How to write a good Book Review

When you write a review or book report you need to think about the following:
- appropriate review vocabulary
- set it out correctly in organised paragraphs
- write it in the style of a review or book report

The steps below will help you with your book review.

A) Step One: Think about your audience
Why are you writing a review? What is its purpose?
Is it to:
- inform
- entertain
- interest
- evaluate
- give an opinion
- another reason

B) Step Two: Brainstorm Ideas
What should you include in your review?
Here are some ideas that should point you in the right direction. Make notes on:
- basic info (what type of book is it?)
- the plot (the reader needs to have an idea of the story but do this briefly)
- the characters (describe them briefly)
- description (what was memorable or remarkable about it?)
- your reactions (what did you enjoy or dislike about it?)
- would you recommend it? Why or why not? To whom?

C) Step Three: Organise Ideas
Make a plan. the one below is just a suggestion. You might have a different idea.

Para One: Introduction

Para Two:
Brief description of plot. DO NOT spend too long on this part.

Para Three:
Discuss the things you liked about the book and WHY? How was the writer effective. Give examples to justify your arguments. Refer to all elements of the book: the plot, characters, language, style, genre.

Para Four
Same as Para Three except:
Discuss the things you did not like about the book and WHY?

Para Five: Conclusion
D) Step Four: Vocabulary

(i) Genres of literature
Can you think of an example of a book for each of the genres below?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>autobiographies</th>
<th>non-fiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biographies</td>
<td>poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classic novels</td>
<td>romances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comic novels</td>
<td>science-fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>crime stories</td>
<td>thrillers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>Westerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historical novels</td>
<td>whodunits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mysteries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you add any more genres?

(ii) Which of these words below would be used to describe a book positively and which negatively? What would they refer to? The book as a whole, the plot, the setting or the characters?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>amusing</th>
<th>thought provoking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>best-selling</td>
<td>moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entertaining</td>
<td>well-written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gripping</td>
<td>clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literary</td>
<td>complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetic</td>
<td>hard to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popular</td>
<td>lucid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predictable</td>
<td>readable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convincing</td>
<td>well-drawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humorous</td>
<td>inventive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original</td>
<td>intriguing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unputdownable</td>
<td>full of suspense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you add any more of your own adjectives. Remember that when you use an adjective to describe a book you should always give an example to justify your choice.
(iii) **Expressing your opinion**
In a book review you will need to use language to express your opinion. Below are some ideas to help you.

I felt / I thought it was
I was impressed by
What struck me most was
What I liked most / didn't like was
On reflection, I think it was
I would have no / little / some / a lot of hesitation in recommending
It struck me as being
In spite of these criticisms, I think
I especially liked/disliked

(iv) **Useful expressions:**
The book/story is about
The story is set in
The characters are
The plot
The author describes/tells the story of
The author has written a tale of
  - a twist at the end
  - a cliffhanger
  - I couldn't put it down

(iv) **Final advice:**
* Remember that when you describe the plot of a novel or film you use the present tense.
* Reviews should inform but also entertain. Bring the book to life.
* Do not go into great detail about the plot and never give away the ending!!
* A review should be well organised and easy to follow for the reader.
* Look at all aspects of the novel:

**style:** how well-written it is and if it is readable
**characters:** what kind of people they are and if they are well-drawn
**setting:** where the story takes place
**personal reaction:** describe the emotions it produced in you

* Finally, look at examples of reviews. You can find some on the website [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and these will give you some ideas BUT don't just copy them. PLAGIARISM is cheating and you will be punished for it.
(v) Final checklist: Has your review got

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>natural sounding language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a wide range of grammatical structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rich expressions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate vocabulary for a review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well organised clear paragraphs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an informative but entertaining style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a clear opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no errors!!!</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now you should have written a good review!