


Stars and Words: Reviewing Book Reviews

Gregg Bridgeman

EIC at Olivia Kimbrell Press™, Inc.


Olivia Kimbrell Press™

Agenda

1. Types of book reviews.
2. Why are book reviews important?
3. How to get reader reviews.
4. How can you get more organic reviews?
5. Responding to Reviews.

Agenda 1: Types of book reviews.

- Expert Reviews
- Trade Reviews
- Friends, Family, and Financially-tied
- Reader reviews

Bad Review? You are NOT alone.

Case Study #1





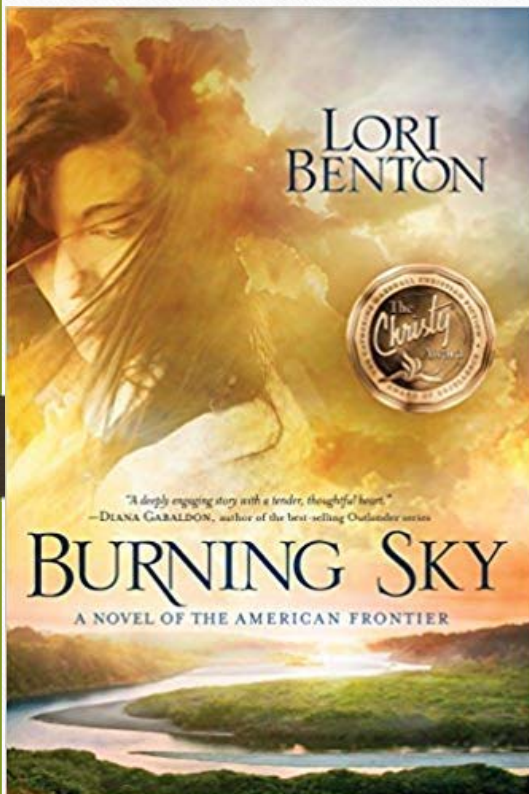
Lori Benton

Through celebrating the redemptive power of Jesus Christ in the form of story, I've discovered something that touches my heart more deeply than I could have imagined before publication. While I have my conversation with the Lord about the characters, story, and themes during the writing of each book, once that book is in your hands it becomes your turn. To each story you read, you bring everything that makes you individually, irreplaceably *you*. Therefore my prayer is that through each of my novels our Heavenly Father speaks to your heart something uniquely meant for you. That you turn the final page more in love with our merciful Jesus than when you began.

—<https://loribenton.com/about>

Burning Sky by Lori Benton

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group

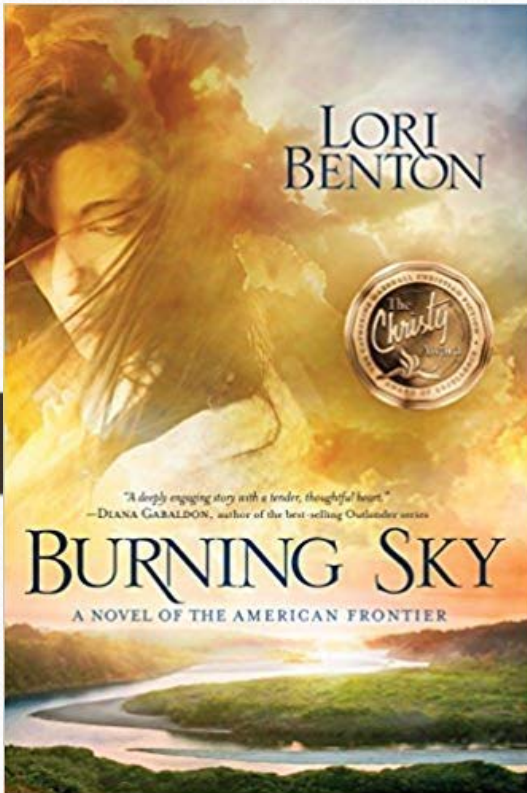


Abducted by Mohawk Indians at fourteen and renamed Burning Sky, Willa Obenchain is driven to return to her family's New York frontier homestead after many years building a life with the People. At the boundary of her father's property, Willa discovers a wounded Scotsman lying in her path. Feeling obliged to nurse his injuries, the two quickly find much has changed during her twelve-year absence: her childhood home is in disrepair, her missing parents are rumored to be Tories, and the young Richard Waring she once admired is now grown into a man twisted by the horrors of war and claiming ownership of the Obenchain land.

The intricate exploration of human emotion is riveting, evoking strong sympathetic responses. Much of the novel's allure comes from the depiction of faith as a touchstone—something to be lived with love, humor, and devotion.

— Publisher's Weekly

... riveting, evoking... faith as a touchstone...



Burning Sky by Lori Benton

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group

Finalist for the ECPA 2014 Christian Book Award

Winner for the 2014 Christy Award for **First Novel**

Winner for the 2014 Christy Award for **Historical**

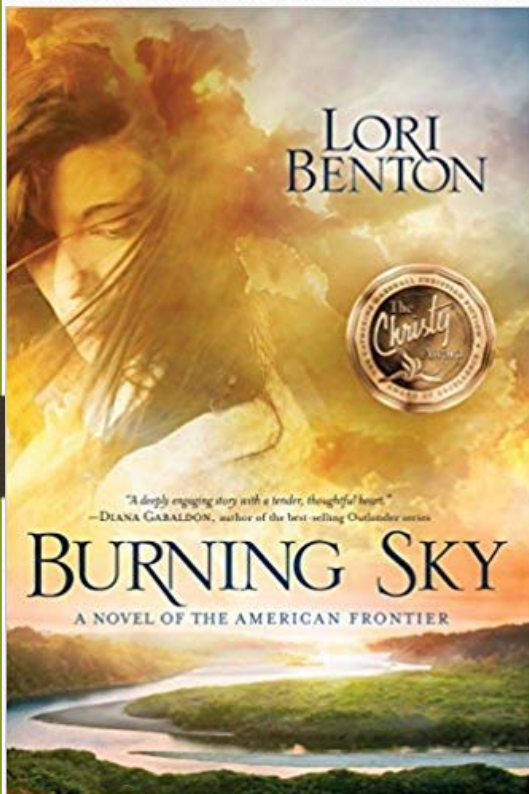
Winner for the 2014 Christy Award for **Book of the Year**

Sample narrative:

“The air inside the cabin swirled with stale memories, echoes of once-familiar voices trapped within, awaiting her coming to free them.”

Burning Sky by Lori Benton

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group



rated it ★★★★★

Nov 16, 2016

Shelves: christian, ebook, did-not-finish, et-tu-brute, historical-fiction, i-must-hate-myself, me-no-likey, romance, why-do-i-do-this-to-myself

I was well past the halfway point before I gave up on *Burning Sky*, because in all that time nothing happens. After reading for what feels like forever, due to the boring storyline and almost nonexistent plot, it became apparent that the love interest I was rooting for wasn't going to get the girl, so I decided I'd wasted enough time.

... After reading for what feels like forever, due to the boring storyline and almost nonexistent plot...

Expert Reviews



Expert- one with the special skill or knowledge representing mastery of a particular subject. (merriam-webster.com)

If Karen Kingsbury or Frank Peretti recommends a book, readers will probably take a chance on it. That's the power of an expert review.

Expert reviews are similar to endorsements, and the two are often interchangeable.

Favorable reviews from successful authors in your genre are often invaluable to fiction authors.

Favorable reviews from experts in the field are almost mandatory for non-fiction works.

Trade Reviews



These are reviews from sources that exist to serve publishers and the publishing industry. Review sources like Publishers Weekly, Kirkus, Foreword Reviews, and others are read by members of the trade, including librarians, booksellers, media, distributors and more.

Trade Reviews usually require books to be submitted for review a minimum of **three months** before publication, and editors choose the books that will receive reviews. Kirkus, Foreword, and others offer fee-for-review services that guarantee reviews for your book.

Friends, Family, and Financially-tied



Also clansmen, kinfolk, cousins, coworkers, chums, collaborators, comrades, confederates, and confidantes.

Gregg Bridgeman could write the most objective and comprehensive review possible on any Hallee Bridgeman novel, but anyone reading that review could not help but let the relationship Hallee and I enjoy color the content of the review.

If you are related to the reviewer by blood or marriage, have financial ties in any way, or if you've been best friends since grade school, it is likely that most places will target these reviews for removal.

Reader reviews

- There are so many things to learn about reader reviews that we are going to camp out here for a while. Break out the S'mores supplies.
- Introducing the Reader Reviewers...





The Spoiler-Revealing Reviewer

- “Rosebud’s the SLED!” “Bruce Willis is a GHOST!” “The BUTLER did it!”
- Many books rely on revealing plot points to the reader only as the unfolds. Yet some reviewers feel the need to record them in their reviews.
- Most spoiler reviews simply give away all the plot twists in your book like a fifth grade book review, making reading the book itself entirely unnecessary or entirely unsatisfying.
- Brace yourself. There will usually be **at least one** of these in your **first twenty** reviews.

The Never-Read-It Reviewer

- In my opinion, someone who reviews a book they've never read has a nefarious purpose, either to **promote** or **prevent** the reading of it.
- Authors might suggest they don't mind as long as it's a positive review, but they should. **Reader reviews aren't for authors, they're for potential readers.** As a reader, there's nothing worse than relying on a review and being deceived into wasting money and time.
- Platforms like Amazon usually don't allow a review of a product that hasn't been bought directly from them so that helps a little bit.
- Platforms like Goodreads rely on the honesty of the reading community they have assembled. That system can be, and often has been, **badly trolled**.

I
**NEVER
READ
I JUST
LOOK
AT
PICTURES**
Andy Warhol

The Never-Finished-Reading-It Reviewer

- I waded through the bog of words that was *The Brothers Karamazov* by Feodor Dostoevsky, and it wasn't until nearly the very last page—that book changed my life.
- However, everyone has started reading at least one book they just couldn't manage to get through. For me, it's Tom Clancy's 1996 *Debt of Honor* which, to be fair, I started immediately after his 1995 masterpiece entitled *Without Remorse*.
- Plenty of people justify reviewing a book they haven't actually read it to the end, usually citing their inability to finish as evidence that the book was just too boring to hold their interest.
- Any review that starts with, "I didn't finish this book..." is one I automatically disregard.



The Rating-Without-Explanation Reviewer

- I get that most people don't have time to write lengthy reviews, but I also automatically disregard any one-star or five-star ratings if they don't have an accompanying review that explains why. After all, a book ought to be completely awful to be rated one star and utterly amazing to be rated five stars.
- A one-star or five-star rating without going into the reason why is open to interpretation. Is it one star because the reader doesn't like that genre but thought they'd give it a try anyway? Or is it one-star because it was a truly terrible book? Or is this reviewer just a troll? Without an adequate explanation, the rating is close to meaningless.

The Nightmare Reviewer

- This reviewer has some sort of agenda that precludes him or her from responding sincerely to the book.
- Often that agenda is as simple as trying to seem clever/authoritative or taking someone who has received more than her fair share of attention down a notch or two.

7 WAYS
to hate a book



The Ninny-Neatnick-Nitpicking Reviewer

To nitpick

To correct minutiae or find fault in unimportant details; to kvetch.

- The nitpicking review gets caught up on **one tiny little thing** and is then based entirely on that one thing.
- Example: One reviewer couldn't get past the fact that the story was set during a **Key West, Florida Christmas**, making it hot and entirely **lacking in snow**. Even though half the world celebrates Christmas without snow, the reader was particularly annoyed that the story didn't include magical snowfall.
- The review lends no idea whether the book was any good, just that she didn't like that single aspect of it.



