

Book Report Guidelines

Oral Book Reports should be **3-5 minutes** long. Reports that are shorter than 3 minutes cannot get a better grade than a "D."

Each report should have three parts: a **summary** of the book, a **discussion of its main theme**, and a **recommendation**.

I. Summary: A one paragraph (5-8 sentence) summary of the book, emphasizing what is most interesting about it. Be sure to include the title of the book and the author, but **don't start with boring deadwood** such as "The book I read is. . ." or "My book report is about. . ."

Don't wind up. Just pitch, like this:

Ben Franklin once quipped that visitors, like fish, stink after three days. He'd obviously never met Amber, the barefoot 30-something at the center of Ali Smith's novel *The Accidental*. Amber turns up one day at the home where the Smarts are enduring their vacation, announcing, "Sorry I'm late. I'm Amber. Car broke down." Michael, an English professor, assumes she's come to interview his wife, Eve, a bestselling author of "autobiotruefictinterviews." Eve assumes that Amber is the latest in Michael's long string of student-conquests...

Or this:

"Wish I could be thirteen again," the father fatuously remarks in "Black Swan Green," David Mitchell's brilliant new coming-of-age tale. "Then," his son, Jason, thinks darkly, "you've obviously forgotten what it's like." Mitchell, a Man Booker Prize nominee, clearly hasn't forgotten a minute of the humiliation and turmoil of adolescence, and he uses it all to create a genuinely memorable hero.

The story lurches through a year of Jason's life in 1982 England. Margaret Thatcher and the Falklands war swirl together with parental fights, graveyard initiations, a Belgian countess, and Gypsies, which Mitchell then distills into a kind of essence of boyhood. And while Jason is hardly an average teen, he's not a freakish prodigy. (Readers will figure out his parents' problems long before he does.) He's a smart kid whose speech impediment makes him "shrivel up like a plastic wrapper in a fire. . ."

II. Discussion of main theme: Pick one theme and explain how it is developed in the novel. This should be 3-4 paragraphs (about 8 sentences each).

Pride and Prejudice was first titled *First Impressions*, and these titles embody the main theme of the novel. **[Statement of thesis:]** The book deals with the way prejudices and first impressions lead people to make mistaken judgments. .

[First main point:] The main character is Elizabeth Bennet. Her judgments about other characters' dispositions are accurate about half of the time. She is correct about Mr. Collins and how absurdly self-serving he is and about Lady Catherine de Bourgh and how proud and snobbish she is, but her first impressions of Wickham and Darcy steer her incorrectly. At first she thinks Wickham is a gentleman and a good man. His good looks and his easy manner fool almost everyone, and Elizabeth believes without question all that he tells her about Darcy. Elizabeth's first impressions of him are contradicted when she realizes that he has lied about Darcy.

[Second Main Point:] Elizabeth's first impressions of Darcy are also wrong. She, like many other

characters in the book, see him as mean-spirited. She is also prejudiced against him because of the lies Wickham has told her. Darcy sees this fault of prejudice in Elizabeth, stating that her defect is "willfully to misunderstand everybody." Eventually, Elizabeth realizes she is foolish to trust her first impressions. She states, "how despicably have I acted... I, who have prided myself on my discernment! – I, who have valued myself on my abilities..."

[Transition:] The above are only a few of the major examples of first impressions, prejudice and pride in the novel, as these themes show up throughout the story. **[Third Main Point:]** Many other characters besides Darcy are also accused of having too much pride, such as Bingley's sisters, Miss Darcy, Lady Catherine and others. There are also discussions about pride between Elizabeth and Darcy, and Mary discusses pride vs. vanity. Several characters are described as being proud on various occasions. For example, Mrs. Bennet is described as visiting her married daughters with pride, and Elizabeth is said to be proud of Darcy because of what he had done for Lydia. Prejudice is also quite evident in the way that both Darcy and Lady Catherine react to the status of Elizabeth and her family.

III. Conclusion: Tell your classmates whether you think they would like to invest their time in reading this book. Let them know what is good or not good about it, and what sort of reader might be attracted to it:

For anyone who loves a complicated story of love overcoming obstacles, this excellent novel will stay in your hands from the moment you pick it up until you reach the romantic conclusion. The plot and characters draw the reader into a world where a person's acquaintances depend on social status and connections, and there are rare times when a person marries for true love, but that is the case in *Pride and Prejudice*.