How to write an abstract for the IB Extended Essay

A definition
An abstract is a succinct summary of a longer piece of work, usually academic in nature, which is published in isolation from the main text and should therefore stand on its own and be understandable without reference to the longer piece. It should report the latter's essential facts, and should not exaggerate or contain material that is not there. Its purpose is to act as a reference tool (for example in a library abstracting service), enabling the reader to decide whether or not to read the full text.

The EE abstract
The norms for this feature are clearly stated by the IBO: “The requirements for the abstract are for it to state clearly the research question that was investigated, how the investigation was undertaken and the conclusion(s) of the essay.” This means that the purpose of it is to allow your readers to understand quickly the contents they will encounter in your Extended Essay. It has only three requirements:

1. A clear statement of your research question. You can just write, for example: "My research consists of an investigation into the use of symbolism in 1984 by George Orwell".
2. An account of the scope of the essay. You need to explain what the focus of the investigation as and what your sources were.
3. A brief summary of your conclusion.

It is important to remember that:
• The abstract is not the same as the introduction.
• You are not required to explain why you have chosen your topic.
• You are not expected to summarize the whole essay.
• You must not exceed 300 words.

Normally, the abstract is written last so that it reflects what you have done, rather than what you intended to do.

Formatting:
Your abstract should be printed on one side of a separate page and placed immediately after the title page. The top of the page should be headed with “Abstract,” which should be centered. Your abstract needs to be spaced 1.5 or 2 and a word count needs to be included at the bottom.

Criterion J: Abstract
The Abstract is worth 2 points, scaled as follows:

0  The abstract exceeds 300 words or one or more of the following is/are missing: the research question, the scope of the investigation, the conclusion reaches.
1  Within the abstract, the research question, the scope of the investigation and the conclusion reached are all present, but not all clearly stated.
2  Within the abstract, the research question, the scope of the investigation, and the conclusion reached are all clearly stated.
Below are abstract examples for English A1 EEs (both are around 260-270 words):

The Title of the Essay is: “The Two Emilies”.
The topic is: “The poetry of Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson”.
The research question is: “Do Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson exhibit similar attitudes to nature and death in their poetry?”

Abstract
Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson share more than just a name. They were both female writers in the nineteenth century, a time when it was still not easy for women to have their writing published. They both wrote extensively about nature and death. My research question is: Do Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson exhibit similar attitudes to nature and death in their poetry?

At it would be impossible to discuss all of the poetry written by the two Emilies, I have concentrated on comparing and analysing the following poems by Emily Brontë: “I said, Go, gentle singer”; “I’m happiest when most away”; “In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid”; “Shall earth no more inspire me”; and by Emily Dickinson: “What mystery pervades a well!”, “I felt a funeral in my brain”, “A great Hope fell”, “Death is the supple Suitor”; “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—”. I have consulted a range of secondary sources, some of which threw light on the interweaving of nature and death that can be found in both writers.

The similarities that I found in the works of Brontë and Dickinson were surprising. The importance of nature in their lives, its magnetic force as an inspiration and the retreat it provided them from the isolation they felt from society were all too obvious. What was more striking was that just as society had failed them, so, in the end, did nature. Only in death did they feel that they would find both peace and the answers they sought to what was the meaning of life.

(Note: The above abstract is divided into three paragraphs to indicate clearly the different elements. It is not necessary to set it out in this manner.)

To what extent was Charlotte Brontë successful in portraying a “plain and small”, conventionally unattractive heroine, in Jane Eyre?

Abstract
Charlotte Brontë’s claim of creating an unconventional heroine in Jane Eyre has been subject to criticism; thus, this paper aims to analyze the character of Jane Eyre, in order to determine the extent to which Brontë was successful in creating a “plain and small”, conventionally unattractive heroine, in Jane Eyre. In order to thoroughly analyze Jane’s character, various aspects of the novel are examined. Jane’s view of herself to be very plain, small, and simple seldom changes; however, when she thinks herself no longer plain, the criticism that Brontë did not completely defy convention is supported. Nevertheless, Brontë’s foiling of Jane’s character with those of Eliza and Georgiana Reed, and her portrayal of Jane’s monotonous life, overshadow Jane’s infrequent view of herself as anything but plain, small, and simple.

The physical setting is examined, where Brontë’s insistence on creating an unconventional heroine is seen through her description of the physical setting, which portrays Jane’s isolation, at the very beginning of the novel. Jane’s nature is noted through the analysis of her relationship with Rochester and Mary and Diana Rivers, where she is found to be extremely impressionable. The investigation of Jane’s character is further carried out by examining whether or not she is a “threat to the literary tradition of masculine heroism”, analyzing the foil in character and performance between Jane and Blanche, as well as the foil between Rochester’s treatment of both women. Despite the novel’s ending in a Victorian conventional marriage, it is inevitable to conclude that Brontë was to a great extent successful in creating a “plain and small”, conventionally unattractive heroine in Jane Eyre.