The Short Thoughtful Reviewer

- “Three stars. A traditional clean romance with feisty main characters and a lovely HEA.”
- It doesn’t get much shorter or sweeter than that. And while the author might prefer four or five stars, it’s the kind of review that will speak directly to the target audience for a book of that genre.
- A sentence or a paragraph is all that most writers want because a sentence or a paragraph is all that most potential readers will read before moving onto the next review.





“

There are some Christian readers who
NEVER give ANY book (that isn't
the BIBLE) a 5 star review.

”

This behavior, of course, tends to flatten the bell curve for our reviews because in their minds, a 4 Star review means it was perfect and a 3 star review means they really liked it.

The Mid-Length Musing Reviewer



- The mid-length musing review is more likely to be seen and read in full on a book blog and is more likely to be written by an influencer or book reviewer (amateur, aspiring, established, or otherwise) and appreciated by bibliophiles.
- You will know exactly why the reviewer did or didn't like the book and, in most cases, it will have just enough detail for the author to think, "Hmmm, I must remember this part of the critique when I'm writing my next book."
- Unless it devolves into a rant—always a possibility when someone feels strongly enough to write a mid-length musing review—then it's always worth giving it some consideration.

The Long Essay Reviewer

- This is the kind of review most writers only dream of, thousands of words dedicated to a genuinely thoughtful consideration of the author and her book.
- These will usually appear in trades like newspapers and magazines and will be written by professional critics who weave the story of the author and her writing of the book into his review of the book itself.
- These are flattering for authors (assuming they're positive) but they're mostly for hard-core readers and they're few and far between for writers who don't have a lot of recognizable **symbolic capital**.

HAPPY♥EVER♥AFTER



USA TODAY Interview: Hallee Bridgeman,
author of 'Jade's Match'

<https://happyeverafter.usatoday.com>

By: Joyce Lamb | January 25, 2018 12:01 am

Joyce: Welcome to HEA, Hallee! Please tell us a bit about your new release, *Jade's Match* (Jewel Series #7).

Hallee: I was watching the opening ceremonies of the Rio Olympics and saw several athletes holding smartphones up to the crowd. Out of nowhere, the idea for this book, *Jade's Match*, came to mind. I immediately started researching Olympics, Olympic training, and reached out to Team USA hockey's director of communications and had a back-and-forth exchange where he answered all of my silly questions.

The idea of a phone company hiring an athlete to take their phones into the Games and share his journey with the world just seemed like something that a phone company would do. So that's where I started. When my research revealed that the first Team USA hockey game would fall on Valentine's Day, the whole "pretend social media romance" between a Rio Games silver medalist and a hockey star just all clicked together.

Joyce: Is there interesting that's happened to you while doing research for a book?

Hallee: I was in Richmond, Virginia, interviewing the prosecuting attorney for the city of Richmond for my book *A Carol for Kent*. Her job was my character Carol's job in the book. She was quite wonderful in opening her world to me. I spent the day there, asking dozens of questions, looking through crime scene photos and reports, looking through exhibits for court, and finished my day sitting in court, watching all of the players do their thing.

When she asked me about the plot of my book, I started telling her about my serial killer, the methods and the character traits of my killer. She was incredibly stoic as I spoke, and I started feeling very uncomfortable, very silly, and thought she'd laugh and call me foolish.

Symbolic Capital

- British sociologist John Thompson writes that (besides cash money), the most important resource for an author is **symbolic capital**, which he defines as “the accumulated prestige and status associated with the publishing house.”
- Symbolic capital is part of your **brand** and should be considered in your **branding strategy**.
- New authors—certainly self-published authors—have no symbolic capital with their first book. They are not (yet) known for producing quality books that influence readers to the degree that they are willing to part with some of their disposable income, not to mention time.
- Reader reviews build symbolic capital. A shopper evaluating a book for purchase when it has no, or few, reader reviews is like the hungry guest walking into an empty restaurant. *How good can this place be if no one is here eating?*
- **PUT A PIN IN THIS. WE WILL COME BACK TO THIS CONCEPT.**

Reader Reviews Recap

- Reader reviews are written **by readers, for readers**. You, the author, are not the intended audience.
- Collectively, Reader Reviews potentially influence **anyone** who would have anything to do with your book from agents to editors to potential influencers to readers.
- Recent studies reveal that the majority of younger readers seek at least 20 third-party reviews with a 3.86 or greater average rating as **symbolic capital** before potentially making a positive purchasing decision.

Agenda

- ~~1. Types of book reviews.~~
2. Why are book reviews important?
3. How to get reader reviews.
4. How can you get more organic reviews?
5. Responding to Reviews.



Agenda 2: Why are book reviews important?

- Personal Validation
- Influencing Readers
- Influencing Influencers
- Influencing Decision Makers



Bad Review? You are NOT alone.

Case Study #2

Sigmund Brouwer

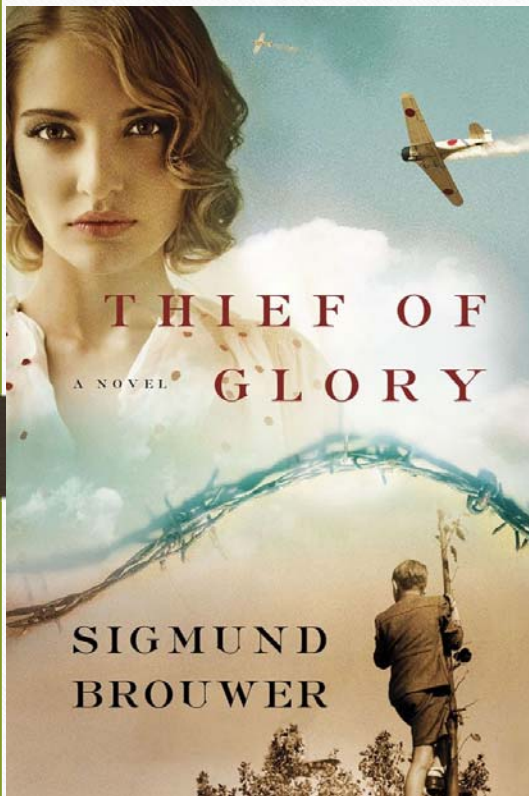


Sigmund Brouwer is the best-selling Canadian author of nearly thirty novels, with close to 4 million books in print. He has won the Christy Book of the Year and the Arthur Ellis award, as well as being nominated for two TD Children's Literature Awards and the Red Maple Award. Sigmund splits his time between Red Deer, Alberta and Nashville, Tennessee.

—<https://sigmundbrouwer.com/about-sigmund/>

Thief of Glory by Sigmund Brouwer

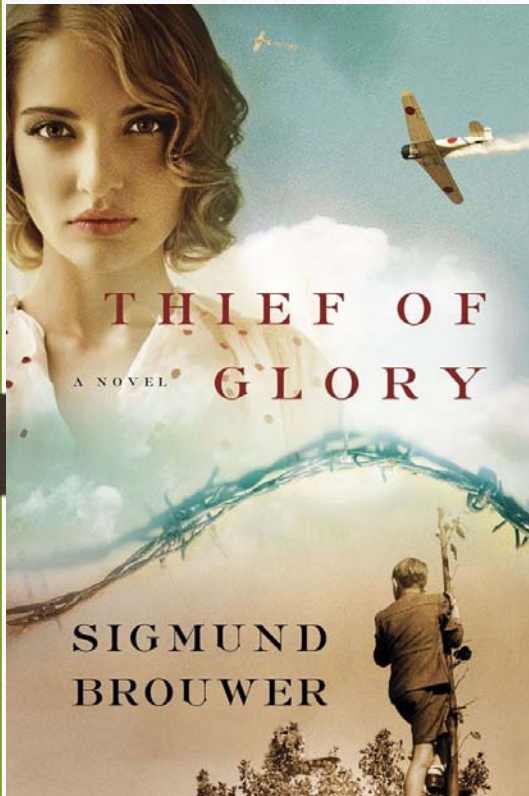
WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group



For ten year-old Jeremiah Prins, a life of privilege as the son of a school headmaster in the Dutch East Indies comes crashing to a halt in 1942. When the Japanese Imperialist army invades the Southeast Pacific, and his father and older stepbrothers are separated from the rest of the family, Jeremiah takes on the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings. But he is surprised by what life in the camp reveals about his frail, troubled mother—a woman he barely knows.

Amidst starvation, brutality, sacrifice and generosity, Jeremiah draws on all of his courage and cunning to fill in the gap his father and brothers left behind. Life in the camps is made more tolerable as Jeremiah's boyhood infatuation with his close friend Laura deepens into a friendship from which they both draw strength.

When the darkest sides of humanity threaten to overwhelm Jeremiah and Laura, they reach for God's light and grace, shining through his people. Time and war will test their fortitude and the only thing that will bring them safely to the other side is the most enduring bond of all.



Thief of Glory by Sigmund Brouwer

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group

INSPIY Award Shortlist 2015 Nominee for General Fiction

Winner for the 2015 Lime Award for Historical Fiction

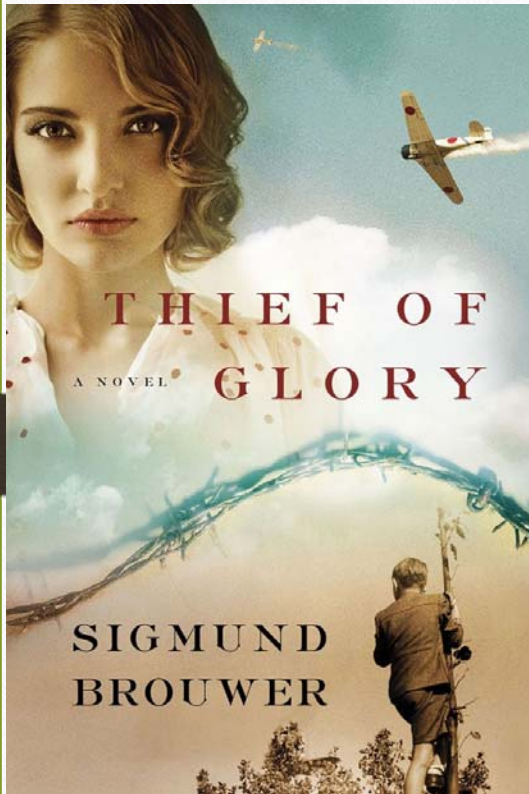
Winner for the 2015 Christy Award for **Historical Romance**

Winner for the 2015 Christy Award for **Book of the Year**

Video:

“Sigmund’s father talks about his boyhood in an internment camp in the Dutch East Indies”

<https://youtu.be/oqIATKkKIfE>



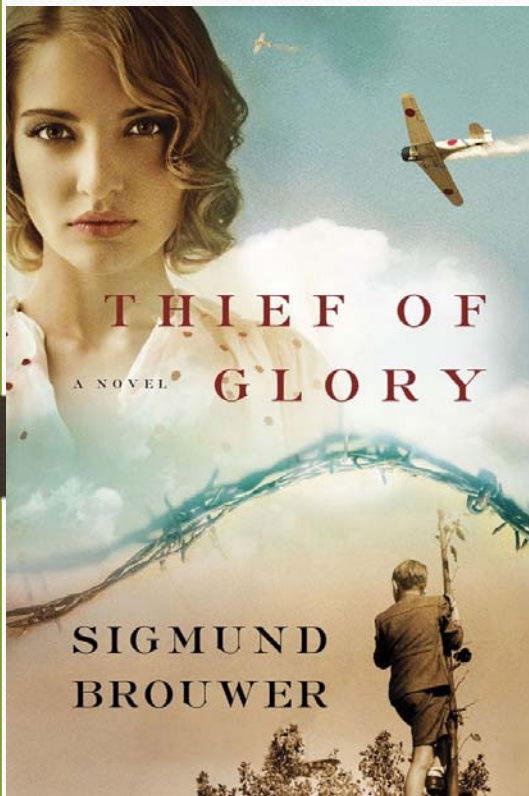
Thief of Glory by Sigmund Brouwer

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group

He recounts his life's story in a series of journals, describing events and people from the war and reflecting on his resultant emotional and spiritual states. Thorough historical research, skillful use of foreshadowing, and keen insight into the human spirit make this one of Brouwer's best.

