

## Writing book reviews topics and vocabulary with gradable and extreme adjectives

*Without looking below for now, brainstorm things that you could write about a book onto a mind map on blank A3 paper or on the board. Start with very large categories like “genre” and continue until you get to very specific things like “unputdownable”.*

-----fold, cover or cut-----

*Use this list of categories to help with the brainstorming task, putting what you brainstormed into larger categories such as these and then brainstorming more examples.*

### Things to write about in a book review

- Appearance/ Format
- Availability
- Characters
- Genre
- Length
- Marketing/ Publicity
- Organisation/ Structure
- Parts of a book
- People involved in writing and publishing it
- Plot/ Story (e.g. twists in the plot or ending)
- Popularity
- Positive points
- Price/ Value for money
- Readership
- Relationships to other things
- Setting
- Story behind the book/ History of the book
- Style
- Subtext
- Title
- Unique features/ Originality
- Viewpoint
- Weak points/ Negative points

*Use the sub-categories under the fold below to help organise and expand your mind map, brainstorming more examples of each thing.*

-----fold, cover or cut-----

- Positive adjectives
- Negative adjectives
- Fiction
- Non-fiction
- Critical reception/ Other people’s opinions on it
- Popular success
- Narrator/ Voice

*Add the things below to at least one place on your mind map, rearranging the categories if you need to. Just leave any which you don’t understand or don’t know where to put for now.*

(Book jacket) blurb (Cram)packed with...  
 (Critically/ Universally) acclaimed (Critically/ Universally) panned  
 (Genre) trope (MAN Booker/ Pulitzer) prize winner  
 (Multi) award-winning (New York Times) bestseller (Semi-)autobiographical  
 (Superhero) comic/ Graphic novel (Work of) genius  
 (Neglected/ Universally acknowledged) masterpiece Abridged  
 Adult/ Erotic Adventure Allegory/ Allegorical  
 Alternative reality/ Alternative history/ What if Amazing Amusing  
 Annoying/ Irritating Antagonist Anthology/ Collection Anti-hero  
 Astonishing Author/ Writer Autobiography Avant-garde  
 Awe inspiring Awful/ dreadful/ terrible Baby Bad  
 Banned/ Forbidden Biography Bodice ripper Book of the year  
 Boring/ Dull Business book Cathartic  
 Brilliant/ excellent/ fabulous/ fantastic/ splendid/ superb/ terrific/ wonderful  
 Captivating/ fascinating/ spellbinding Challenging Character arc  
 Charming/ delightful/ lovely Chicklit Children's book  
 Classic Clichéd Cliffhanger Coffee table book Coincidence  
 Collaborator Collected letters Collection of (linked) short stories  
 Collection of aphorisms Collection of articles Collection of columns  
 Collection of comic strips Collection of essays Collection of poetry/ poems  
 Complicated Concise Confusing Conventional  
 Cookbook Cover/ (Book) jacket Critical success  
 Criticism Cynical Dated Dazzling  
 Debut novel/ First novel Deep Depressing  
 Derivative Devastating Diary Diary/ Journal  
 Dictionary Disappointing Disastrous Distinctive/ Original  
 Doorstopper Dramatic Dystopian  
 Easy reader/ Graded reader E-book Editor  
 Emotional Enchanting Encyclopaedia Enjoyable  
 Entertaining Epochal/ Epoch-shaping Essential reading  
 Exceptional/ Outstanding Exciting Excruciating Experimental  
 Fable Fairy tale Family saga Famous  
 Fan fiction Fantasy Feminist First edition First of a series  
 First person (narration) Five-star review Flashback Flowery  
 Footnotes Foreshadowing Forgettable Frightening/ scary  
 Funny Ghost writer Good Gothic Gripping  
 Haiku Hardback/ Hard cover Haunting Heart-breaking  
 Heart-wrenching Heavy Hero Hilarious/ Side splitting  
 Historical fiction Historical period Homage How-to book  
 Humorous Iconic Idiotic/ ridiculous Illustrations  
 Illustrator Imagery Important Impressive  
 Infamous/ Notorious Influential Informative  
 Infuriating Inspiring Instruction manual Intriguing  
 Ironic Joyful Large print Laugh out loud Launch  
 Length of each chapter Length of sentences Length of the book  
 Life affirming Life changing Life lessons Light  
 Location Lyrical Magic(al) realism Memoir Memorable

