Book report template for 4th grade: form, outline and a worked example

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A free 4th grade book report template to print: the form, a four-part outline, a worked example on Rumpelstiltskin and a shorter review version.

A 4th grade book report asks for more than what happened: what the main character wants, why the setting matters, the conflict and how it is solved, a part that surprised the reader, and an opinion backed by the book. Peabody's 4th grade template prints those as a form with lines to write on, adds a four-part outline for writing it as paragraphs, and works the whole thing through on Rumpelstiltskin, 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 prints.

What changes from 3rd grade

A 3rd grade report mostly asks a child to retell well: a summary, a problem and its solution, two reasons for an opinion. Fourth grade keeps the summary but starts asking why. Why does the character do that? Why here and not somewhere else? Which part did you not see coming? Each of those wants an example from the book, and that is the real step up.

The form

The boxes, top to bottom, with the prompt printed under each:

- Box: Title, author, genre and date · The prompt: When was it written or first told?
- Box: Main character · The prompt: What do they want? What are they like? Give an example from the book.
- Box: Setting and why it matters · The prompt: Could the story happen anywhere else?
- Box: Summary · The prompt: In your own words, five sentences at most.
- Box: Conflict and resolution · The prompt: What is the big problem, and how is it solved?
- Box: A part that surprised me · The prompt: What did you not expect, and why?
- Box: Opinion and rating · The prompt: Did it work for you? Reasons, and stars out of 5.

The date box surprises some parents. For a folk tale or a classic, "when was it first told?" is a real question with an interesting answer, and it is a first small taste of context, which grows into a part of the introduction by 7th grade.

The outline, as paragraphs

1. Introduction: title, author, genre and date.
2. Summary.
3. The main character, the setting and the conflict.

4. A surprise, your opinion and the rating.

A worked example

The example on the template page is on Rumpelstiltskin. A grown-up can read it here first and check every answer against the story. Four of the boxes, filled in as they are on the page:

Title, author, genre and date:

Rumpelstiltskin, a fairy tale the Brothers Grimm wrote down in Germany in 1812, retold by Peabody.

Main character:

The miller's daughter wants to stay safe, and later to keep her baby. She is brave and does not give up: she keeps guessing names for three days.

Setting and why it matters:

A king's castle long ago, and a room full of straw. The locked room matters: she cannot leave until the straw is gold.

A part that surprised me:

I did not expect the whole story to turn on a name, or that he would be so angry he stamps his foot through the floor.

Look at the main character answer. "She is brave" on its own is an opinion. "She keeps guessing names for three days" is the example from the book that turns it into a report. That is the tip printed on the page as well: ask for one example from the book for each claim.

The review version

For a book your child chose for fun, the shorter review version on the same page is often enough: a rating out of five with one word for the book, the best thing about it ("what made you want to keep reading?"), one thing they would change if they were the author, and "read this if you like…". It is quicker, and it still asks for an opinion with a reason.

Finding a book at the right level

On Peabody's ladder, 4th grade is level 9. That page lists the free stories at level 9 in the library, such as Cinderella and A Day on the Space Station, and the kids' lists that fit, including the top 25 books for a 4th grader. A level on Peabody is measured from each story's own text, never from a child, so treat it as a place to start and move a level up or down by how the first page goes.

Other grades

The step before is 3rd grade. The step after is 5th grade, which adds the theme and a choice the author made on purpose. All ten templates, kindergarten to high school, are on the book reports page, and the guide to book reports by grade sets them side by side.

Helping without writing it

Ask, don't tell. "What did she want?" gets a better main character box than a sentence a grown-up suggests. When your child writes a claim, ask "where in the book?" and wait. Let spelling wait for the second draft, too: the first draft is for deciding what to say.

Questions parents ask

How long should a 4th grade book report be?

On the form, about a page by hand. As paragraphs, four. A summary of five sentences at most keeps the retelling short, which leaves room for the boxes that ask why.

My child writes "it was good" in the opinion box. What do I ask?

Ask "which part made it good?" and then "what happens in that part?" The second answer is the example from the book. Write nothing yourself; just ask the next question.

The teacher's format is different. Which one should we use?

The teacher's, always. This template covers what most 4th grade reports ask for, and it works as a first draft before your child copies the report into the class's own format.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/book-report-template-4th-grade