

GOVT. P G COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, GANDHINAGAR, JAMMU

SEM.: 6

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

TITLE: WOMEN WRITERS IN INDIA

CODE : 1ENLDE0601

BOOK REVIEW

DEFINITION

A book review is a thorough description, critical analysis, and/or evaluation of the quality, meaning, and significance of a book, often written in relation to prior research on the topic. Reviews generally range from 500-2000 words, but may be longer or shorter depending on the length and complexity of the book being reviewed, the overall purpose of the review, and whether the review exams two or more books that focus on the same topic. Professors assign book reviews as practice in carefully analyzing complex scholarly texts and to assess your ability to effectively synthesize research so that you reach an informed perspective about the topic being covered.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD BOOK REVIEW:-

- 1) **A good review is balanced.** It takes into account that we all have likes and dislikes, and while this book may not be our cup of tea, it could be someone else's absolute favorite. Yes, share your honest opinion. But realize that's what it is. Your opinion. A subjective evaluation of what you've read. No more, no less.

- 2) **A good review is about the book, not the author.** Focus on the writing, on the treatment of the topic, on the characters, on the storyline, on the research, on the facts, and so on. Don't make judgment calls about the author's faith, intelligence, relationships, parenting skills, parentage, or whatever. A reviewer's job is to share your opinion of the *book*. You don't have the right to go beyond that.
- 3) **A good review is about the author's craft, not the book's packaging.** Don't base your review on the cover or endorsements or things over which, I guarantee you, most traditionally published writers have absolutely no control. But remember, what you're reviewing is the *writing*, not the packaging.
- 4) **A good book review doesn't give an extensive summary of the book and then one or two lines about your thoughts.** Readers can get the summary from lots of places. What they want to know is what you thought of the writing, the message, the story.
- 5) Even more important, **a good review doesn't give away the ending/secret/mystery/twist!**
Don't ruin the read for others. If you knew who the killer was on page 2, fine, say, "I knew who the killer was by page two." But do NOT say, "I knew by page two that the butler was the killer." If a book has a great twist, say that. But don't give the twist away.
- 6) **A good book review is specific.** Don't just say you loved the book or hated it, tell us why. And tell us what specific aspect of it you loved or hated. For example:
 - a) What did you like or dislike about the writing?
 - b) What drew you to—or left you cold about—the topic or characters?
 - c) What moved or challenged or inspired or infuriated or disappointed you?

STEPS TO WRITE A BOOK REVIEW:-

1. BEGIN WITH A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

This is probably the best way to introduce any review because it gives context. But make sure to not go into too much detail. Keep it short and sweet since an official summary can be found through a quick Google search.

2. PICK OUT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE BOOK

Break this down with character, world-building, themes, and plot. But this might vary between books, genres, and your tastes.

Dedicate a paragraph to each of these important aspects, discussing how well the author dealt with it, along with what you enjoyed and what you didn't enjoy.

3. INCLUDE BRIEF QUOTES AS EXAMPLES

Including quotes is always a great idea, because it gives examples for everything that you're saying. If your review talks about a character being particularly witty, a witty line from the character lets your readers see exactly what kind of witty character you're dealing with here.

But be careful: lengthy quotes can take up big chunks of space and overpower your review. Short quotes will usually get your points across while letting *your* work shine through.

4. WRITE A CONCLUSION THAT SUMMARISES EVERYTHING

Like your introduction, keep your conclusion short and sweet! It should bring up the main points of your review, along with your overall opinion of the book.

5. FIND SIMILAR BOOKS

A great way to wrap up a review is to find similar books to the one you're reviewing. So you can say, "if you were a fan of X book, I think you'll definitely like this one!"

You can also be more specific, looking at the exact things that might make two books similar. So you can suggest something like... "if you liked that the main character in X book was a kick-ass superhero, then you'll love the main character of *this* book!"

Book review of LAJJA

Written as a response to the wave of communal violence that rose in Bangladesh after the demolition of Babri Masjid in India in 1992, *Lajja* by Taslima Nasrin wrote *Lajja*, 1993, is not only an invaluable historical document but also a text whose relevance has—unfortunately—not been diminished in the two decades it was published. The novel's central concern—the evil of communalism—continues to plague the subcontinent, erupting from time to time like a dormant volcano. *Lajja* chronicles the terrifying disintegration of a Hindu family living in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the riots that break out to avenge the destruction of the mosque in India. Hundreds of temples across Bangladesh are ground to dust or desecrated, Hindu men are butchered, women raped, houses burnt to cinders, and property confiscated. Nasrin brings out the sufferings inflicted on the "minority" community through the trials faced by Sudhamoy Datta, an upright physician who had fought in the Liberation War of 1971 at immense personal cost, and his family.