—Publisher's Weekly

Thorough historical research, skillful use of foreshadowing, and keen insight into the human spirit ...



Thief of Glory by Sigmund Brouwer

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group

★★★★☆ Overall, a bust

Reviewed in the United States on December 6, 2018

Format: Library Binding

... continually foreshadowed events...

I had a bit of a trouble getting into this book. It would have been much better if it had been written in the voice of a 10 year old, instead of an 80 year old retelling his past. Unfortunately, this is a big distinction which would have made a huge difference. As a 10 year old, Jeremiah continually foreshadowed events, which I find to be a particularly annoying writing technique. Overall, a bust.



Amazon Customer

★★★★☆ Disappointed

Reviewed in the United States on October 14, 2015

Format: Kindle Edition | **Verified Purchase**

... not enough meat in the story...

I didn't like this book at all. It was very difficult to get into and when I finally did the ending was disappointing. A lot of graphic WWII things but not enough meat in the story to go with it. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone unless they will read ANY book on or about WWII.

Personal Validation

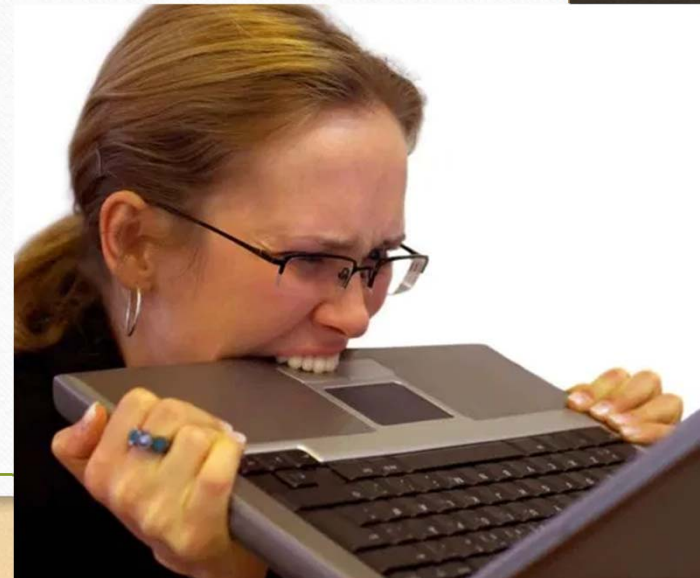
You worked **hard**. You stayed up late, got up early, pushed through writer's block, and avoided friends and family and social media to write.

You skipped meals, jumped out of the shower to make a note, sacrificed sleep, drank WAY too much coffee, endured critiques and edits, and written blurbs and the dreaded SYNOPSIS!

Finally, at long last—you finished writing your book.

It was like a long, long, labor of love.

Kind of like...



Validation

You have invested literally everything you know, and everything you are, to create a baby.

Your baby's name is "My Novel."

Naturally, you want everyone—literally EVERYONE—to look upon your baby and instantly love your baby.

Some people are going to do exactly that. These people are called your "demographic."

Some will grow to love your baby.

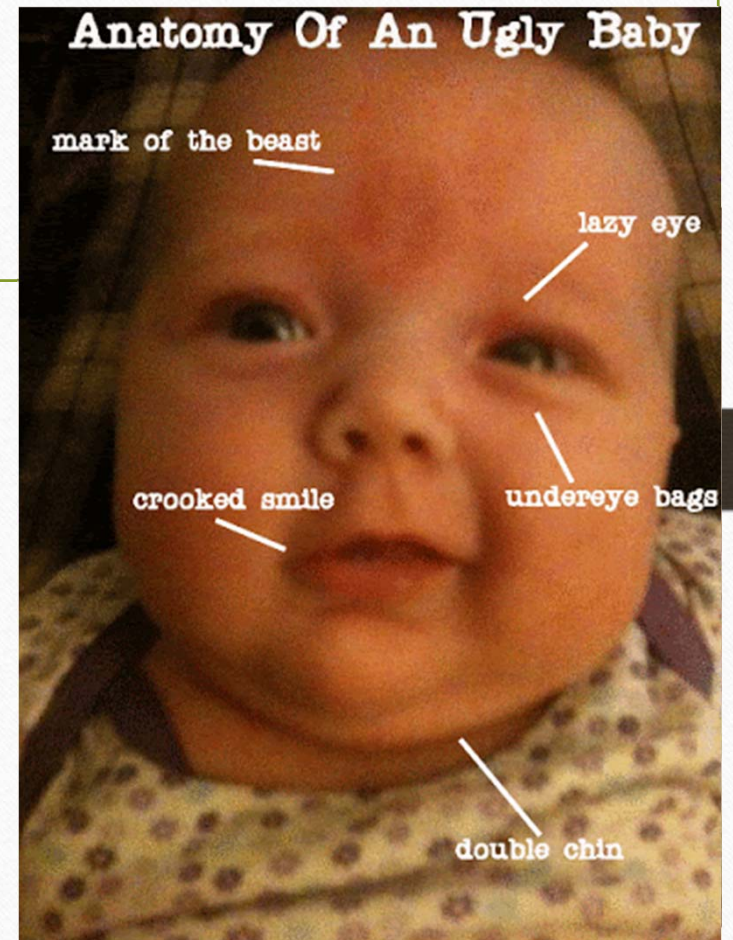
Others are just not going to "get" it.



Validation

In Philip Roth's *The Anatomy Lesson*, novelist Nathan Zuckerman fantasized about quitting the novel-writing business and becoming an obstetrician. Quote:

He catches what comes out and everyone loves him. When the baby appears they don't start shouting, "You call that a baby?"



Sidebar: Three Quick Tips

1. Negative Reviews Are Inevitable, So Expect Them

- This is just a part of life. Miserable people exist, and they try to impose their misery upon the rest of the world. If there isn't any, they will try to create it.
- The only true defense against any sort of negative review or criticism is not to publish your book. You can do that, but God didn't call you to this profession to have you head toward Ninevah.
- Don't let miserable people and their negativity beat you. **Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.**

Sidebar: Three Quick Tips

2. Negative Reviews Indicate You Stand for Something

- If no one hates what you have to say, then you aren't really saying anything worth saying. No one cares about a book that says the moon is round.
- Having haters is, at its core, a GOOD thing. It means that you are challenging beliefs that others hold dear—and that are probably completely wrong. Lean into that and be proud.
- **The truth of the Gospel message has never been a popular message.**
- Never EVER apologize for writing about that truth. Rebuke anyone who implies that you cannot, or should not, fulfill the great commission.

Sidebar: Three Quick Tips

3. It's Okay to Admit Negative Reviews Make You Feel Bad

- Many authors feel guilty or ashamed that negative reviews make them feel bad. They almost feel that they're supposed to be “above” them. That's not reality.
- Our brains are hardwired to pay greater attention to negative feedback—it's called **negativity bias**.
- Someone just said you made an ugly baby. It's perfectly normal to feel upset about that, and it's just fine to admit it upset you. Privately. Among loved ones.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/200306/our-brains-negative-bias>

Personal Validation

The most important thing to remember about a reader review is that...

You, the author, are not the intended audience for the review.

Readers are the intended audience for the review.

Looking for validation in reader reviews is
literally barking up the wrong tree.

Agenda 2: Why are book reviews important?

- ~~Personal Validation~~
- Influencing readers
- Influencing Influencers
- Influencing decision makers



They Note...

Reader Review Rating

They read...

Expert Reviews
Trade Reviews
Friends, Family Reviews
Reader Reviews

Influencing readers

- ...according to BrightLocal's Local Consumer Review Survey, **91% of 18-34-year-old consumers** trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. (source, Forbes online Aug 21, 2019)
- ...consumers expect businesses in this industry to have a minimum average ...rating of **3.84 across at least 20 reviews**. (Ibid.)



They Note...

Reader Review Rating

They read...

Expert Reviews
Trade Reviews
Reader Reviews

Influencing Influencers

- Reviews influence influencers who can amplify your platform.
- Bookbub, eReaderNews, BookBlast, Yahoo, Christian Kindle News, etc.
- Book clubs, Online Bookclubs, Goodreads groups, Librarything groups, etc.

Influencers within your demographic may choose to bring your book into their platform and promote it on social media platforms like Facebook, Instragram, Pinterest, blogs, vlogs, YouTube channels, and so on. There are subcultures within social media like BookTube and Bookstagram that are full of Shelf-Selfies called “Shelfies” which are photos of books or bookshelves.



They Note...

Reader Review Rating

They read...

Expert Reviews
Trade Reviews

Influencing decision makers

- Book reviews **will** influence agents, editors, and other decision makers involved in the publishing process
- So will your **branding**
- So will your internet/social media **presence**

Reviews, and how you *handle* reviews,
are part of your **reputation** as an author.

Your reputation is the essence of your **symbolic capital**.

Agenda

1. ~~Types of book reviews.~~
2. ~~Why are book reviews important?~~
3. How to get reader reviews.
4. How can you get more organic reviews?
5. Responding to Reviews.



Agenda 3: How to get reader reviews?

- Organically garner them based on your **symbolic capital**
- Buy them \$\$\$

Bad Review? You are NOT alone.

Case Study #3

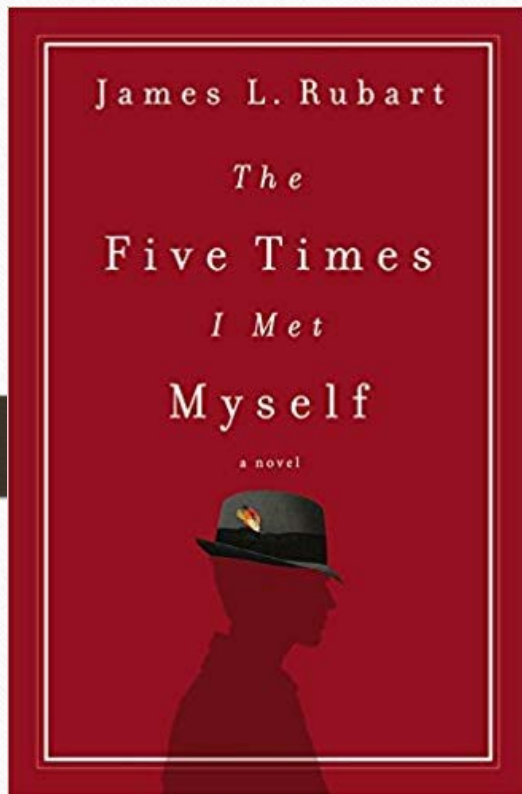




James L. Rubart

James L. Rubart is a 28 year old trapped in an older man's body, who loves to water ski and dirt bike with his two grown sons. He's the bestselling, Christy Book of the Year, Carol, INSPY, and RT Book Reviews award winning author of ten novels, including his latest, *The Pages of Her Life*. He lives with his amazing wife on a small lake in eastern Washington.

