



## **MHR guidance for writing book reviews**

### **Journal-specific information**

- After submission, there will be 2 rounds of peer review by an assistant editor who is broadly familiar with the subject of the book review. Only book reviews which have undergone peer review will be considered for publication.
- Please see the website for examples of book reviews published by the journal:  
<http://www.midlandshistoricalreview.com/book-reviews/>

### **Key guidelines for format of book reviews**

- A review should ideally be around 1,500 words. However, longer reviews will be accepted, and the peer review process often results in some lengthening of pieces, so this is intended as a general guideline only.
- Please include some background literature to situate the book in its wider context. This need not be much (the reviews on the website vary greatly in this regard: 4-5 references would definitely be adequate). Authors nearly always cover their influences and inspiration in the introduction, so start by looking at the references for this if you are unsure.
- A standard approach is to structure your review around the chapters of the book. If you choose this approach, please ensure that you are critical of them. This approach typically also involves a few paragraphs at the end to address wider issues.  
A different approach is to use your review to write about broader themes which the writer engages with, almost like a mini-essay – this is equally valid and can be very useful for fellow academic readers who want to know where the book sits in relation to current debates.
- Please ensure that you follow the journal's style guidelines:  
<http://www.midlandshistoricalreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Midlands-Historical-Review-Guide-for-authors-EDITED.pdf>

### **Optional areas to write about**

- Who is the author and why are they writing? Are they an academic or do they have a more specific motive for writing the book?
- What is the author's main argument (most academic books will have one)? Is it revisionist? Is it convincing?
- Being critical does not just involve criticising a book. It also encompasses what the book does well, or better, than others in the field.
- How is the book structured? Is it chronological or thematic?
- Can you comment on the style of the book: is it clear and engaging? Is it aimed at an academic or a popular audience?
- What evidence did the author use to write the book (archival documents, interviews etc.)?
- Is the book well-referenced?
- Does the book include figures (e.g. maps) or other images? Do they help or are they too generic?
- Ensure that your review is fair: it should not be overly praise-worthy, nor should it attack the author or misrepresent the book.
- For more general advice on writing book reviews, see also:  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studyingeffectively/writing/writingtasks/bookreviews.aspx>  
<http://blogs.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humsresearchers/2010/06/02/writing-book-reviews/>