Framework for Critiquing By E. L. Strife

General things to discuss upon swapping samples of writing
Is this a finished book or a work in progress?
Is this the genre you like to read?
Is this the genre you write in?
Have you done critiques before?
How long have you been writing?
Who is the target audience?
What are you looking for in feedback? General (plot/scene setting/characterization) or more detailed (voice/structure, line edits/copyedits)?

Notes
If you're doing a group critique, don't read others notes while critiquing. You run the risk of bias.
Remember to provide professional and polite feedback
Point out what you liked as well as what you found problematic
Read through these questions before you begin the critique to help you hunt down critical issues and answer them as thoughts come to mind
Leaving in-text notes can help you with a final (overall) assessment and also point out specific problem areas to the writer

Critique Questions

First Chapter/Opening
Do the first few lines hook the reader with the main character and their problem/conflict?
Can you visualize the environment, the main character, and the problem?
Is the manuscript starting where you think it should?
Is there enough tension and emotion to draw the reader in?
Does it start with a cliché, or is it a unique and intriguing beginning?

Conflict/Tension
Was there a major resolution to the main conflict? Or did you feel something was missing at the end?
Were the stakes enough?
Did the tension ebb and flow in a way that made you want to keep reading?
Were there tense hooks at the end of each chapter?
Did the beginning of each chapter give you the premise with a subtle hook as well?
If this is a series, is there a bit of conflict left unresolved for the next book?
Could you understand the internal/emotional battles the characters were fighting? Did they contribute to the progress of the plot and the character's overall change (arc)?
Did any details or events seem convenient/contrived?

Characters
Were the chosen names, dress, and ages appropriate for the genre and setting?
Could you follow along with the emotional journey of the character? Or did it feel glossed over or forced?
Did the characters encounter enough struggles, including between characters, to complete a transformation at the end?
Do you understand why the villain/antagonist is a protagonist in their own mind?
Does each characters' behavior seem believable?
Are the characters three-dimensional in personality?
Do they experience all emotions?
Do they improve the story?
Do they have flaws/limitations?

Are their goals, morals, and desires understandable?
Are they relatable to a level that fits the genre?
Are their back-stories compelling and well-rounded?
Did you find the characters' changes satisfying at the end?
Were the social relationships among the characters genuine and supportive to the story?
If any, was the hierarchy presented believable and beneficial?
If this was a character-driven piece, do you feel the work was appropriately saturated with detail?
Did you find the characters motivating, compelling, or inspirational in any way?
In general, were the emotions, actions, and dialogue *shown* effectively?

Plot
If this was a plot-driven piece, do you feel the work effectively tackled this as a priority?
Do you know what the main plot is/was? Was it consistent from beginning to end?
Is the sequence of events consistent and believable?
Were there too many dreams or flashbacks that detracted from the clarity of the plot?
Were any aspects predictable?
Were any events dwelled in for too long or not long enough?
If there was more than one plotline or any subplots, were they constructive to the storyline or the character arcs?
Is the influence of any "daily life" in the work helpful?
Are the twists realistic? Surprising?

Setting/World-building
Can you clearly visualize where and when the story takes place?
Do you understand the cultural norms?
Is each change of scene distinguishable?
Were there any environmental descriptions that were overwhelming?
Does the setting/world frame the plotline effectively?
Is the history/back-story of the landscape fitting and believable? (Why are we here?)
Was every scene necessary to the plot?

Dialogue/Language
Are the colloquialisms effective or overwhelming?
Did the language seem to fit each character?
Was the dialogue constructive in moving the story forward?
Were there too many formalities? Hi/Bye, Thank you/You didn't have to
Any dialogue dumps?
Any moments that needed more?
Did it evoke emotions or thoughts in you as a reader?
Did the dialogue reflect the displayed emotions of the characters?

Point of View - Format of narration for the book
Is the point of view effective for the story?
First person - "*I* am telling you."
Second person (rare in novels) - Narrator tells story *to* another (the reader). The "you" perspective.
Third person (limited) - Narrator is outside of character minds. "He read it to her."
Third person (omniscient) - Narrator is in characters' heads. "Josh hated the concept. *This sucks,* he thought. But he read the book to his little sister anyway."
Was the point of view consistent? (Especially between third person limited and omniscient?)

Perspective - Comes from all characters telling the story as we meet them throughout it. This is their view on situations because of their pasts, prejudices, attitudes, and personalities.

For works with multiple perspectives, do the changes from character to character seem fitting or does the story head-hop too quickly?

Are there too many perspectives?

Is there a character whose perspective you'd like to see?

Craft

Pacing

Did the writing carry you along smoothly?

Were there any problematic slow/fast areas?

Did any sections of backstory/info/descriptions slow the story?

Are the transitions helpful in moving from one scene to the next?

Does the pace fit the genre? (ie: Action Adventure vs. Historical Romance)

Show vs. Tell

Any clichés used? Once upon a time…

Does the work show things where it is needed?

Are the moments of telling appropriate?

Format

Are the chapters broken up appropriately by scene/perspective/time changes?

If there are breaks within chapters, do they seem fitting? Or could pieces be joined?

Were any sentences or paragraphs too long or short?

Voice/Tone

Did the voice flow along with the story or did it seem choppy in calm moments and too calm during action?

Is the tone fitting for the genre? (ex: Humorous, dark, melodramatic, literary, mechanical)

Grammar

Was punctuation used correctly? (comma splices, run-on sentences, not too many ; or !)

Any misplaced modifiers?

Are there too many adverbs?

Are the sentences sticky with too many conjunctions?

If there are curses, were there too many?

Are there vague filler words?

Is the writing concise?

At the End

Did the beginning fit now that you know the ending?

Did you notice any inconsistencies in plot/character/scene?

Does the author have any redundancies, catchphrases, or go-to words?

What was your personal take on the story? (Keep this separate)