—<http://jameslrubart.com/>



The Five Times I Met Myself by James L. Rubart

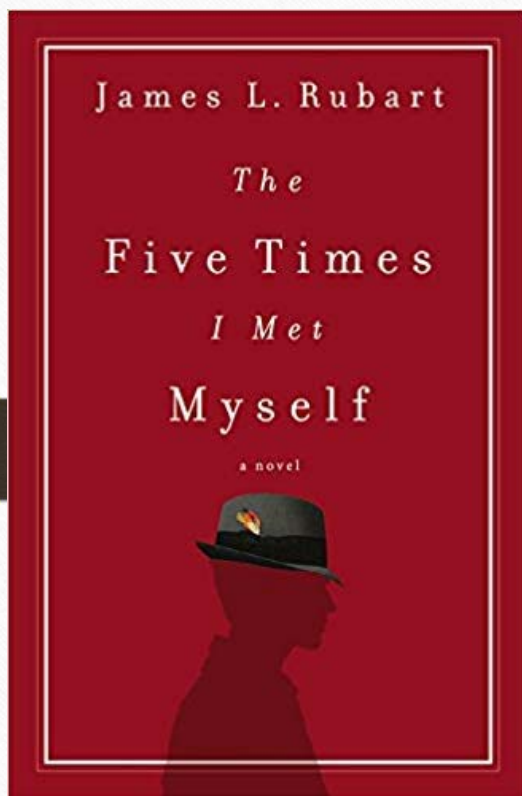
Thomas Nelson

Brock Matthews' once promising life is unraveling. His coffee company. His marriage.

So when he discovers his vivid dreams—where he encounters his younger self—might let him change his past mistakes, he jumps at the chance. The results are astonishing, but also disturbing. Because getting what Brock wants most in the world will force him to give up the one thing he doesn't know how to let go of . . . and his greatest fear is it's already too late.

“A powerfully redemptive story with twists and turns that had me glued to every page. With a compelling message for anyone who longs to relive their past, *The Five Times I Met Myself* is another James L. Rubart masterpiece.”

—Susan May Warren



The Five Times I Met Myself by James L. Rubart

Thomas Nelson

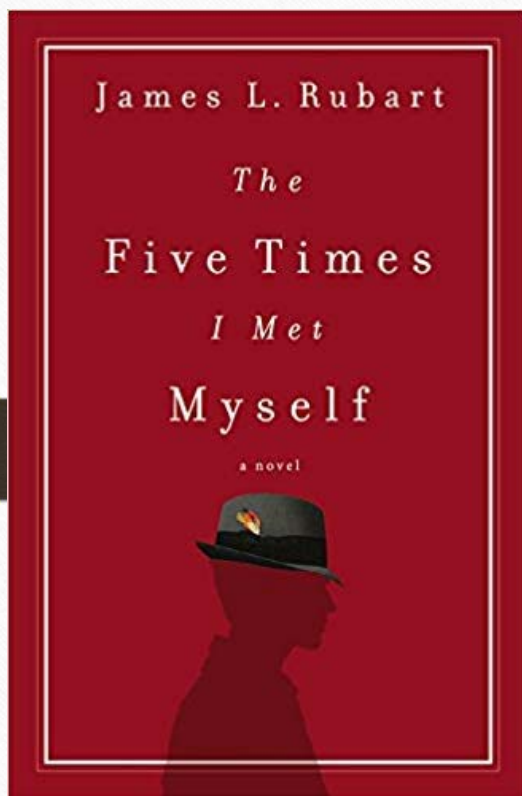
Winner for the 2016 Christy Award for **Visionary**

Winner for the 2016 Christy Award for **Book of the Year**

...Rubart infuses raw passion into his characters' struggles with faith, loss, regret, and missed opportunities. A fine plunge into the psychological depths of married middle-age life.

—Publisher's Weekly

<http://jameslrubart.com/books/the-five-times-i-met-myself/>



The Five Times I Met Myself by James L. Rubart

Thomas Nelson

★★★★☆ **Awful.**

Reviewed in the United States on March 10, 2018

Format: Kindle Edition | **Verified Purchase**

Drivel written on a second grade level. Just a disappointment on many levels. Content, intent, style. Awful.

Drivel... disappointment... Awful...

★★★★☆ **Skip**

Reviewed in the United States on July 28, 2018

Format: Paperback | **Verified Purchase**

Not written well, simple story, not interesting.

Not written well... not interesting.

★★★★☆ **I would not recommend this book**

Reviewed in the United States on February 24, 2017

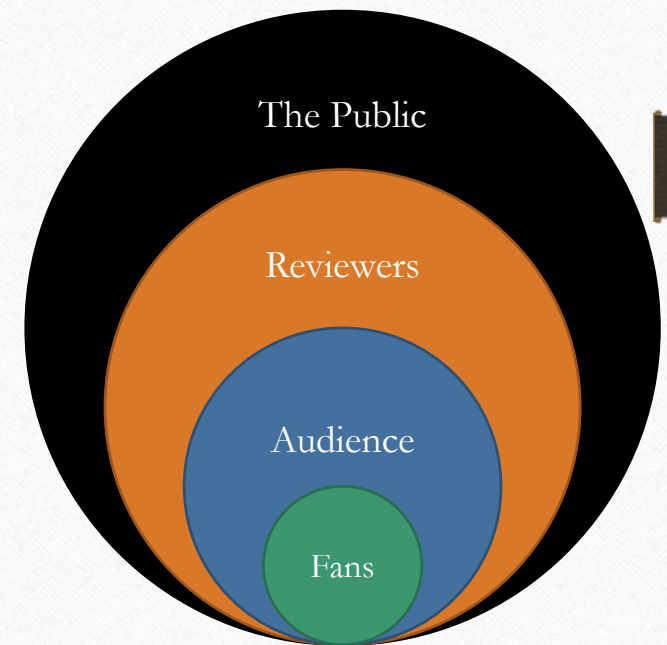
Format: Paperback | **Verified Purchase**

I would not recommend this book. It's weird. I have never heard of lucid dreaming, and I don't wish to hear about it any more.

It's weird.

Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- The key to a successful book launch is prospecting for 20 or so reviews in safer territories first, then expanding in stages.
- The goal is to have as many reviews in place—the book's social proof and **symbolic capital**—as you can before investing in general promotions.



Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Loyal Fans.** These are people that know, like, and trust you. They are also the ones most likely to leave a review. For an established author, they are readers who have reviewed previous books. For new authors, the circle can be very small—it depends on the depth of their personal network, and the extent to which that network is familiar with their writing.



Fans

Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

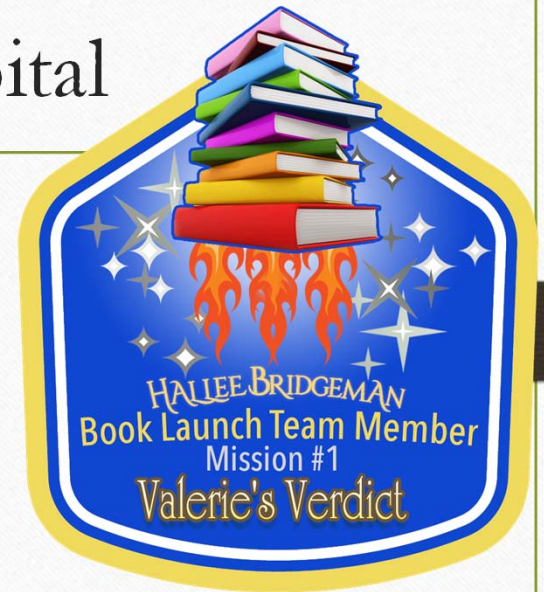
- Be careful—approaching close contacts to review your book carries three risks.
 1. Amazon is good at spotting reviews from **friends and family** and may reject the review (or worse) if it is from a known family member.
 2. If your **Loyal Fan** network hasn't left reviews for other books, their sole review of your book will carry little weight with shoppers who happen to look at who wrote the review.
 3. Some **Loyal Fans** go overboard and review the author rather than the book, or gush without including any meaningful feedback.



Fans

Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

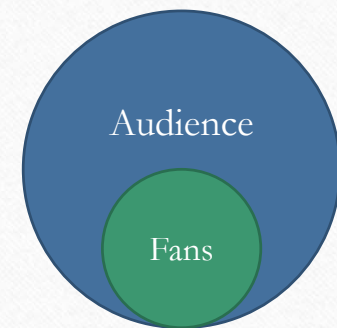
- Ask Beta Readers
- Mobilize your Street Team
- Organize and motivate a Launch Team (more on this later)
- Ask critique group members*
 - Be cautious about asking fellow authors to review your book.
 - **Swapping** reviews with another author is technically a violation of Amazon's Community Guidelines.
 - It can also put the other author in an awkward position.



Fans

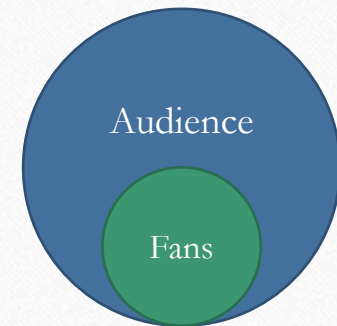
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Addressable Audience.** These are people who have given you permission to contact them, in some way related to your writing (or the subject matter of your book).
- It isn't enough that someone gave you an email address, liked your page/profile, or follows you on twitter. If you run a dry cleaning business and decide to tell your mailing list about your new romance novel, the level of engagement with this list will be directly proportional to their awareness of you as a romance author.



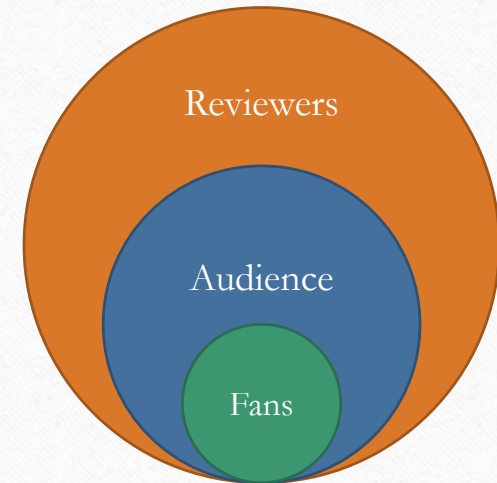
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- Your Addressable Audience **absolutely** includes people who have subscribed to your **newsletter**.
- Addressable Audience members become **Loyal Fans** when they buy your book and/or act to tell others about your book.



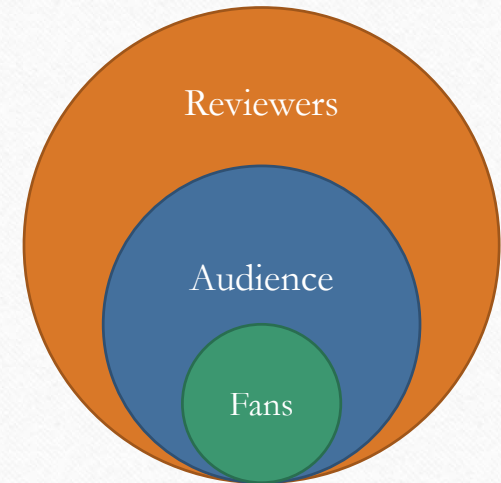
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Chosen Reviewers.** The first 2 stages take time to build and nurture, but it's friendly territory and engaging them to review your book should come naturally. Proactively seeking reviewers is different.
- There are many options and a successful strategy takes time, and potentially money, to execute.
- **The most important guidance is to seek reviewers who enjoy books like yours.**
- These readers are far more likely to respond favorably to an invitation to invest the time to read your book and offer an informed view.



Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Chosen Reviewers.** You still have some measure of control over whom you approach.
 - Reviewers of comparable books.
 - Book **bloggers**
 - **Blog** tour organizers
 - Book reviewers in local news venues
 - A **paid reviewer** network such as NetGalley or BookCrash



Wait! Paid reviews?

- The bottom line is that there are legitimate reasons to pay for reviews in certain cases, depending upon the book and depending upon the circumstances.
- As mentioned before, Kirkus, Foreword, and some others offer fee-for-review services that guarantee reviews for your book and these are reviews which will appear directly in the trades.
- An internet search for “Paid Book Review Service” results in more than 10 pages of ads and hits for services that perform general promotions which result in book reviews for your book.
- A great and affordable paid review service for Christian authors is **BookCrash**.

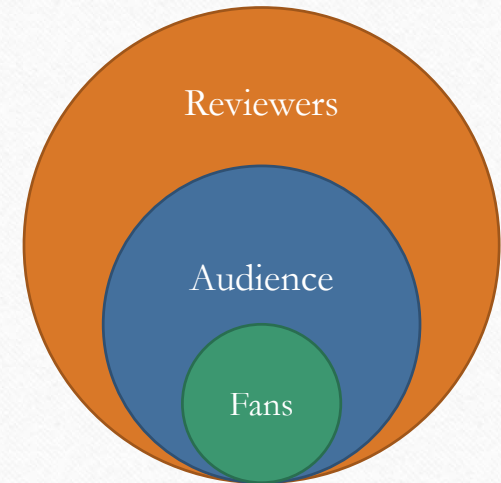
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Search Amazon Top Reviewers**

Step 1: You can go to:

<https://www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers>

- Search for reviewers who have reviewed similar books.
- You have to do this manually, by opening their profiles.
- Yes, it is VERY tedious and time consuming.

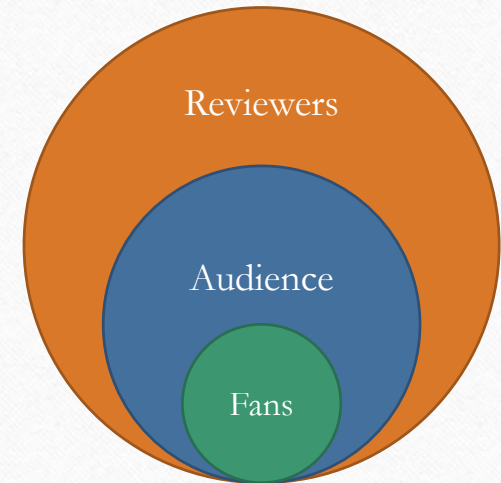


Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **Search Amazon Top Reviewers**

Step 2: Amazon doesn't publish their email addresses anymore but most have links to their websites where they post their emails or have a contact page or to their social media accounts in their profiles.

Step 3: Depending on what source (social media, email, or website) contact them appropriately and see if they would be willing to review your book.

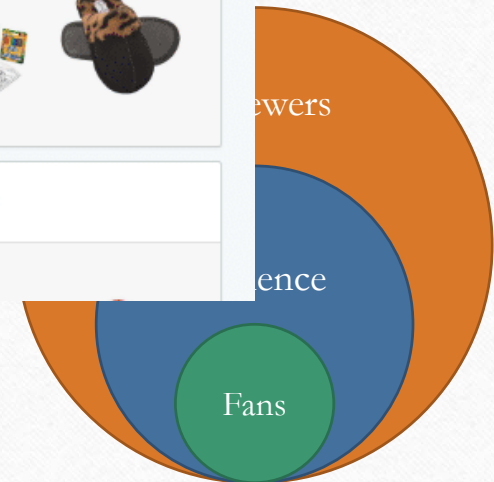
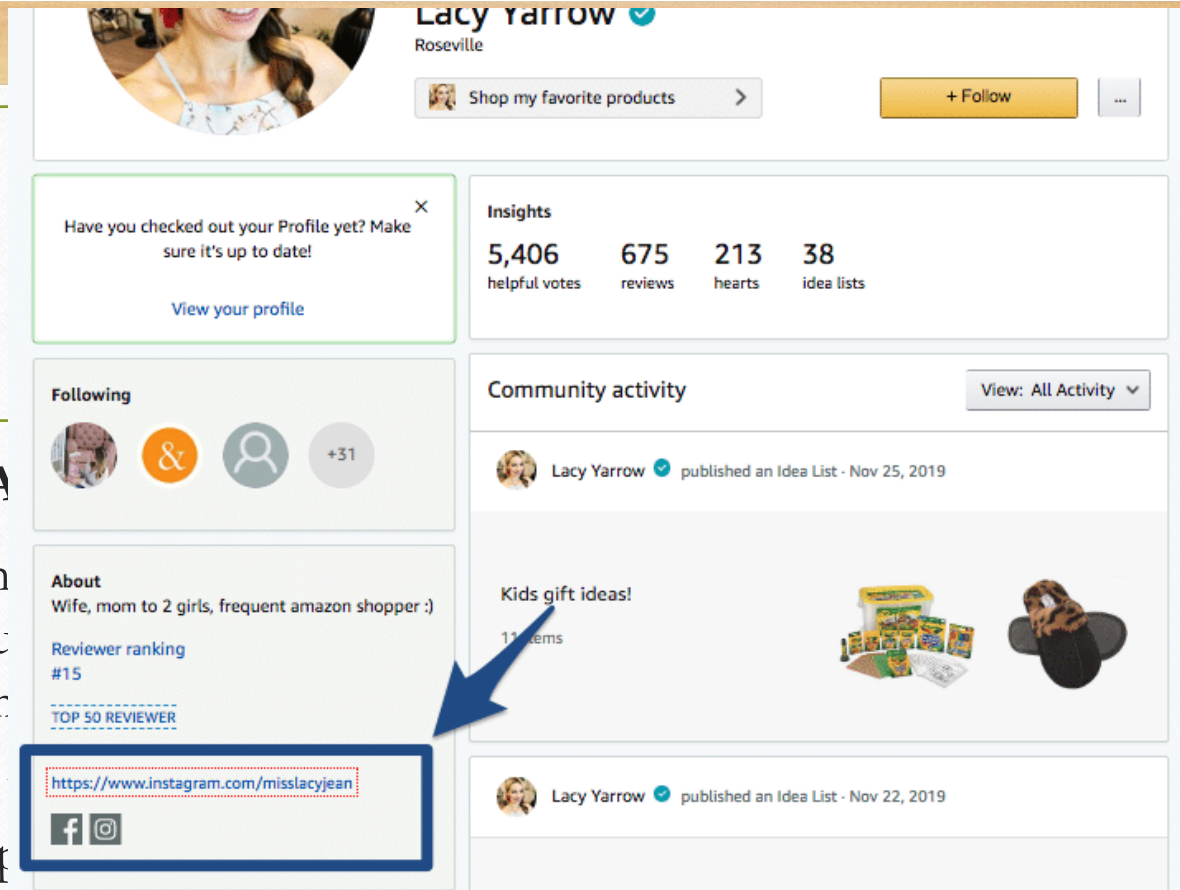


- Search A

Step 2: Am
anymore bu
they post th
their social

Step 3: Dep

email, or website) contact them appropriately and see if they would be willing to review your book.



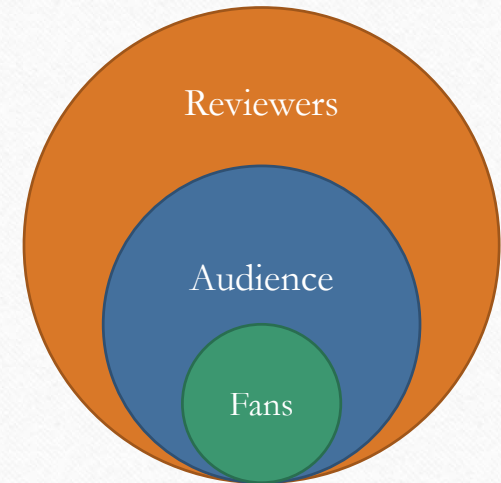
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- Cultivate Relationships with Book Blogger Networks

Blogs are important for SEO, platform, and brand.

Book bloggers are book lovers who have self-selected themselves based on genre, generated active, involved communities around that topic

They have considerable influence with their readerships. In some cases, they have access to an even larger pool of readers because of affiliations they've built with other book bloggers and reviewers.



Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

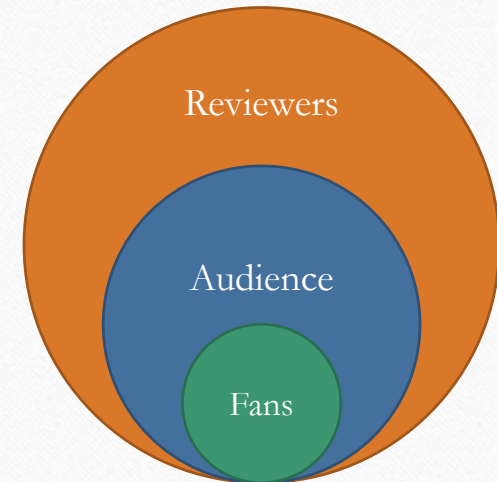
- Time and engagement are key ingredients.
- To stand out from the crowd, you **must** take the time to develop **relationships** with book bloggers *before* you start asking for a review for your book.
- Get involved on discussions on their blog. **Engage with them** and their community by asking and responding to questions on topics related to your genre.
- **Follow them** on social media. Join the conversation when it's relevant to do so. Don't pester. Add value.
- **Don't expect more than you're willing to give.**

Book bloggers are potential **business partners**, who may have other connections and resources that can help you in your career. Assuming you intend to write more than one book, a book blogger can be as important to you as your reader base.

Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

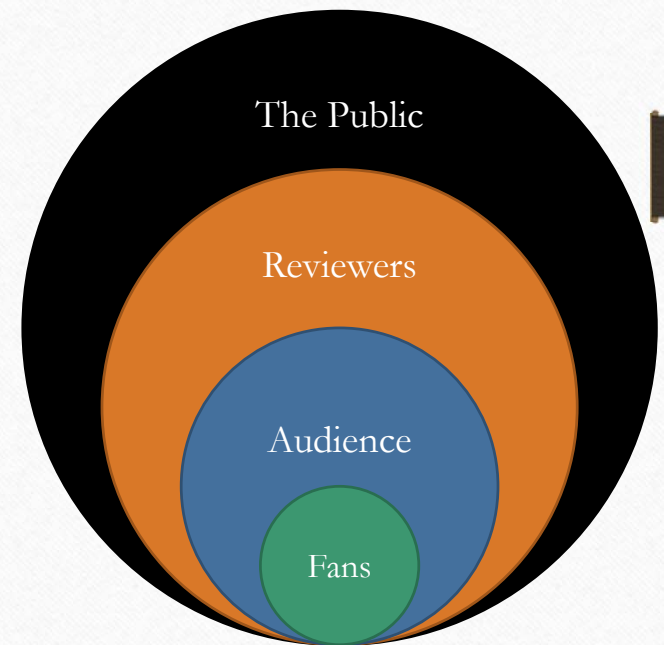
Eventually, you can ask a book blogger for a review

- Choose bloggers in your genre
- Get a very rough estimate of a site's traffic by checking their [Alexa rank](http://www.alexa.com/) (the lower the number, the better).
- Review and **follow their book submission and review policies exactly!**
- Your pitch should briefly state who you are and what you are offering for review
- Are reviews posted only on their blog or also on Amazon, Goodreads, and other review sites?
- Thank them



Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **The Public.**
- Unfortunately, this is where many authors begin.