Message/ Moral	Meta	Metaphorical	Mind-boggling/ Mystifying
Mind-numbing/ stupefying	Minor character	Miserable	Moral of the story
Motif	Moving	Multiple narrators/ Multiple viewpoints	
Murder mystery/ Whodunit	Myth/ Mythology	Narcissistic	
Narrative poem	Nice/ pleasant	Non-linear	Nonsense verse
Novel	Novelisation	Novella	Nursery rhymes
Odd/ Weird	Omniscient narrator	Once in a lifetime	Out of print
Over the top	Overrated	Pace/ Pacing	Page-turner
Paperback/ Softcover	Parable	Part of a series	Personal
Petrifying/ terrifying	Picture book	Plagiarism	Play
Pleasing	Plot device	Poem/ Poetry	Pointless
Political position/ Worldview	Popular science	Positive adjectives	
Posthumous	Predictable	Prequel	Pre-school
Previous works by the same writer		Previous works from the same publisher	
Previous works in the same series	Prose	Prose poem	Protagonist(s)
Publisher	Pulp	Radical	Rambling
Realist/ Realistic	Reference book	Reissue	Religion/ Spirituality
Romance	Run of the mill	Sad	Sales (figures)
Satisfying	Sci-fi	Screenplay	Self-help
Self-study (textbook)	Sequel	Serious	Shocking
Silly	Simple/ straightforward	Sonnet	Sophisticated
Spare	Special	Spinoff	Standalone
Stream of consciousness	Study guide	Stunning	Subplot
Subtle	Subversive	Surprising	Suspense(ful)
Symbol/ Symbolism/ Symbolic		Taboo-breaking	Thesaurus
Third person	Thriller	Thrilling	Timeless
To the point	Translation/ Translator	Trashy	
Travel guide/ Travel book	Two-volume	Unbelievable	Unconvincing
Underrated	Understated	Unforgettable	Unique
Unoriginal	Unpleasant	Un-put-downable	Unrelenting
Unreliable narrator	Unrelieved...	Unsuccessful	Uplifting
Western	Witty	Worthless	YA

*Ask about any words above which you couldn't understand or couldn't put on your mind map, putting them on your mind map each time.*

*Try to find or think of words with opposite meanings to words above.*

*Try to find or think of words which have similar meanings to words above, i.e. extreme adjectives which mean "very/ extremely" + one of those adjectives.*

*Compare as a class or with the suggested answers.*

**Vocabulary for book reviews opposites suggested answers**

- Acclaimed – Panned
- Avant-garde/ Experimental/ Radical – Conventional
- Awful/ dreadful/ terrible – Brilliant/ excellent/ fabulous/ fantastic/ splendid/ superb/ terrific/ wonderful
- Boring/ Dull – Exciting/ Interesting
- Complicated – Simple/ straightforward
- Concise/ To the point – Rambling
- Dated – Classic/ Timeless
- Depressing/ Miserable – Joyful/ Life affirming/ Uplifting
- Disappointing – Satisfying
- Distinctive/ Original/ Unique – Derivative/ Unoriginal/ Rip off
- Exceptional/ Outstanding – Run of the mill
- Famous – Obscure
- Fascinating – Mind-numbing/ stupefying
- Fiction – Non-fiction
- First person (narration) – Third person
- Flashback – Foreshadowing
- Forgettable – Memorable/ Unforgettable
- Hardback/ Hard cover – Paperback/ Softcover
- Hero – Antagonist/ Anti-hero
- Historical – Sci-fi
- Homage – Satire
- Inspiring – Uninspiring
- Negative adjectives – Positive adjectives
- Nice/ pleasant – Unpleasant/ Revolting
- Novel – Short story
- Over the top – Subtle/ Understated
- Overrated – Neglected/ Underrated
- Part of a series - Standalone
- Poetry – Prose
- Predictable – Shocking/ Surprising
- Prequel – Sequel
- Serious – Silly

*Ask about any words above which you think have different meanings, are not sure how to pronounce, etc.*

### Comparing book review vocabulary

*Explain the differences between the words on each line below. Note that sometimes the differences are quite small.*

