). *Author information pack*.
52 <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/artificial-intelligence/0004-3702/guide-for-authors>
- 53 Belcher, W. L. (2019). *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic*
54 *publishing success* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- 55 Boehm, D. A. (2016). *Returned: Going and coming in an age of deportation*. University of
56 California Press. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1525/j.ctt1bd6k3g>
- 57 Hyland, K., & Diani, G. (2009). Introduction: Academic evaluation and review genres. In K.
58 Hyland & G. Diani (Eds.), *Academic evaluation: Review genres in university settings*. (pp.
59 1–14). Palgrave Macmillan.
- 60 Nicolaisen, J. (2002). The scholarliness of published peer reviews: A bibliometric study of book
61 reviews in selected social science fields. *Research Evaluation*, 11(3), 129–140.
62 <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154402781776808>
- 63 Sarabia, H. (2018). [Review of the book *Returned: Going and coming in an age of deportation*,
64 by D. A., Boehm]. *Contemporary Sociology*, 47(3), 304–306.
65 <https://doi.org/doi:10.1177/0094306118767651h>
- 66 Scandinavian Journal of Management. (n.d.). *Instructions for research notes and book reviews*.
67 [https://www.journals.elsevier.com/scandinavian-journal-of-](https://www.journals.elsevier.com/scandinavian-journal-of-management/policies/instructions-for-research-notes-and-book-reviews)
68 [management/policies/instructions-for-research-notes-and-book-reviews](https://www.journals.elsevier.com/scandinavian-journal-of-management/policies/instructions-for-research-notes-and-book-reviews)