The Dattas, as Nasrin reveals, are divided on the question of staying on in the land they have always thought of as their home. Their ancestral seat in the village, once thriving and prosperous, has been usurped by their Muslim neighbours, forcing them to seek refuge in a rented house in Dhaka. However, Sudhamoy stubbornly, desperately, and naively holds on to his faith in the inherent goodness of fellow human beings, even at a time when his allies are turning against his family. His son Suronjon is more vulnerable to the circumstances. Like his father, Suranjon refuses to run away from the country of his birth or give in to communal sentiments he had condemned all his life, but his feelings begin to shift after a terrible tragedy visits the family.

Sudhamoy's wife Kiranmoyee and daughter Maya are far less squeamish about making an exodus to India for the sake of their lives and dignity, but the women, as Nasrin insinuates, are but pawns in the hands of the men. Maya's prayer for security is beggared by the lofty ideals of her "indifferent, irresponsible, vagabond" brother, who remains unemployed for refusing to take orders from anyone.

Kiranmoyee nurses a "deep, intimate pain", sacrificing every chance at happiness for the sake of her husband's unshakeable resolve to remain rooted to the land of his birth, even as the consequences of his choice are horrible.

While focused on the plight of the persecuted, Nasrin's plot never departs from an area of moral discomfort, **never pitting one**

community against the other or shying away from showing up the **prejudices that infiltrate the minds of both Hindus and Muslims.** Yet, in spite of its sustained ethical complexity, *Lajja is not a literary masterpiece. Far more nuanced accounts of communal violence have been fictionalized by writers from Bangladesh. Nasrin's plot is interrupted by long roll-calls of the damages and killings every few pages. Frequent discourses on politics and power also slow down the pace, and the sub-plots, especially related to Suronjon's jilted romantic life, perhaps deserved more attention. All in all Lajja is an attempt by the author to bring forward the ugly face of communalism however it doesn't achieve its goal with desired impact.*

MOVIE REVIEW

DEFINITION

Movie review is the analysis of the film made by one person or collectively expressing the opinion on the movie. The peculiarity of movie review is that it does not simply evaluate the movie but gives very specific opinions which are the foundation of film review. This paper writing as well as writing essays, research papers, and term papers should entertain the reader and grab the reader's attention immediately. At the beginning it is vital to mention the reputation of actors and director and write what your expectations were and whether they were fulfilled. The reviewer should explain how the story builds without recollecting key moments and ending. The review should

be concise and engaging with the use of metaphors, specific adjectives, analogies, similes etc. **Close**

Characteristics of a movie review

The name of the documentary/movie – There is no reason to skip mentioning the name of the film in the text just because it has already appeared in your headline. The name of the film always appears in the introduction paragraph.

Summary – The overall objective of the review is, to sum up the feature film for readers who haven't seen it yet. For writing an effective review, always imagine that your teacher hasn't watched it either so that you don't omit important details assuming the teacher has already seen it so they would not be interested. As a critic, your work is to describe the events that took place and state whether the film director succeeded or failed. Your opinion about liking or disliking the film won't matter unless you support it by specific facts and examples from the film itself.

Film Director – Perform a background search on the person who helmed the project. Are there any controversies involved or is he/she a known political figure? Does the film director have an influential background? Write a paragraph about the person who directed the movie and his/her previous works to establish the importance of the movie you are reviewing in his/her career.

Creative aspects – The movie makers work hard to incorporate creative aspects into their films. These elements are important to the plot line and movie on the whole. For instance, background music can either take the movie further or deceive its purpose. Color choice in the movie can be vibrant and lift the spirit of the movie or they can make it seem dull and depressing. Costumes can define the genre of the movie and add to the storyline and while the bad ones destroy everything. The camera angles and lighting also enrich the movie experience. There are several turning points in the story that make movie viewing a gripping experience.

Actors – The casting of the movie must be realistic. Did the actors do justice to their roles and vice versa? Do you believe some other actor would have been a better choice for the role?

