

# THE FORMAT FOR YOUR BOOK REPORTS

The introductory paragraph of a book report should start with a topic sentence that states the title, author, main character(s) and the main idea. After the topic sentence, give a brief summary of the main story, or plot. End your first paragraph with a thesis statement—that's a sentence about the author's message. Below is an example of a first paragraph.

The book, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, by Wilson Rawls, tells the story of a boy named Billy and his adventures with two hounds, Old Dan and Little Anne. It is a sad story based around raccoon hunting and the relationship Billy develops with his dogs as he trains them to be prize-winning hunting animals. Billy and his hounds form a relationship that ends as Old Dan is mortally wounded after saving Billy from a mountain lion. Little Ann seems to grieve for Old Dan and loses her will to live. She dies soon after. An important theme in this story tells us about the importance of relationships.

Your second paragraph will give a specific instance of how the theme is supported through the text of the story. Add supporting details by using transition words and phrases. In the following example of a second paragraph, note the use of transitions in **boldface** text.

Billy builds a solid relationship with his hounds. **One way the author shows this** is in the way Billy teaches Old Dan and Little Ann to hunt raccoons. He spends time with the dogs. **For example**, he takes them with him every night so they can learn about the forest and how to react to raccoons when they find one. **In this way**, Old Dan and Little Ann not only form a strong bond with Billy, but they learn to rely on each other, too.

Your third paragraph is similar to your second one. You will give another instance of how the author supports the theme through the story.

Your fourth paragraph makes a personal connection to the story or theme. Make a claim in your own words by responding to the author's main points. Support your claim with details using one of the following: personal experience (In my own life, ...); prior knowledge (I knew this because ...); connections to other stories (This story reminds me of ...); how the story made you think (I was surprised, curious, confused, wondering, etc.). Here is an example of a fourth paragraph.

Relationships are an important part of my life. This story makes me think about people even though the plot is mainly about a boy's relationship with his animals. Although the ending upset me, I was reminded of all the warm times I've spent with important people in my life. I think people (and animals, too) form relationships when they do things together. They experience warmth, sadness, joy, and trials, and they support one another during difficult times.

Your fifth paragraph is your conclusion. You restate your opinion of the author's message in a topic sentence. Use a transition word or phrase: Therefore; As you can see; In conclusion. Also include what you liked or did not like about the book. It should summarize your overall impressions of the book and bring the report to a close. Don't be afraid to give your own honest impressions of the book. After all, if you've read the book thoroughly, you are entitled to your own interpretation of it

As you can see, Where the Red Fern Grows, is about relationships. The author shows how the three, Billy, Old Dan, and Little Ann, become inseparable as they experience life together. Even though the hounds die in the end, the feeling lives on as Billy will forever respect what he learned from his two best friends.