- Amusing/ Hilarious
- Annoying/ Infuriating
- Article/ Essay
- Astonishing/ Surprising
- Autobiography/ Biography
- Autobiography/ Memoir
- Awe inspiring/ Impressive
- Awful/ Bad
- Boring/ Mind-numbing
- Brilliant/ Good
- Cathartic/ Depressing
- Cathartic/ Uplifting
- Challenging/ Difficult
- Classic/ Timeless
- Clichéd/ Run of the mill
- Collaborator/ Ghost writer
- Comic/ Comic strip
- Complicated/ Confusing
- Critical success/ Popular success
- Depressing/ Miserable
- Derivative/ A rip off
- Disastrous/ Unsuccessful
- Essential/ Important
- Exceptional/ Special
- Exciting/ Thrilling
- Exciting/ Uplifting
- Excruciating/ Painful
- Fable/ Moral
- Fable/ Fairy tale
- Famous/ Infamous
- Fantastic/ Good
- Fantasy/ Sci-fi
- Fascinating/ Interesting
- Frightening/ Petrifying
- Heart-breaking/ Heart-wrenching
- Hero/ Protagonist
- How-to book/ (Instruction) manual
- Idiotic/ Silly
- Illustrations/ Imagery
- Inspiring/ Life affirming
- Life affirming/ Life changing
- Life lesson/ Moral
- Location/ Setting
- Lovely/ Nice



- Memorable/ Unforgettable
- Mind-boggling/ Mind-numbing
- Motif/ Symbolism
- Motif/ Theme
- Moving/ Heart-wrenching
- Novel/ Novella
- Novella/ Short story
- Original/ Unique
- Over the top/ Overrated
- Page turner/ Readable
- Pointless/ Worthless
- Prequel/ Sequel
- Religion/ Spirituality
- Revolting/ Unpleasant
- Romance/ Bodice ripper
- Thriller/ Whodunit
- Travel guide/ Travel book
- Unbelievable/ Unconvincing/ Unreliable narrator

*Find pairs above where one word means “very/ extremely” + the other word, and circle the stronger word.*

*Which word is an “extreme adjective” and which word is a “gradable adjective” in each pair? Why do they have those names?*

*Which adverbs can go with each kind of word?*

### **Gradable and extreme adjectives for book reviews suggested answers**

- Amusing – Hilarious/ Side-splitting
- Bad – Awful/ dreadful/ terrible
- Boring/ Dull – Mind-numbing/ stupefying
- Complicated/ Confusing – Mind boggling/ mystifying
- Disappointing – Devastating
- Exciting – Gripping/ Thrilling
- Frightening/ scary – Petrifying/ terrifying
- Good – Brilliant/ excellent/ fabulous/ fantastic/ splendid/ superb/ terrific/ wonderful
- Impressive/ Awe inspiring
- Interesting – Captivating/ fascinating/ spellbinding
- Irritating/ Infuriating
- Memorable – Unforgettable
- Moving – Heart wrenching
- Nice/ pleasant – Charming/ delightful/ lovely
- Original – Unique
- Painful – Excruciating
- Sad – Devastating/ heart-breaking
- Silly – Idiotic/ Ridiculous
- Special – Exceptional
- Surprising – Astonishing/ Shocking
- Unpleasant – Revolting
- Unsuccessful – Disastrous

*Without looking above, try to think of words which mean “very/ extremely” + the words below (i.e. extreme versions of these gradable adjectives).*

admired, respected or well-respected  
attractive, good looking or pretty  
big or large  
bright  
busy  
challenging, difficult, hard or tricky  
cool or cold  
crowded  
dirty  
disappointed  
drunk, merry, or tipsy  
dry  
energetic  
expensive or pricey  
glad, happy or pleased  
hot or warm  
hungry or peckish  
important or necessary  
impressed  
little or small  
loud or noisy  
old  
poor  
rich or wealthy  
sleepy or tired  
tasty  
thirsty  
ugly  
unimportant  
wet  
yucky

