Writing Map for a Review

What you need to know before you write your review: What is the item being reviewed? What tools are appropriate to review this item? (Using the ten tools of literary analysis might be a good place to start. Other tools exist for reviewing a video game, movie, or product.) What should I compare the item to? What are the negatives? What are the positives? What tone do I want to take?

Sections of Review	Factors to Consider	Your Prewriting
1. Opening	• Tone suggests your evaluation • Context (genre, definition) • Overview	
2. Opening	• Comparisons to similar products or experiences • Share your informed experience	
3. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
4. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
5. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
6. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
7. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
8. Body analysis	• Analysis using tool • If appropriate, tell both positives and negatives	
9. Conclusion	• Reiterate your judgment • Match the tone of the opening	

This review was published on Orson Scott Card's website as part of his blog "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything." Used with permission of OSC and Sherwood Smith.

Title, author, genre	A few months ago, I reviewed Sherwood Smith's fantasy novel *Inda*, the first volume of a projected trilogy, and I believe I said very positive things.
Setting	I recently read volume two, *Fox*, and the achievement of this writer is only getting more remarkable.
	So many fantasy novels take place in a space about the size (and with as much variety) as the state of Delaware.
	But in *Fox*, Smith opens up the novel into a wide, wide world, with enormous variety. Here we have nation within nation, layers of history, and a real sense that there are kingdoms and empires on several continents, with complex interactions among them, and wide variation in their cultures.
Situation, the problem	Every group has its own history, its own objectives, its own grievances. And Smith handles the relationships and machinations among them so deftly that you don't realize you're being given a course in politics.
Action or plot pacing	The novel begins by plunging into the story about fifteen minutes after the end of the previous volume. I strongly recommend that you reread that last chapter of *Inda* before starting to read *Fox*. Otherwise, you'll be as lost as I was. As with the first volume, Smith does not define things as she goes along: You're expected either to remember or figure it out.
Negative	
Positive (lessening the negative above)	But the sense of dislocation is only momentary. Within a chapter or two I was fully reoriented, despite the months between volumes. And what a ride this new book is!
Characters and their relationships	Though the international politics is deftly handled, what matters most is that the personal stories are believable and compelling. The close-in core of Inda's companions; the second core of characters surrounding Prince Evred; the potential rival to Inda for leadership of his anti-pirate pirate fleet, Fox; and the most mysterious character, a warrior mage named Ramis who seems able to control space and time — all are richly created, sympathetic, and real.
Structure of the work	Nor does Smith infinitely postpone decisive action, the way so many writers of long series do. No, when it's time for something to happen, it happens, and Smith flings out the consequences with reckless abandon. It's often quite breathtaking how daring she is.
Negative	Naming and vocabulary are, as always in this series, a challenge. Inda goes by the nom de guerre of "Elgar the Fox," perhaps intending that he be confused with his ally and rival, whose name is Fox.
Positive (lessening the negative above)	After a while, titles like sierlaef and harskialdna begin to sound like natural words, and family names like Montredavan-An and personal names like Indevan-Laef Algara-Vayir become not just pronounceable, but freighted with all kinds of meaning. It's as if we enter into the culture, like immigrants who finally catch on to the language.
Negative	Sexuality in these books is a bit utopian (in a libertarian sense) and denies much of human evolution — it's a world in which sexual activity is largely separated from mating and child-rearing, and sexual orientation is accepted no matter which way it turns.
The intended audience. Positive (lessening the negative above)	But nothing is ever pornographic. You don't necessarily give this book to pre-adolescents, but nobody is going to learn the facts of life from it, either. As always, the best suggestion, if you have a fantasy-loving teen, is to read it yourself and then discuss the issues raised by the books in an intelligent way. It works far better than banning a book at keeping your child's moral lens clearly focused.
	In the past few months I've started reading more than a dozen fantasy novels or series; I haven't reviewed them here because they were, to put it kindly, a waste of my time, and I didn't bother finishing them.
The effect on the audience	By contrast, I didn't want *Fox* to end. I savored every paragraph and continued to live in the book for days afterward.
	I keep thinking that if I write a good enough review, the publisher or author will relent and let me read the next volume early. Like now. Please.

