Introduce Persuasive Book Review Writing

Hold up the book review section of a local newspaper and/or printouts of book reviews from booksellers’ websites. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about how book reviews may affect the choices you make as a reader.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I have some reviews here of a book called Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo. I’m trying to decide if I want to read it or not. From these reviews, I get a sense of the book’s plot. It’s the story of a girl who finds a dog in a grocery store. The dog helps the girl through a difficult time in her life. I love stories about animals, so I think I might like this book. One of the reviews says that the book has funny parts—that’s another thing about the story I think I would enjoy. Another review says that the author creates interesting characters, and this reviewer says it’s a good book. And here it says that the book won a big award—the Newbery Honor. This book just sounds better and better! I can’t wait to read it and see if I agree with these reviews.

Say: These reviews helped me make up my mind about whether I want to read Because of Winn-Dixie. Book reviews give descriptions of the plot, characters, and setting, but they are not just a summary of the book. Book reviews give the reviewer’s opinion—whether he or she liked the book, and why. Book reviews can also give information about awards the book may have received or information about the author.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Persuasive Book Review Writing

Say: A book review is an example of persuasive writing. That’s writing that tries to convince the reader to think or do something. When I write a book review, I try to persuade someone to either read or not read the book I’m reviewing. I give reasons why the book is worth reading or not. I love books, and I enjoy writing reviews because it is a good way to share the books I really like with other people. If I read a book that I can’t put down, I want other people to read and enjoy it, too. The audience for my book reviews is my students, friends, and family, but you can write book reviews for anyone who likes to read.
2. Rehearse

Practice Telling Book Reviews Orally

Invite students to work with a partner. Encourage students to talk about a book that they recently read. Ask students to talk about whether they liked the book or not and why, and whether they recommend that others read the book, too. The partner listening should be prepared to share with the class the book his or her partner read and what the partner thought of it.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Book Reviews with the Class

Invite volunteers to tell which book their partner chose, what their partner liked or didn’t like about it, and whether the partner recommends the book to others. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the exercise.

Person recalling the idea
- What book did your partner talk about?
- Why did your partner like the book?

Listener
- What did you learn about your partner’s book?
- Did your partner convince you to read this book? How?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that a book review describes a book and gives the reviewer’s opinion of it. We read book reviews to discover books that we might like to read, and we write them to share books that we love, as well as to let readers know about books we don’t like. In the next several weeks, we will look at how to write book reviews that engage and persuade readers.

Encourage students to write a paragraph about the book they talked to their partner about, or a different book they remember reading.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three volunteers to share their paragraphs describing a book they read.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners to “Practice Telling Book Reviews Orally.” Encourage them to describe their book and their opinion of it in any way they can—with words or gestures. Expand on their ideas with simple sentences.

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Write simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to describe a book and their opinion of it. For example:

- The book is about ______.
- I like the book because ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: description/la descripción; opinion/la opinión; persuasive/persuasivo(a).