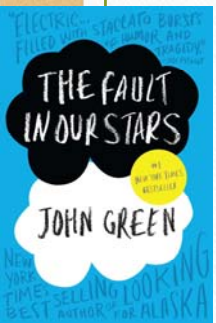
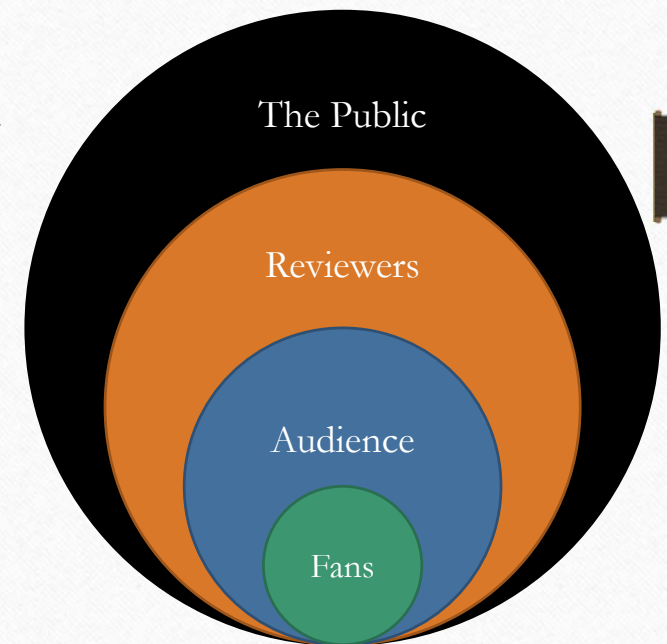
Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- **The Public.**

Research suggest authors can expect around 1 review for every 1,000 copies sold.

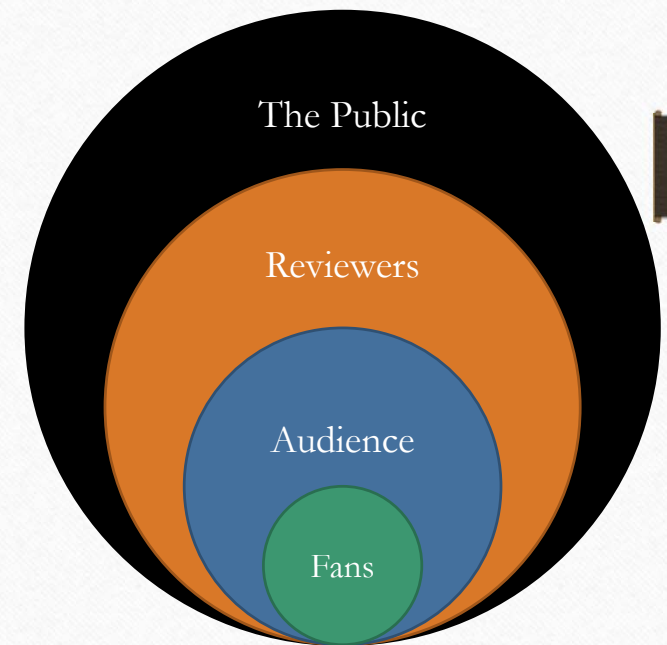
That's just 0.1%.

Bestsellers might do slightly better: John Green has reportedly sold 10-12 million copies of *The Fault in Our Stars* and has 47,000 reviews on Amazon—at best that's a review rate of less than 0.5%.



Organically garner reviews based on your symbolic capital

- Use Free Book Review Sites
See the handout.
- Cultivate Relationships with Book Blogger Networks
See the handout.
- Use any additional “ninja” marketing you can to get reviews.
See the handout.



Agenda

- ~~1. Types of book reviews.~~
- ~~2. Why are book reviews important?~~
- ~~3. How to get reader reviews.~~
4. How can you get more organic reviews?
5. Responding to Reviews.



Agenda 4: How can you get more organic reviews?

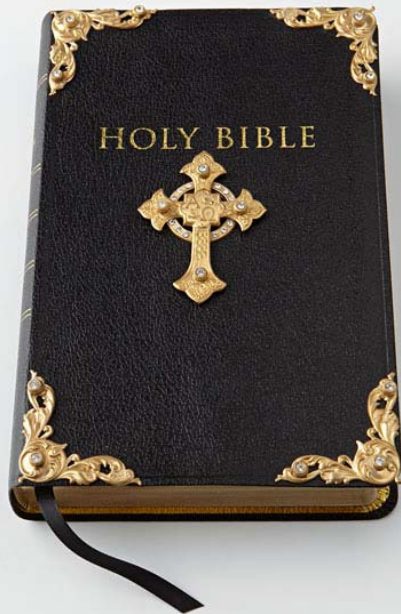
- Make it easy for readers
- Specific strategies to implement

The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a curved orange arrow underneath it pointing from the letter 'a' to the letter 'z'.

Bad Review?
You are NOT alone.

Case Study #4

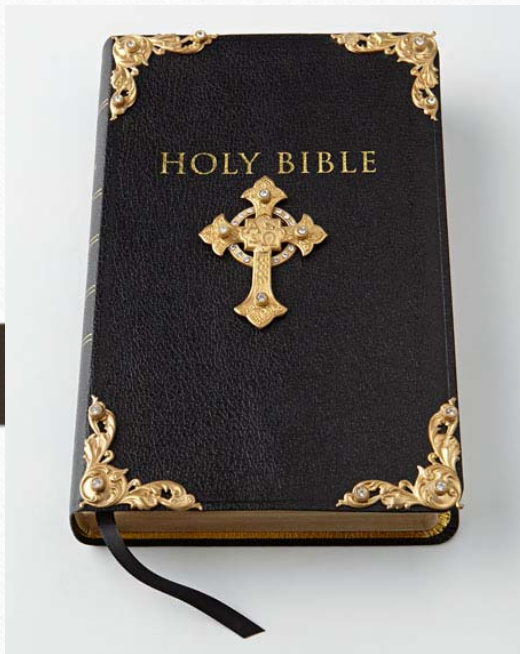
The Holy Bible



As told by: Abir, Adonai, Advocate, Almighty, Alpha, Amen, Angel of the Lord, Anointed One, Apostle, Author and Perfecter of our Faith, Beginning, Bishop of Souls, Branch, Branch, Bread of Life, Bridegroom, Carpenter, Chief Shepherd, Comforter, Consolation of Israel, Cornerstone, Day Star, Dayspring, Deliverer, Desire of Nations, El Elyon, El Roi, El Shaddai, El-Berith, El-Gibhor, Elohim, El-Olam, Emmanuel, End, Everlasting Father, Eyaluth, Faithful and True Witness, Father, First Fruits, Foundation, Fountain, Friend of Sinners, Gaol, Gate for the Sheep, Gift of God, Glory of God, God, Good Shepherd, Governor, Great Shepherd, Guide, Head of the Church, High Priest, Holy One of Israel, Horn of Salvation, I Am, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-M'kaddesh, Jehovah-Nissi, Jehovah-Rohi, Jehovah-Rophe, Jehovah-Sabaoth, Jehovah-Shalom, Jehovah-Shammah, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, Jesus, Judge, Kadosh, Kanna, King of Israel, King of Kings, Lamb of God, Last Adam, Life, Light of the World, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Lord of Lords, Magen, Master, Mediator, Melekh, Messiah, Mighty God, Morning Star, Nazarene, Omega, Palet, Passover Lamb, Physician, Potentate, Priest, Prince of Peace, Prophet, Propitiation, Purifier, Rabbi, Ransom, Redeemer, Refiner, Refuge, Resurrection, Righteousness, Rock, Root of David, Rose of Sharon, Ruler of God's Creation, Sacrifice, Savior, Second Adam, Seed of Abraham, Seed of David, Seed of the Woman, Servant, Shaphat, Shepherd, Shepherd, Shiloh, Son of David, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of Mary, Son of the Most High, Stone, Stone, Sun of Righteousness, Teacher, The Christ, Truth, Tsaddiq, Tsur, Vine, Way, Wonderful Counselor, Word, Yeshua

The Holy Bible

The most best selling book of all time



Dennis



Too large to handle

Reviewed in the United States on May 8, 2019

Verified Purchase

I did not realize just how big the book was. A lot of information that I didn't need.

Too large...



rockyroad



One Star

Reviewed in the United States on July 29, 2014

Verified Purchase

it was smaller than I thought it would be

Too small...



Logan Haefner



Not what I was expecting

Reviewed in the United States on March 25, 2019

Verified Purchase

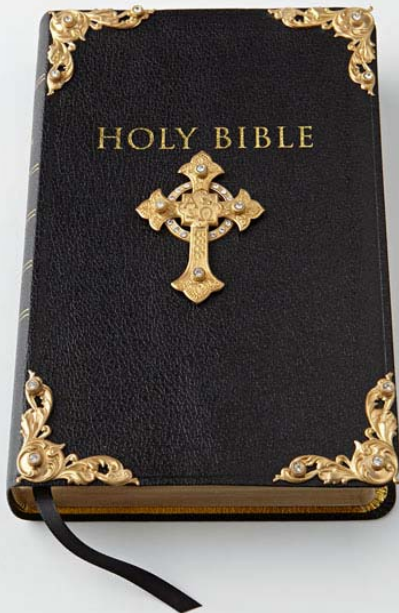
Not what I was expecting

Unexpected...

The Holy Bible

The most best selling book of all time

Poorly written...



John Hurdle

★☆☆☆☆ **Poorly Written Fantasy Novel**

Reviewed in the United States on September 8, 2019

One of the first fantasy novels I've ever picked up. Lord of the rings and Harry Potter are by far better written.



Eric

★☆☆☆☆ **Not for the weak of mind.**

Reviewed in the United States on January 22, 2016

Verified Purchase

So many contradictions and fanciful tales asserted as fact with out evidence. Also has slavery, misogyny, homophobia and many more things twisted to be called good things.

One person found this helpful

... slavery, misogyny, homophobia...

Make it easy for readers

- One mistake many authors make is when they request for someone to give their book a review, they either ask the reader to **search for the book** or even send the person a **link to their book**, making the person click around till they finally get to the review page where they can write the review.
- Because of this, readers are more than likely not to follow through.
- You have to **make it easier** for your readers to leave a review.

Here's how.

Create Special Links to Go Straight to Your Review

Step 1. Depending on the format you want the review to be directed to, either find your ASIN for the eBook or Audiobook, or the ISBN -10 for the Print book.

Step 2. Take the following link, and add your number from step 1:

<https://www.amazon.com/review/create-review?&asin=> + [ASIN or ISBN 10]

Example: <https://www.amazon.com/review/create-review?&asin=B07WG3PRY4>

Create Special Links to Go Straight to Your Review

With an AFFILIATE CODE. Take the following link, and plug in your affiliate code tag and your number from step 1:

[https://www.amazon.com/review/create-review?tag= + \[Affiliate Code\] &asin= + \[ASIN or ISBN 10\]](https://www.amazon.com/review/create-review?tag= + [Affiliate Code] &asin= + [ASIN or ISBN 10])

Example:

<https://www.amazon.com/review/create-review?tag=halleethehomem-20&asin=B07WG3PRY4>

Specific strategies to implement

- Create a Pretty Link and a QR Code

Step 1. Use your Pretty Link™ WordPress plugin or [bit.ly](#) to shorten the URL:

www.halleebridgeman.com/ReviewIce

amzn.to/arDAQm

bit.ly/ThoughtsSapphire

Step 2. Make a QR code.

www.the-qrcode-generator.com



Strategy #1: Use These on Marketing Materials



- Business Cards
- Bookmarks
- Last page of your book
- In your newsletter
- Anywhere else

Strategy #2: Book Review “Ask” in Your Book

- **Humanize Yourself:** Find ways to remind the reader that you are actually a human with emotions and feelings. Remind them of how hard it was to put this book together. By doing this, they’ll be more likely to leave “you” a review.
- **Impress Upon Them the Importance of the Review:** Readers don’t fully understand the importance of a review. Remind them how they help you as an author and your book.

