Book report template for 3rd grade: form, outline and a worked example

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A free 3rd grade book report template to print: the form, a four-paragraph outline, a worked example on a free story and a shorter review version.

A 3rd grade book report usually asks for five things: the title, author and kind of book; the characters and the setting; a summary of the beginning, middle and end in three to five sentences; the problem and how it is solved; and an opinion with two reasons. Peabody's 3rd grade template prints all five on one page with lines to write on, a rating line at the bottom, a four-paragraph outline for the child who is ready to write it as prose, and a worked example on a story your child can read free tonight. It is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026, and nothing is typed on the page: it is paper.

The form

The boxes, in the order a child can fill them:

1. Title, author and genre. What is it called, who wrote it, and what kind of book is it?
2. Characters. The main character and one more, with a word that describes each.
3. Setting. Where and when does it happen?
4. Summary. Beginning, middle and end in three to five sentences.
5. Problem and solution. What goes wrong, and how is it solved?
6. My opinion. Did you like it? Give two reasons.
7. Rating. Stars out of five, and who should read it.

The summary box is the hard one. Three to five sentences means choosing what matters, and that is the skill third grade is building. A good prompt for a stuck child: "If you told a friend in one breath, what would you say?"

The outline, when it becomes paragraphs

- Paragraph 1: the title, the author and the genre.
- Paragraph 2: the summary.
- Paragraph 3: the characters, the setting, the problem and the solution.
- Paragraph 4: your opinion, two reasons and the rating.

A worked example

The example on the template page is on Stone Soup, a folk tale told in France and Portugal and first written down in the early 1700s, which Peabody retells at level 8. A grown-up can read it in a few minutes and check the example against it. The summary box, filled in:

Three hungry travelers come to a village where nobody will share. They put stones in a pot of water and say they are making stone soup. One villager adds a little salt, then others add vegetables and more. Soon there is a big pot of soup for the whole village.

Four sentences, beginning to end, and nothing about the stones being magic, because they are not.

The review version

For a book your child chose themselves, the shorter review version is often better: a rating and one word, the best thing about it, one thing they would change, and "read this if you like…". It is on the same page, under the form.

Other grades

A report grows with the reader: pictures and one sentence in kindergarten, beginning-middle-end in 1st grade, problem and solution in 2nd grade, what the character wants and why the setting matters in 4th grade, and theme with evidence in 5th grade. All ten are listed on the book reports page.

Helping without writing it for them

Ask, don't tell. "What happened first?" gets a better summary than a sentence a grown-up suggests, and "Why did you like it?" twice gets the two reasons. Let spelling wait for the second draft; the first draft is about choosing what to say. If a child freezes at a blank page, let them say the whole report out loud first, then write the parts they said.

Questions parents ask

My child's teacher gave a different format. Which one wins?

The teacher's. This template covers what most 3rd grade reports ask for; a class's own instructions always come first.

How long should a 3rd grade book report be?

On this form, about a page by hand. As paragraphs, four short ones. Length matters far less than a summary that picks the right three or four things.

What book should it be about?

One your child finished and has an opinion on. If you need one at the right level, books for level 8 lists Peabody's free stories and the kids' lists that fit a typical 3rd grader.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/book-report-template-3rd-grade