Jack Mruz

Period 2

Dr. Gingrich

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Rules for Review

<https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/van-morrison-moondance/>

<https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/earl-sweatshirt-earl/>

1. Summarize but don’t reveal too much. In both of these reviews as well as in several book [reviews](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/oct/17/killing-commendatore-by-haruki-murakami-review) I read for research, a major section is devoted to summary and explaining the plot points of the subject. However, the last thing a reviewer wants to do is spoil the experience for the prospective consumer. The best summaries require balanced execution, with enough summary to make the reader interested but not to steal the experience of the subject.
2. Explain the history and context surrounding the subject. In the case of “Yesterday”, one would explain that Murakami himself is from the Kansai region like Kitaru. In Pearce’s review of “Earl”, he explains how the Earl Sweatshirt persona was created and how it was both influenced by and launched the Odd Future mania.
3. Use vivid language as a method of drawing and keeping reader’s attention. No one wants to read a boring, cut-and-dry review. A dry review could possibly put off the reader as it seems as if the subject wasn’t even worth a bit of effort by the reviewer. In Walsh’s review of “Moondance”, he begins with a Van Morrison quote that immediately grabs the reader’s attention, writing, “Will you shut the fuck up and listen?”. This alone made me more interested in listening to the album.
4. Explain how the subject personally affected the reviewer. In nearly every review I have ever read, the reviewer explains the impact that the product left on them and how it did or did not influence their life. The easiest way to convince someone of the validity of the product is to tell them that it left a lasting influence on the reviewer.
5. Explain how the subject influenced the broader genre or even popular culture. In the review of “Earl”, Pearce explains that “Earl” shifted the entire genre of hip-hop and the momentum of the industry, leading to more shock-based, internet-focused music production. If the subject is as good as the reviewer claims, then it will have had a major impact on its surroundings. If it wasn’t that good, then it probably wouldn’t have a lasting influence.

Haruki Murakami: Story without Pretense

A [man](https://granta.com/a-walk-to-kobe/) goes for a long walk to his hometown on a day off from work and experiences waves of nostalgia and sadness. Someone else tells his elderly father a story about a young man who gets trapped in a [town full of cats](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/09/05/town-of-cats). [Another](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/kino) opens a jazz bar after divorce and struggles to cope with unresolved feelings that had been bottled up for years. These seem like separate events, with no external meaning for the reader with which to leave. This is the magic of [Haruki Murakami](http://www.harukimurakami.com/author)'s storytelling. He doesn't try to force the reader to take meaning from the story or even attempt to have a story-like plot. Rather, Murakami takes the reader with him on a journey. This is a result of his writing process, during which he says that he doesn't even have a story in mind and that it just flows naturally, taking him along for the ride. This mirrors his hobbies, as he [says](https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/magazine/the-fierce-imagination-of-haruki-murakami.html) that he zones out while running and sort of goes with the flow. In all of his short stories, something happens and then, the end. However, the stories don't always end in neat fashion with all lose ends tied. Often, tangents are introduced only to fizzle out with no apparent rhyme or reason for their entry or disappear. Murakami's stories aren't about the introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, or resolution. Meaning is left up to the reader and comes not at any one point of the story but instead during the journey. One major example of this is his short story, "[Yesterday](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/09/yesterday-3)".

“Yesterday" is told in first person, but in true Murakami fashion we know almost nothing about the narrator except that his name is Tanimura and he is from Kansai but attending college in Tokyo. There is no real main character or plot, rather we follow the narrator as he learns more about the relationship between two other characters, Kitaru and Erika, who are childhood best friends with unresolved feelings for each other. Any other story might be filled with drama and introductions of new love interests to complicate the love present but Murakami instead allows the reader to follow Tanimura as he learns more about the individual characters. The narrator originally meets Kitaru and assumes that he is from far outside of Toyko because he has a breezy Kansai accent; however, he was born and raised in Tokyo and chooses to speak with the accent to fit in with fans of the baseball team. Tanimura seems in this case his dialectical opposite as Tanimura was born in Kansai but adopted flawless Tokyo speech to get rid of negative stereotypes and escape his past. Kitaru's girlfriend Erika also seems to be opposite of Kitaru as she is hard-working and beautiful, while Kitaru has an easy-going approach to life. Tanimura learns that while Kitaru loves Erika, he is unable to take things further in their relationship. She relates this to standing in a cramped room together with him looking at a moon made of ice, knowing that the ice will eventually disappear.

The appeal of "Yesterday" is two-fold: at once it feels both as if one is spectating a story about three people and listening to an old friend talk while at the same time relate to the story and feel as if you are in it. Everyone has the same feeling of love that can't go further as Kitaru at some point in their life. Everyone also has the feeling of loving someone that is unable to go further at some point like Erika. Even people that haven't felt those emotions can relate to the narrator, who says that he feels as if he had been looking at the same icy moon alone and had been experiencing depressive symptoms.

At its surface "Yesterday" is a story about someone who moves to Tokyo and becomes friends with a quirky guy. At its deepest, it's a story about love, distance, and restlessness in life. Like all of Murakami's works, mystical elements are coupled with reality seamlessly and while the top-level plot may be simple, there are tons of underlayers for the reader to discover.

“Yesterday” is not perfect, however. For some readers the story may at times feel boring or tiresome as a result of such a simple style of writing. Fans of action-packed books filled with twists and turns will be disappointed in the relatively static plot. While the story is emotionally charged, it can take some deeper thinking and searching to actually feel the full emotional effect. Although there are some downsides, with patience and ability to find deeper meaning “Yesterday” still hits all the right notes for the average consumer.

"Yesterday" had a significant impact on me both emotionally and practically. I ended up rereading several times to try and understand all of the possible subplots and symbolism littered throughout. I found that I had connected strongly with all of the characters at various points throughout my life. I had several periods post-reading where I thought about my relationships with various people and how they mirrored or differed from the relationships in “Yesterday”.

Overall, I would strongly recommend “Yesterday” to anyone that enjoys storytelling and vivid emotional encounters with stories.