Strategy #2: Book Review “Ask” in Your Book

- **Tell Them You’ll Read Their Book Review:** When readers realize you’ll read and take to heart their review, two things will happen:
 1. They’ll feel more obligated to leave a review since you’re depending on them.
 2. Their review grade will probably improve since they’ll now know you, the human, will actually read it. Most criticism becomes more constructive in nature when readers know you’ll personally read it.

Don't Forget the Audiobook!

- If you, **personally**, ask for a review at the end of your audiobook, you will be amazed how many positive reviews it will receive.
 - Write it down.
 - Rehearse it.
 - Have it properly mastered and leveled.
 - Make it specific to each book.

Amazon Community Guidelines

Here is what you **can** do.

- You can give away a copy of the book for free, or as an ARC to anyone you like.
- You can give away a copy of the book at a reduced cost or discount to anyone you like.

You may not do either in exchange for a review. There are more things you cannot do than things you can do.

Amazon Community Guidelines

Here is a list what you **can't** do:

- Pay or Incentivize Someone to Leave a Review in **any way**
- Offer a **free gift** in exchange for a review
- Offer to **refund** the reviewer for the price of the book in exchange for a review
 - You can give the book for free, or as an ARC. But you can't cover their costs. While they are both essentially “free,” the second one requires a review in order to make it free, thus incentivizing the review.
 - The same can be said about offering to send a Amazon gift card to cover the book price
- Swapping reviews with another author is a violation

Strategy #3: Do Legal Giveaways!

Step 1: Create a giveaway contest.

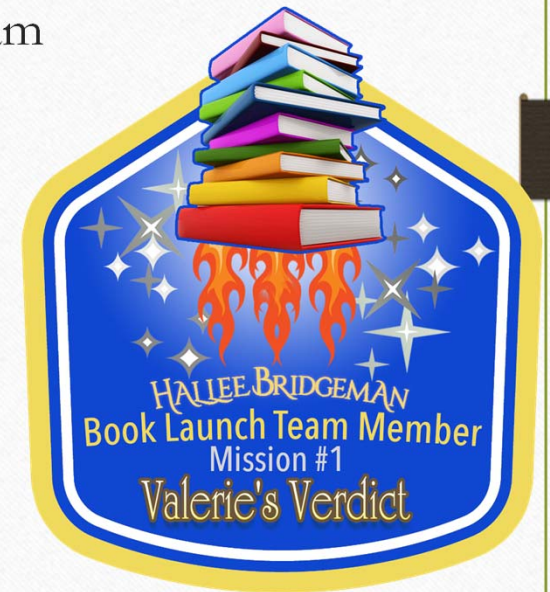
Step 2: In this contest, make it clear that if they just **click** the link that points to your book's review page, they are automatically entered into the contest.

Step 3: Make it clear that they **are not required to leave a review**, just **click** the link.

Step 4: That's it.

Strategy #3: Motivate Your Launch Team

- You need to start organizing Beta Readers or a Launch Team well in advance of the book release. Then, surpass their expectations
 1. Do not send mass emails to all Beta Readers/LT Members
 2. Stalk Them Like a Crazy Stalker
 3. Have Them Link You to the Review
 4. Remind them They Don't have to Read The Whole Book
 5. Surprise them.



1. Do not send mass emails to all Beta Readers/Launch Team Members

If you really want people to take action, ensure you talk to them personally. Send each beta reader a personal email asking him or her to take certain actions. They'll feel more obligated to act when you specifically email them and let them know you are counting on their review. When it's obviously a mass email, many will inherently think that it's fine and you won't notice if they don't leave a review.

2. Stalk Them Like a Crazy Stalker

Develop a spreadsheet listing each beta reader or launch team member, when you last talked with them , if they've left a review, and any other notes. It's important to keep track of them and reinforces the personal connection.

3. Have Them Link You to the Review

Tell your beta reader or launch team member to link you to the review so that you can read it. Set the expectation that you're specifically waiting for their review because you really want to know what they thought. Make it clear that it would mean the world to you. With this, they'll feel as though you truly care and are waiting on them.

4. Remind them They Don't have to Read The Entire Book

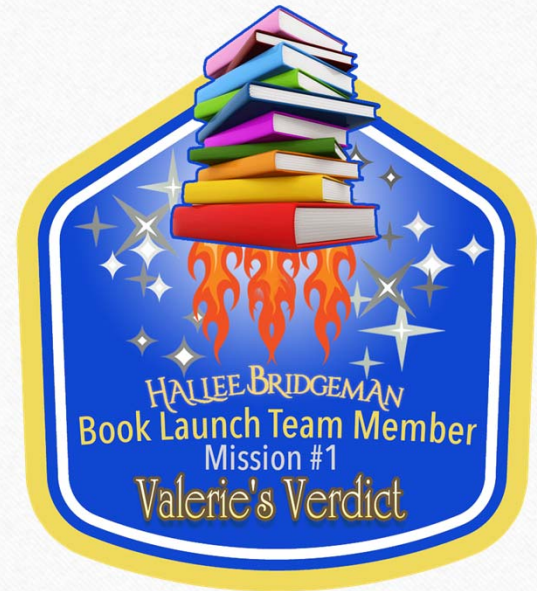
The most common excuse Beta Readers/launch team members use not to leave a review is that they couldn't finish the book in time but they promise they will leave their review "later" (which they almost never do).

Remind them that they do not have to finish the entire book just to leave a review. They can instead talk about what they've read so far, or even your legitimacy on the subject or genre. They can always change the review once they've finished the book, if they'd like.

This removes the last excuse not to leave a review.

5. Surprise Them

A mission patch, a signed copy of the paperback, a bookmark, a custom pen, penlight, book reading light, coffee mug, a tchotchke or doo-dad with a personal thank you letter, a coupon code for your next book, or even something as simple as a thank you card in the mail will make a fan into a super-fan.



Agenda

- ~~1. Types of book reviews.~~
- ~~2. Why are book reviews important?~~
- ~~3. How to get reader reviews.~~
- ~~4. How can you get more organic reviews?~~
5. Responding to Reviews.



Agenda 5: Responding to Reviews.

- Expert Reviews
- Trade Reviews
- Friends, Family, and Financially-tied
- Reader reviews

Responding to Expert Reviews.

YES! Always!

A nice thank-you note, and an offer to reciprocate in kind in the future, is absolutely appropriate.

Responding to Trade Reviews.

Yes! Sometimes.

Always leave a comment on any online resource thanking interviewers, bloggers, etc. for their time and interest.

For other trades, a response is neither expected nor required and will likely have little impact on the intended trade audience.

However, it may be desirable to send a thank-you note if you have some upcoming work that you would like reviewed by the same trade. Much like a press release, it will help to keep your name in front of the reviewer framed in a positive light.

Responding to Friends & Family Reviews.

If friends, family, and financially-tied friends leave a review that is posted by the vendor, a private response is always appropriate.

Let them know that reviews penned by people with even *loose* associations with the author are often removed by the vendor as “biased” and therefore untrustworthy.

Also let them know that they can greatly help in other ways, by **word of mouth** or by requesting their **local library** carry your book and encourage them to promote your interests by those means.

Agenda 5: Responding to Reviews.

- ~~Expert Reviews~~
- ~~Trade Reviews~~
- ~~Friends, Family, and Financially-tied~~
- Reader reviews

Bad Review?

You are NOT alone.

Case Study #5





Hallee Bridgeman
(Obviously the most beautiful Christian author
of all time, and my personal favorite)

Hallee Bridgeman has 30 Christian books in print, nearly 900,000 sales and downloads, and more than 12 million page reads on Amazon.

She is a past and present Director for the Kentucky Christian Writers Conference (KCWC) and currently serves on the executive board.

She is a member of the American Christian Fiction Writers (ACFW) and the American Christian Writers (ACW) and Secretary of the board for Novelists, Inc. (NINC).

Hallee was a long-time member of the Published Author Network (PAN) and past president of the Faith, Hope, & Love chapter of Romance Writers of America (RWA) before deciding not to continue her membership with that organization in 2019.

<http://www.halleebridgeman.com/>

Sapphire Ice by Hallee Bridgeman

Olivia Kimbrell Press, Inc.

The men in Robin's life have never been anything but pushers and users. Tony's intrusion into her exhausted world both infuriates and intrigues her. Does Tony have a chance to break through the wall of ice Robin built around her heart?

Published 24 March 2012*

Numerous awards including 1st Runner Up Best Audiobook, Society of Voice Arts and Sciences

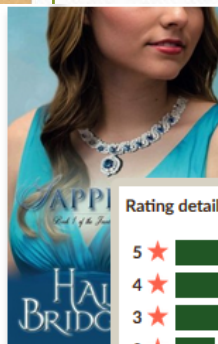


Sapphire Ice by Hallee Bridgeman

Olivia Kimbrell Press, Inc.

Goodreads

...couldn't put it down...



Sapphire Ice: The Jewel Series book 1

(Jewel #1)

by Hallee Bridgeman (Goodreads Author)

★★★★★ 4.21 · Rating details · 986 ratings · 129 reviews

Rating details



94% of people liked it

All editions: 4.21 average rating, 986 ratings, 129 reviews, added by 3218 people, 1309 to-reads

This edition: 4.33 average rating, 3 ratings, 0 reviews, added by 11 people

Published February 15th 2017 by Olivia Kimbrell Press, Incorporated



Mary rated it ★★★★★ · review of another edition

Apr 11, 2012

I was hooked from the Prologue and picked it up every spare minute I had. Even with an infant and a toddler, I finished it in 2 days because I just couldn't put it down! The characters are so real and well thought out, the story draws you in and has unexpected twists and developments throughout. More than just a good love story, it's a great book and I can't wait to read the rest of the series.



Shannon rated it ★★☆☆☆ · review of another edition

Apr 25, 2019

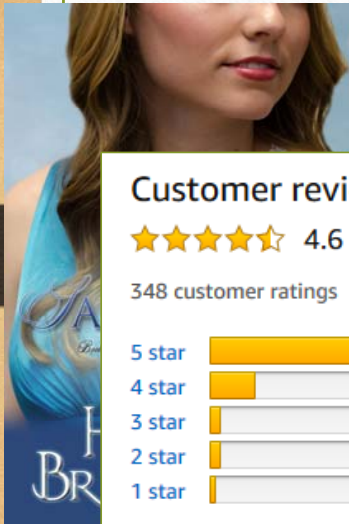
Shelves: borrowed, gave-up

So bad. Just, so bad. From the man-handling to the simpering protests, to the terrible message it has. Could't finish it. ([less](#))

Like · see review

...So bad. Just so bad....

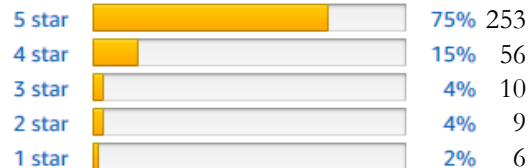
Amazon



Customer reviews

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

348 customer ratings



▼ [How does Amazon calculate star ratings?](#)

Sapphire Ice by Hallee Bridgeman

Olivia Kimbrell Press, Inc.

...clean romance...hooked me...



