

## Reading and Writing a Literary Critique

1. Use the Nine Yardsticks of Value Chart to show how you rate the autobiographical novel *Monkey Bridge* by Lan Cao.
2. Also, carefully read the following critique and use the chart to indicate what you believe to be the values of the author, "*Monkey Bridge*," Cao has a distinctive style that's subtle and engaging. But because the novel is so clearly autobiographical, I wished that Cao had abandoned her creaky literary devices and written a memoir. In the interests of creating a compelling narrative, Cao shamelessly leads the reader toward the soap-operatic revelation of Mai's mother's murky parentage. The sensationalism feels tacked on, while the well-chosen details are what gives the story its energy.



Cao excels at memorializing, conveying ironies in the simplest details. For instance, the Mekong Grocery, where Mai's mother works, becomes a meeting place for the American GIs of Falls Church who want to indulge their taste for Vietnamese delicacies and distaste for Jane Fonda. Cao also tells us that in Saigon women buy paper bags of canaries and hummingbirds and free them for the karma of doing a kind deed. And we learn that in Vietnamese, the word for "please" is "make good karma." ("Make good karma and pass the butter.") In "*Monkey Bridge*," it's the glimpses of Vietnamese-American culture -- not the melodrama -- that left me wanting more." (Elizabeth Judd)

### Your Evaluation

### Elizabeth Judd's Evaluation

Yardsticks of Value	1	2	3	4	5	Yardsticks of Value	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity						Clarity					
Escape						Escape					
Reflection of Real Life						Reflection of Real Life					
Artistry in Details						Artistry in Details					
Internal Consistency						Internal Consistency					
Tone						Tone					
Emotional Impact						Emotional Impact					
Personal Beliefs						Personal Beliefs					
Significant Insights						Significant Insights					

**Do you agree or disagree with her critique?**

**3. Now, write your own review:**

**ASSIGNMENT:** Evaluate the novel based on the Nine Yardsticks of Value. Peruse the POWERPOINT presentation. Make your decisions. Write a critical review in which you address all nine points. **Grading:** Complete, Correct: Three distinct parts: Introduction, Body and Conclusion. Quotations woven in seamlessly and correctly cited? and Creative.