HALO REACH

Sept. 14. became an important date in gaming history with the release of *Halo Reach*. The newest Bungie project and the final game in the Halo series answers all of the questions relating to the successful Halo franchise. ★★★★/5

MICHAEL GINOCCHIO
Sports Editor

2001 marked a year that all gamers remember fondly the way parents remember their baby's first steps: the release of *Halo: Combat Evolved*. A first-person sci/fi shooter, the *Halo* series set a benchmark in many facets of gaming, including an online multi player system that has defined the games. Subsequent releases of *Halo 2* and *Halo 3* only raised the degree of difficulty even higher, and it seemed impossible to top the success of Master Chief over the years.

Then came *Reach*.

Halo Reach, released Sept. 14, 2010, is a direct prequel to *Combat Evolved*, but by no means is it inferior to the rest of the series. As a matter of fact, *Reach* is by far the best game in the entire series.

Reach incorporates the traditional *Halo* elements, and elevates the game to a whole new level. In multi player, there are new armor abilities that allow temporary offensive or defensive advantages. For example, players can project a hologram of their character running across the map, or use a feature called "Armor Lock", where the player locks down their armor to invincible levels but sacrifices mobility. In addition, *Reach* introduces a credit system for players to spend on armor design (don't get too excited, the designs are just for show.) *Reach* also takes the Fire fight mode that was introduced in *Halo 3: ODST* and vastly improves it, to the point that you forget *ODST* ever existed (which is a good thing).

Even if a gamer just wanted to play the campaign mode, that would still be good enough on its own. *Reach* has a gripping story line, detailing humanity's futile defense of their most valuable planet outside of Earth itself. The player takes control of "Noble Six", the newest sixth member of an elite squad of super soldiers tasked with helping humanity in its hopeless task. What makes the campaign so memorable is the vast array of characters, from the no-nonsense Commander Carter to the walking tank Jorge and possibly insane knife-wielding Emile. But what will draw you in is the near-blank slate your player is. *Reach* gives players just enough information about their own character, but leaves out enough for personal interpretation. So for all intents and purposes, the player really is Noble Six.

What makes *Reach* so special is the sense of finality of the entire project. It closes the loop on the Halo series, and finally stamps shut the story of how you found Halo in the first place. That, and Bungie, the company that has literally made itself with the Halo series, is leaving the project to pursue other interests. So, barring some major announcement from Microsoft, this is it. No more Halo games. No more Master Chief. No more Spartans. No more Covenant. So sit back and enjoy the fun while it lasts. Because if video games are an art, then *Halo: Reach* is a masterpiece.

Characters- Though the Master Chief is sadly not present in Halo: Reach, there are plenty of other personalities to fill in the emotional void. Fight alongside a score of memorable characters, from the brilliant strategist Kat to the laser-accurate sniper Jun, and build your own story as Noble Six.

Weapons- The M319 Individual Grenade Launcher fires powerful grenades with EMP capacity, which can decimate an opposing defense single-handedly. Or if you're more for the old-school approach, mow down your foes with the Designated Marksman Rifle.

Vehicles- Take to the stars with the YSS-1000 Sabre, a top-secret star fighter designed for fast, explosive dogfights against the Covenant. On the alien side, the Revenant is a Covenant equivalent of a motorcycle plus a sidecar, with very big guns.

Game play features- Take your game to another level with crazy power-ups. Utilize invincibility, jet packs, and hologram projections to get the drop on your foes. And once you've done that, finish them with style with Reach's all-new assassination animations.

Multi player features- Thought Halo 3's Forge Mode was ground-breaking? Reach introduces Forge World, a massive landscape with no limits to what you can do. Laws of physics need not apply. Also new to Reach is Headhunter mode, where killing a foe results in them dropping a skull. The player with the most skulls at the end of the round wins.

Nov. 15, 2001 — The first game in the series *Halo: Combat Evolved* was released.

Nov. 9, 2004 — *Halo 2* was released complete with Xbox Live multi player.

Sept. 25, 2007 — *Halo 3* was released, ending the Halo story arc.

Mar. 3, 2009 — The only RTS Halo game, *Halo Wars* was released.

Sept. 22, 2009 — Set between *Halo 2* and 3, *Halo 3 ODST* included beta multi player with purchase.

Sept. 14, 2010 — A prequel to the Halo series, *Halo Reach*, was released as the final installment.

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