

Writing a Brief Book Review for a Magazine

A book review for a magazine (print or online) does not have to be as thorough as a book report or a critical essay. (You'll notice below, for example, that paragraphs do not have to be very long and there are no references to page numbers or research). The book review should:

Content:

- (1) Identify a theme that might be familiar or interesting to readers.
- (2) Briefly profile the writer: What is he/she famous for? What are his/her previous books? Awards? (If he/she is not well known, you might need to give basic information as well.)
- (3) Give a sense of the main storyline and characters of the book, perhaps focusing on one or two key scenes or ideas.
- (4) Briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

Format:

- (1) The review should be no more than 6 paragraphs or 500 words in length.
- (2) The title can be simple: A Review of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Or it can focus on a theme in the book.
- (3) Write a tagline below the title, summarizing the review and including your full name.
- (4) Do not use subheadings in the body of the text.
- (5) Include the following at the end of the review: title, author, number of pages, publisher, price (in local currency).
- (6) Please include your contact information in the draft.

***Player One* by Douglas Coupland: Review**

Ian Critchley on Douglas Coupland's vision of the forthcoming Apocalypse, *Player One*

Douglas Coupland is fascinated by the prospect of apocalypse. In his first novel, *Generation X*, one of the narrator's friends tells stories about the end of the world, including one where nuclear war breaks out while the protagonists are in a supermarket. In his latest novel, Coupland suggests that doomsday will be triggered by the realisation that oil is running out.

The story starts innocuously. Four characters converge on a cocktail bar in a Toronto airport hotel, a building resembling "the third-best restaurant in the fourth-largest city in Bulgaria." There is the barman, recovering alcoholic Rick, and three customers: Luke, a pastor who has stolen \$20,000 from his church; Rachel, a beautiful 17-year-old who seems like an automaton; and Karen, a 40-year-old divorcee meeting a man she contacted online.

A disembodied voice called Player One comments on events like a Greek chorus. We are meant to identify this voice with Rachel, who suffers from autism and mentions that only when she plays video games (using an avatar named Player One) does she feel free from the restrictions of her disorder.

When the news emerges that the oil price has hit \$250 a barrel, all hell breaks loose. There are explosions, and chemical clouds darken the sky; the four barricade themselves inside the bar against a sniper keen on settling some scores.

Though Armageddon is in progress, the characters seem remarkably lacking in fear or despair. Already prone to metaphysical musings when they arrived in the bar, their views on faith, time and love become more long-winded the more dire their situation becomes.

Coupland seems less interested in creating plausible characters than vehicles for his ramblings. The novel, based on a series of the author's lectures, forsakes narrative for disquisition. Worse, all the characters are similar to the disembodied Player One. They are more like computer avatars than people – colourful and briefly entertaining, but two-dimensional.

Player One by Douglas Coupland
256 pp, William Heinemann, £16.99

Source: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8006539/Player-One-by-Douglas-Coupland-review.html>>