

Hi [Name Withheld],

I'm Jackie, one of the editors for SuperSummary. I've edited a couple of your guides now, and—although I'm not sure what your preference is!—I think you're a particularly strong analyst of nonfiction. In light of that, I want to give you some feedback on *Permanent Record*. I hope that it will help you as you tackle memoir analysis in the future.

When analyzing a controversial subject like this one, keep a neutral editorial voice. This passage's underlined phrases could be construed as non-neutral:

*As such, the descriptions of his time obsessed with his computer and his burning passion for his country help to alleviate some concerns which audiences might have regarding the man who leaked many of the most important and terrifying documents of the information age.*

Here's an example of the same summary, stated in a neutral way:

*It not only explains the foundational understanding of technology that enabled Snowden to get a job with the NSA—and end up in the position to become a whistleblower—but also lays a foundation to explain why he acted as he did.*

Also, certain assertions Snowden makes should be qualified to show that they are Snowden's opinion. For instance, when summarizing his views about the IC's dependence on contractors, you wrote—

*It also functions as “governmentally assisted corruption” (91), lining the pockets of those who approve the budgets for private sector hires.*

With this adjustment, the sentence avoids stating an opinion as fact:

*He views the system as “governmentally assisted corruption” (91), lining the pockets of those who approve the budgets for private sector hires.*

Most importantly, as you analyze a memoir narrator like Snowden, take a journalistic view of the character. One question will be asked about Edward Snowden's time on this planet: Was he a traitor, or wasn't he? As you rightly point out, by being open about his teenage online misadventures, he works to paint himself as truthful. I also read about a guy who compared his actions to a myth of the gods creating the Hawaiian islands, and who viewed himself as the only person able to make this *enormous* decision that affected 300 million lives. This guy was spinning the world on the tip of his finger like a basketball, and considered himself to be the right person for that job. It's pretty autocratic decision-making for such a pro-democracy fellow—and that's worth pointing out to the reader.

In addition to holding this view of his own abilities and importance, he had grievances about his treatment by the Army and the intelligence community. It's appropriate to make clear to the reader that, although he may not have been motivated by those grievances, they certainly existed alongside his idealism.

Smaller things:

- The original reference to the permanent record comes in Chapter 5, but it's not tied to the book's title until the Symbols and Motifs section. Mention it in each analysis section, referring back to it and layering the analysis to show the reader how he builds this connection throughout the book.
- Continue working to write more in active voice than passive voice. You've already made strides in this area since the last time I read your work, but keep at it.
- Keep the new style guidelines in mind regarding direct quotes: Use a maximum of two in each chapter summary.

I enjoy reading your guides. You make complex issues easy to understand. Your explanations of the privacy risk from metadata tracking and the way mass surveillance violated the Fourth Amendment were spot on. "A portrait of the whistleblower as a young man" was a particularly good turn of phrase in this one.

I'll close with this thought: Snowden, a very smart guy and a self-declared hacker of all systems, probably considered how to hack PR and, by extension, the reader. I see it as our role, in service to the reader, to unhack as best we can by presenting all aspects of his complicated character. Question his assumptions about himself; question your own assumptions about him. I look forward to seeing how you engage memoir subjects like Snowden in the future.

Best regards,

Jackie, Editor