

## Book Review Examples for University Students

**Title of the book:** Becoming

**Author:** Michelle Obama

Look, I'm not a happy crier. I might cry at songs about leaving and missing someone; I might cry at books where things don't work out; I might cry at movies where someone dies. I've just never really understood why people get all choked up over happy, inspirational things. But Michelle Obama's kindness and empathy changed that. This book had me in tears for all the right reasons.

This is not really a book about politics, though political experiences obviously do come into it. It's a shame that some will dismiss this book because of a difference in political opinion, when it is really about a woman's life. About growing up poor and black on the South Side of Chicago; about getting married and struggling to maintain that marriage; about motherhood; about being thrown into an amazing and terrifying position.

I hate words like "inspirational" because they've become so overdone and cheesy, but I just have to say it-- Michelle Obama is an inspiration. I had the privilege of seeing her speak at The Forum in Inglewood, and she is one of the warmest, funniest, smartest, down-to-earth people I have ever seen in this world.

And yes, I know we present what we want the world to see, but I truly do think it's genuine. I think she is someone who really cares about people - especially kids - and wants to give them better lives and opportunities.

She's obviously intelligent, but she also doesn't gussy up her words. She talks straight, with an openness and honesty rarely seen. She's been one of the most powerful women in the world, she's been a graduate of Princeton and Harvard Law School, she's had her own successful career, and yet she has remained throughout that same girl - Michelle Robinson - from a working class family in Chicago.

I don't think there's anyone who wouldn't benefit from reading this book.

**Title of the book:** Ready Player One

**Author:** Ernest Cline

Video-game players embrace the quest of a lifetime in a virtual world; screenwriter Cline's first novel is old wine in new bottles.

The real world, in 2045, is the usual dystopian horror story. So who can blame Wade, our narrator, if he spends most of his time in a virtual world? The 18-year-old, orphaned at 11, has no friends in his vertical trailer park in Oklahoma City, while the OASIS has captivating bells and whistles, and it's free. Its creator, the legendary billionaire James Halliday, left a curious will. He had devised an elaborate online game, a hunt for a hidden Easter egg. The finder would inherit his estate. Old-fashioned riddles lead to three keys and three gates. Wade, or rather his avatar Parzival, is the first gunter (egg-hunter) to win the Copper Key, first of three. Halliday was obsessed with the pop culture of the 1980s, primarily the arcade games, so the novel is as much retro as futurist. Parzival's great strength is that he has absorbed all Halliday's obsessions;

he knows by heart three essential movies, crossing the line from geek to freak. His most formidable competitors are the Sixers, contract gunters working for the evil conglomerate IOI, whose goal is to acquire the OASIS. Cline's narrative is straightforward but loaded with exposition. It takes a while to reach a scene that crackles with excitement: the meeting between Parzival (now world famous as the lead contender) and Sorrento, the head of IOI. The latter tries to recruit Parzival; when he fails, he issues and executes a death threat. Wade's trailer is demolished, his relatives killed; luckily Wade was not at home. Too bad this is the dramatic high point. Parzival threads his way between more '80s games and movies to gain the other keys; it's clever but not exciting. Even a romance with another avatar and the ultimate "epic throwdown" fail to stir the blood.

Too much puzzle-solving, not enough suspense.