You are to write a review of your assigned book in economic growth or development. These reviews will be posted on the class website, and the class will be responsible for the material discussed.

A) The Structure and Format of Your Book Review

I. The Heading

Title. Author. Place of publication: publisher, date of publication. Number of pages. Reviewed by (your name)

II. The Introduction

The introduction starts with a statement of the theme of the book, and lets your readers know what the review will say. Summarize the book and relate the author's main point, or thesis. Include the purpose of, or audience for the book, and a brief summary of your reaction and evaluation.

III. The Context

Place the book in theoretical, policy and/or historical context. You might also discuss what reasonable criteria for judging the book are. Describe the author's viewpoint(s) and purpose for writing; note any aspects of the author's background that are important for understanding the book.

IV. Summary of the Argument and Evidence

This is very much like the summary you might write in an abstract or synopsis. Attempt to put the author's argument in its best light. Note the most important pieces of evidence the author presents to support his or her thesis. Summarize it fairly, without inserting your own views. Evaluate the author's use of evidence, and describe how he or she deals with counter evidence.
You might want to quote or paraphrase key passages from the book. Of course you want to avoid plagiarism by placing quotation marks around quotes and placing the page number from which the quote or paraphrase comes in parentheses immediately afterwards.

V. Evaluation of the Argument and Evidence

This is the heart of the book review and where your views come into play. Remember that you may not be able to express fully your own views. The point of the book review is to present a critical reading of someone else's work, not to give a full exposition of your own work. So carefully distinguish your views from the author's.

Is the book's argument convincing? If so why; if not, why not. Cite examples from the text. Compare this book with other books or articles you have read on the same subject.

VI. Conclusion

Finish with a conclusion which ties together issues raised in the review and provides a concise comment on the book. Provide a final evaluation of the book. You might discuss who would find this book useful and why.

VII. Works Cited

Should you cite a work other than that under review, give full bibliographic information on it.
B) Some Quick Tips

- A book review is not the same thing as a book report. The latter simply summarizes the content of a book. You are not only reporting on the content, but also assessing its strengths and weaknesses. Note that it is not enough to say, "This book is interesting"; you need to explain why it is interesting.

- You may feel unqualified to write a book review. After all, the author is a professional economist, and you are not. Fair enough, but remember that the book is intended for an intelligent but general audience. You should be fully able to assess if the arguments of the author are convincing or not, and assess the general strengths and weaknesses of the book with simply a rudimentary understanding of economics.

- You need to read the book carefully and critically. Don’t read passively – as you read you should make notes, and even mark up the book itself (not if library book!). Mark out passages that strike you as important or clever. Also note that “critical” does not mean negative. If the book is well written and the arguments made are clearly made and convincing, you should say so.

- Put your materials in logical order. It often helps to construct an outline for yourself before you start actually drafting the review.

- Finally, resist the urge to procrastinate. This is a good idea in general, but perhaps particularly in this case – you will have the greatest success in writing about the book if your mind is still processing it. Discipline is going to be necessary to produce a strong review. Perhaps you should look into this product for motivation: http://writeordie.com/