Liz

★★★★★ **A definite jewel to read**

Reviewed in the United States on September 23, 2019

I so appreciate a clean romance...especially one that is part of a series (if I enjoy the first book). I was able to be immediately hooked with a strong heroine. Robin is relatable, likable, and believable. And I loved that Tony had to work to woo her instead of her just "falling in love with the rich man." The Christian themes within the book fit very naturally and didn't seem forced at all. I can't wait to see how the story plays out throughout the rest of the series!



Sue

★☆☆☆☆ **"Christian" Romance?**

Reviewed in the United States on June 23, 2013

Verified Purchase

I very rarely write a review but since I take reviews into consideration when I purchase a book, I felt it necessary to write one. I was only able to read about a quarter of this book before I deleted it. For a so-called "Christian" book, I was floored at the amount of sex talk in this book. The main character begging for sex? Come on!

I was highly disappointed since I was looking for some good, Christian books. I definitely won't be reading the other two in the series either. Very disappointed in Hallee's definition of "Christian" books.

...so-called 'Christian' book....

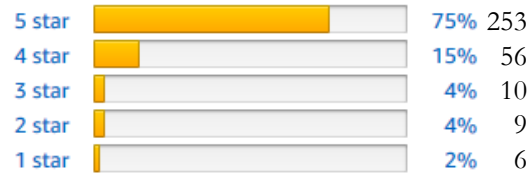
Sapphire Ice by Hallee Bridgeman

Olivia Kimbrell Press, Inc.

Customer reviews

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

348 customer ratings



How does Amazon calculate star ratings?

Amazon Analytics:

	By Reviews		By Stars	
5 star	253	75.75%	1265	81.98%
4 star	56	16.77%	224	14.52%
3 star	10	2.99%	30	1.94%
2 star	9	2.69%	18	1.17%
1 star	6	1.80%	6	0.39%
	334		1543	

	By Reviews		By Stars	
4/5 star	309	92.51%	1489	96.50%
3 star	10	2.99%	30	1.94%
1/2 star	15	4.49%	24	1.56%

Goodreads Analytics:

	By Reviews		By Stars	
5 star	482	48.88%	2410	58.09%
4 star	308	31.24%	1232	29.69%
3 star	134	13.59%	402	9.69%
2 star	43	4.36%	86	2.07%
1 star	19	1.93%	19	0.46%
	986		4149	

	By Reviews		By Stars	
4/5 star	790	80.12%	3642	87.78%
3 star	134	13.59%	402	9.69%
1/2 star	62	6.29%	105	2.53%

Rating details



94% of people liked it

All editions: 4.21 average rating, 986 ratings, 129 reviews, added by 3218 people, 1309 to-reads

This edition: 4.33 average rating, 3 ratings, 0 reviews, added by 11 people



“

There are some Christian readers who
NEVER give **ANY** book (that isn't
the **BIBLE**) a 5 star review.

”

This behavior, of course, tends to flatten the bell curve for our reviews because in their minds, a **4 Star review means it was perfect** and a **3 star review means they really liked it.**

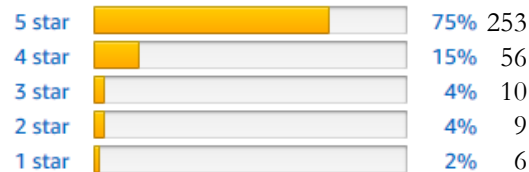
Sapphire Ice by Hallee Bridgeman

Olivia Kimbrell Press, Inc.

Customer reviews

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

348 customer ratings



How does Amazon calculate star ratings?

Rating details



94% of people liked it

All editions: 4.21 average rating, 986 ratings, 129 reviews, added by 3218 people, 1309 to-reads

This edition: 4.33 average rating, 3 ratings, 0 reviews, added by 11 people

	By Reviews		By Stars	
5 star	735	55.68%	3675	64.56%
4 star	364	27.58%	1456	25.58%
3 star	144	10.91%	432	7.59%
2 star	52	3.94%	104	1.83%
1 star	25	1.89%	25	0.44%
	1320		5692	

	By Reviews		By Stars	
4/5 star	1099	83.26%	5131	90.14%
3 star	144	10.91%	432	7.59%
1/2 star	77	5.83%	129	2.27%



97.73%

2.27%

Responding to Reader Reviews.

Do you publicly reply to reader posted reviews?

There are a few very different schools of thought.

Positive or negative, my personal advice is NO. NEVER. Never EVER.

Responding to Reader Reviews.

However, if the review is a positive review (3+ stars) *some* authors have had a lot of success by responding to them. They like to leave a nice public “thank-you” comment on the review or even hint about an upcoming book in the comment to generate some buzz.

For *some* authors, this has worked out swimmingly.

For *other* authors, this has backfired on Goodreads, Amazon, and other sites.

Some readers strongly feel that the reader review space is exclusively “their” area and the Author’s presence is intrusive and unwanted. Be warned and respond to reader reviews, even positive reader reviews, at our own risk.

Responding to Reader Reviews.

Which takes us back to my advice which is never respond to reader reviews.

But what if it was a REALLY negative review? What actions can you take?

- Sue Amazon?
- Sue the reviewer?
- Request that the reviewer revise the review?
- Request that Amazon remove the review?
- Publicly respond to the review?

Can I Sue Amazon for bad Reviews?

- The short answer is “no” you cannot sue Amazon for a negative review.
- The long answer is “The U.S. Communications Decency Act prevents any lawsuits against websites for publishing third party content. That includes reviews, comments, voting, forums, etc.”
- The very long answer is 16 CFR Part 255 for some light reading:
“<https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-publishes-final-guides-governing-endorsements-testimonials/091005revisedendorsementguides.pdf>”

Can I Sue the Reviewer for a bad Review?

- The short answer is, “Maybe, but why bother?”
- The long answer is
 - Lawsuits are expensive
 - Proving libel/slander vs “Free speech and opinion” is a fine line
 - Lawsuits often hurt **your** reputation even when you’re in the right
 - There is no guarantee that you will win even when the facts are on your side (Just ask O.J. Simpson’s murder victims)
 - Are you going to sue every single person who gives you a less than positive review?

Request Revision by Customer

- You may be tempted to try to lighten a negative review by reaching out to the reviewer directly and asking her to **revise or delete the review** after you addressed whatever complaint was made in the review.
- You should already know that it's against Amazon's product reviews policies to **ask a customer to remove or change** a negative review.
- **Don't do it.**

Responding to Reader Reviews.

Recap

- ~~Sue Amazon?~~
- ~~Sue the reviewer?~~
- ~~Request that the reviewer revise the review?~~
- Request that Amazon remove the review?
- Publicly respond to the review?



Request Removal
by Amazon

Request Removal by Amazon

- If the review has nothing to do with your book, is abusive, is personally insulting, contains any form of profanity or vulgarity (even using special characters to r3d@ct c3rtA1n 13tt3r\$ within the curse words), or initiates a personal attack against you then you can try to have the review deleted by Amazon.
- Removal is the most favorable solution for Authors, but be aware that Amazon usually sides with readers and will only remove a review if it violates Amazon's community guidelines.
- **ABSOLUTELY DO THIS! EVERY TIME!**



Comment Publicly

Comment Publicly

- For most authors, ignoring negative reviews is the best way to go because **there is never an upside in responding to toxic people.**
- That said, if someone just gets the facts wrong, it may **rarely** be in your interest to stick to the facts with a brief explanatory comment. I would pray long and hard before doing this.

“I was disappointed to learn that the absence of snowfall during the Christmas season led to a 1-star review of my novella. According to the National Weather Service, there has been no known occurrence of even snow flurries in the Florida Keys since the settlement of the region more than 300 years ago. While snowfall in Key West on Christmas Eve may have added a fantasy-like twist, accurately and factually depicting the setting of my stories in a consistent and realistic manner is my overriding priority. I hope you enjoyed the budding romance between Faith and TJ and all the other aspects of the story.”

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... beg for good reviews to make up for negative reviews.
- Do... develop coping strategies when bad reviews come in.

Try this. Mentally award the same number of stars to your reviewer as they've given to your book. What's this? I got a 1 star review? It's clearly from a 1 star reader, bless her heart!

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... read your own negative reviews if you cannot cope with them.

If a negative review is going to put you into a tailspin that will throw you off of your productivity for even a short period of time, do not read it.

- Do ... Ask a friend to read reviews for you, share the positive ones, and gently summarize the most constructive parts of the negative ones.

Many agents and publicists shield authors from their reviews; there's no shame in deciding you don't want to look at your reviews yourself.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... go on the warpath.

No matter how strongly you may disagree with a negative review, don't respond emotionally. Or at all.

- Do ... respect that others have different views.

Tolerating criticism does not mean that you are letting a reviewer walk all over you or belittle you. It just means that you understand that opinions vary and it doesn't bother you.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... feed the trolls.

Ignore the unreasonable bad reviews, especially if they are nasty in any way.

- Do ... embrace the teachers

Helpful criticism stands to make us all better writers. If the point is valid, take it on the chin and keep it in mind for the next book.



Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... assume there is such thing as a universally beloved book.

Remember that a review reflects the reader's relationship with the book, not the book alone. Your book won't work for every reader, and that's okay.

- Do ... admit that you can always be a better writer.

Choose to take critical responses as opportunities to learn and improve.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... let negative reviews overwhelm good reviews in your mind.

Plan to disregard any personal attacks and other low blows. Anyone who would insult you as a person just because they didn't enjoy a book you wrote isn't someone whose opinion you need to take into consideration.

- Do ... cherish your positive reviews.

Choose to take critical responses as opportunities to learn and improve.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... discuss any negative review on social media.

As an author, you're deeply and intimately connected to your book, which you created with your ideas and your passion. When someone says something negative about your book, you take it very personally and feel hurt, angry, or even despondent. However you feel and express your feelings, *don't* respond to the review in public—don't reply, and don't even subtweet it.

- Do ... feel the way you feel and share your feelings with someone you trust, offline, in a safe and contained way.

Pray about it, admit the way you feel, figure out why, then talk it over with a person who loves you.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... think every reader is the same.
- Do ... consider the context.
 - A review describing your book as “the worst book ever written” by someone who has only ever reviewed your book and nothing else. This is a troll with nothing better to do.
 - If you have a poor review of a sweet romance by someone who only ever gives 5 stars to vampire novels or erotica, you can be pretty sure they're not the best judge of your genre.
 - If a 1 star comes from someone who gives 5 star only to car parts and clothing for dogs, you can be equally sure they're not the best judge of books.

Bad review recap (Dos and Do nots)

- Don't ... assume readers see reviews like you, the book creator, sees them.

You are looking at reviews as the author – and the book is your baby. Readers see it differently.

You will read between the lines, over-analyze, and take each word to heart.

- Do... put yourself in the reader's position.

Readers will just cast their eye over a few reviews and may not even read them in full.

If the reader is a serious potential customer for your book, the odd crazy or troll or dislike review won't scare her off. She'll be smart enough to realize which reviews are credible.

Bad review recap (Last Word)

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

—Teddy Roosevelt

Agenda

1. ~~Types of book reviews.~~
2. ~~Why are book reviews important?~~
3. ~~How to get reader reviews.~~
4. ~~How can you get more organic reviews?~~
5. ~~Responding to Reviews.~~

The background of the slide features a light beige textured surface. A white rectangular area in the center contains the text. Surrounding this area are numerous colorful question marks in red, yellow, and light blue. At the bottom of the white area, several human hands are shown reaching upwards, suggesting a Q&A session or a presentation.

You have some Questions

I may, or may not, have correct answers.