Relevance to your course – It is an important element of review writing to tell the readers how the content of the film fits into your course. Is the movie distorting the historical facts? If you are reviewing the film picture for your history class, keep track of over-dramatization. If the film is based on a book you've studied in your English class, mention the similarities, dissimilarities, or other elements that were present in the movie but were not there in the book.

BEGUM JAAN MOVIE REVIEW

Writer-director Srijit Mukherji's *Begum Jaan* is the story of one such woman, madam of a brothel on the outskirts of a town in pre-Independence Punjab. The year is 1947 and the Radcliffe Line has been drawn by the British to demarcate India and the newly forming Pakistan. As it happens, the line runs through Begum Jaan's brothel. When she refuses to quit her home to make way for a barbed wire fence, she finds herself crossing swords with officials of both countries who in turn are helpless at the hands of a law they do not necessarily agree with.

Begum Jaan has so far prided herself on her power, since her *kottha* is frequented by everyone in town, from ordinary folk to the local raja, freeloading policemen and British officials. Hierarchies of class, caste and religion may be forgotten when these men visit her to quench their lust, but she soon discovers that she is up against forces much higher than anyone she has ever known.

The film is about the battle between them and the officials assigned to execute the Radcliffe Line. It is a fascinating concept.

From the opening scene of the Hindi film, where an unlikely saviour wards off a young woman's potential rapists, two things are evident: that Mukherji intends to make a big statement about female empowerment, and that his statement will come through self-defeating expressions and a limited understanding of his cause.

It is bad enough that *Begum Jaan* is confused about what it wants to say. What is worse is that it is so pretentious and superficial, that it fails to plow past its grand intent to find a soul.

It goes without saying that everything about Begum Jaan's brothel, from its location to its occupants and customers, is intended as a metaphor for a happily multi-cultural India being torn apart against her will. Parallel to their lives, an old woman in the *kottha* (played by Ila Arun) narrates stories of legendary queens from Indian history and myth, who stood up to an ancient patriarchal world on their own terms, among them Rani Laxmibai, Razia Sultan, Krishna *bhakt* Meera and Padmavati.

Three of these women are also played by Balan, Padmavati is described in a voiceover.

These satellite tales of valour mirror the film's central saga of brave women defying convention and refusing to be subjugated. Sadly, they also reflect the filmmaker's skewed notions of female honour, most especially when he appears to equate the historical Laxmibai, a real woman who fought the British till her dying breath, to the mythical Padmavati, who is glorified by folklore for having thrown herself into a fire so that an invading emperor would not get his hands on her.

In scenes where a very old lady and a very young girl replicate *Khol Do's* heroine's actions, Mukherji also unwittingly betrays an oddly benevolent, muddled view of male rapists resulting from thoroughly misplaced ideas of sexual violence.

With the writing so inadequate, everything about the film ends up being ineffectual. It is impossible to feel for Begum Jaan or the women in her brothel because they are not women, they are broad brushstrokes illustrating Mukherji's surface-level interpretation of female strength.

The acting is constrained by the weak script. And so, Balan – who has been so wonderful in the past – sits here with legs akimbo and issues one-liners in a monotone, but is unable to dig deep and summon up a relatable human being, because there is nothing in the writing that she can dig into. Those one-liners are amusing at first, but sound empty after a point. We see a flash of the gifted artiste we know her to be in a scene where she watches as a customer forces himself on a new recruit...but only a flash.

The supporting cast of fine actors — including Pallavi Sharda and Gauahar Khan as women in the *kottha*, Pitobash as their pimp and Naseeruddin Shah as a ruler of the region — are all in the same boat. Sharda and Khan fare somewhat better than the rest.

The actors' faces are often half cut off the edge of the screen by Gopi Bhagat's camera, no doubt again as a metaphor for a nation being torn apart against its will. In a film that fails to come together as a whole, it is an irritating device.

Among the many **half-cooked** aspects of this half-cooked film is Javed-Ejaz's **action**. Except for the first scene in which the women use physical

force to send government officials and police packing, they seem grossly unprepared for battle.

These elements might have been better developed if the director had not been so distracted by what appears to be his primary goal. Thus ***Begum Jaan* is a soulless film, dwarfed by its transparent ambition to be an epic of great intellectual depth and a lofty feminist statement.**

- ASST. PROF. SHAKUN MAHAJAN, GCW, GANDHINAGAR, JAMMU