*Without looking above, try to think of gradable versions of these extreme adjectives.*

ancient  
awestruck  
baking, boiling or roasting  
crucial, vital or essential  
dazzling  
delicious, mouth-watering or lip-smacking  
devastated  
dirt-poor or poverty-stricken  
ear-splitting  
exhausted, knackered, wrecked or shattered  
exorbitant  
filthy  
freezing or frozen  
gigantic, huge, massive or enormous  
gorgeous or stunning  
hideous  
hyper  
idolised  
impossible  
loaded or filthy rich  
overjoyed  
packed or cram-packed  
parched  
parched  
pointless or worthless  
revolting, sickening or repulsive  
rushed off my feet  
soaked or sopping  
starving or dying of hunger  
tiny, miniscule or minute  
wasted, wrecked, or blotto

*Match the words on this page and the page above.*

**Other gradable and extreme adjectives suggested answers**

- admired, respected or well-respected/ idolised
- attractive, good looking or pretty/ gorgeous or stunning
- big or large/ gigantic, huge, massive or enormous
- bright/ dazzling
- busy/ rushed off my feet
- challenging, difficult, hard or tricky/ impossible
- cool or cold/ freezing or frozen
- crowded/ packed or cram-packed
- dirty/ filthy
- disappointed/ devastated
- drunk, merry, or tipsy/ wasted, wrecked, or blotto
- dry/ parched
- energetic/ hyper
- expensive or pricey/ exorbitant
- glad, happy or pleased/ overjoyed
- hot or warm/ baking, boiling or roasting
- hungry or peckish/ starving or dying of hunger
- important or necessary/ crucial, vital or essential
- impressed/ awestruck
- little or small/ tiny, miniscule or minute
- loud or noisy/ ear-splitting
- old/ ancient
- poor/ dirt-poor or poverty-stricken
- rich or wealthy/ loaded or filthy rich
- sleepy or tired/ exhausted, knackered, wrecked or shattered
- tasty/ delicious, mouth-watering or lip-smacking
- thirsty/ parched
- ugly/ hideous
- unimportant/ pointless or worthless
- wet/ soaked or sopping
- yucky/ revolting, sickening or repulsive

*Test each other on the words above.*

### Top-selling books to discuss

*Use as much of the vocabulary above as you can to discuss books which you both/ all know such as these.*

- 20,000 Leagues under the Sea by Jules Verne
- A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking
- A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens
- Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll
- And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie
- Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery
- Black Beauty by Anna Sewell
- Catch-22 by Joseph Heller
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl
- Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
- Chicken Soup for the Soul by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen
- Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
- Eye of the Needle by Ken Follett
- Fifty Shades of Grey by E. L. James
- Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell
- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
- Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney
- Guinness World Records
- Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling
- How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
- Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific in a Raft by Thor Heyerdahl
- Life of Pi by Yann Martel
- Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Love Story by Erich Segal
- Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus by John Gray
- Norwegian Wood by Haruki Murakami
- One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
- Perfume by Patrick Süskind
- Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
- Roget's Thesaurus
- Shōgun by James Clavell
- Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey
- The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
- The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi
- The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle
- The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho
- The Bridges of Madison County by Robert James Waller
- The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss
- The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
- The Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield
- The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis
- The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care by Dr Benjamin Spock

- The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown
- the Diary of a Wimpy Kid books by Jeff Kinney
- The Diary of Anne Frank
- The Eagle Has Landed by Jack Higgins
- The Exorcist by William Peter Blatty
- The Fault in Our Stars by John Green
- The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins
- The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson
- The Godfather by Mario Puzo
- the Goosebumps series by R.L. Stine
- The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
- The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson
- The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams
- The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkein
- The Horse Whisperer by Nicholas Evans
- The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
- The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins
- The Joy of Sex by Alex Comfort
- The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis
- The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupery
- The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold
- The Michelin Guide
- The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco
- The Neverending Story by Michael Ende
- The Odyssey by Homer
- The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway
- The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett
- The Plague by Albert Camus
- The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale
- The Prophet by Khalil Gibran
- The Stranger/ The Outsider by Albert Camus
- The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter
- The Vampire Chronicles by Anne Rice
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe
- To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
- Totto-chan, the Little Girl at the Window by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi
- Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom
- War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy
- What to Expect When You're Expecting by Arlene Eisenberg and Heidi Murkoff
- Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- Where's Wally? by Martin Handford
- Who Moved My Cheese? by Spencer Johnson
- Wild Swans by Jung Chang