A This needs to be explained. One character can be a foil for another but not “in-between.”

The following pages are abstracts from 2009 “exemplar” essays and were downloaded from the Online Curriculum Centre for IBO. Please note the scores for each, as they are not all “perfect.”
Extended Essay for History

Abstract

Word Count: 285

Vaccination is an innovation that has transformed medicine irreversibly. As in the case of other innovations and discoveries, the medical world was sceptical about vaccination. Nevertheless, vaccination was able to spread through Europe and onto Mexico and India within 6 years of Jenner’s first publication. This rapid dissemination is breathtaking, considering that the Napoleonic wars brought great turmoil to Europe. I have therefore decided to investigate why the spread of vaccination was so rapid in the early years of the 19th century despite the upheaval of the Napoleonic Wars.

This paper will identify the factors that may have influenced this rapid dissemination of vaccination and analyse their importance in England, France and Spain. This will be achieved by looking at primary sources from all three countries to determine how the medical doctors in each country came to secure the knowledge and practice of vaccination. The influence of the war on the dissemination will also be assessed to determine to what extent it played a role in the rapid dissemination of vaccination.

The dissemination of vaccination was rapid because of a conjunction of conditions which have all been positively influenced by the general mobilisation of the Napoleonic wars that engulfed Europe. In the 19th century, just after the French Revolution, a dynamism of revolutionary mindset dominating Europe encouraged innovations. The enlightened individuals involved in the dissemination of vaccination were influenced by this mindset and therefore highly valued scientific development. As a result of this quest for knowledge, the trans-national scientific network was efficient in improving communication between scientists. Due to the zeal and the enthusiasm of these enlightened men vaccination was able to spread rapidly but its dissemination was soon impeded as their influence was curtailed.
Extended Essay for History

Score: 1 / 2

Abstract

Absences should be written after the essay is finished, and refer to what has been written. The past tense should be used.

This essay will introduce the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as by whom is been drafted, its main objectives and the purpose of it. This essay is focused basically on how the Holocaust contributed to the drafting of the document, mentioning times of the Nazi Germany, the ideology of people in the Second World War under Hitler’s reign. The essay will explain Hitler’s anti-Semitic beliefs and how his fight for a ‘greater race’ led to the discrimination, degradation and humiliation of an entire race of people. It will then explain what dehumanizing events took place throughout this regime.

Furthermore, the essay will look into the Final Solution which led to the denial of most of the human rights of the bill. The essay will conclude with my opinion about the respect of the human being and how the Declaration of Human Rights defends it.

All elements present but not clear

2
Abstract

This essay is a detailed analysis of the role the outhouse plays in Chris Abani’s Graceland. It investigates how Abani develops a variety of themes through the outhouse such as: depravity, life and morality in the slums, democracy and governance, the comfort of a social network and structure within the slums. It sets out to establish the important metaphorical role the outhouse plays with reference both to Abani’s themes and the development of the characters of Elvis, Efua, Okon and Sunday. Through textual analysis, it establishes that the connection between these themes is Abani using the familiarity of the outhouse to explore society as a whole. Parallels, such as the filth in the outhouse and the feculent nature of the slums, are drawn between the outhouse and other parts of the plot giving its central role in the text. The essay concludes by drawing up the connections between these desperate themes, the connection being that the themes discussed are omnipotent controlling forces that the characters have no power over. They cannot prevent them or even cushion their effects. The end result is escape becoming the only redemption, forcing Elvis to flee to America.
I. Abstract:

Cormac McCarthy’s No Country for Old Men is a novel about a man on the run from a deadly assassin. His other novel, The Road is about a father and son striving to survive in a post-apocalyptic world. However, upon a closer inspection, one begins to notice similarities in style and even in the theme of these two novels. One begins to realize that they are in fact linked, and do contain similar themes, such as the ability to survive in difficult situations, the strength of father-son relationships, and an intricate balance of pessimism and hope. In an attempt to further explore these issues, the following research question arose:

How does Cormac McCarthy Portray Common Thematic Elements in No Country for Old Men and The Road?

In order to answer this question, in depth analysis of the novels was required. As these works have not been around long enough for critics to begin to dissect them, the need to rely on primary research was created. Through this primary research, McCarthy’s two novels were placed under examination in order to ascertain what similar qualities they possess, and how they are displayed in each novel. Through my research I concluded that the two novels do indeed share several themes, and that McCarthy unifies the two novels through adherence to these themes and through stylistic similarities. My conclusion is that the two novels, though not similar in plot, are similar in how McCarthy explores several important themes within each. As such, through my research, I came to the conclusion that Cormac McCarthy creates two works which could intertwine into one, creating an exploration of the human spirit during the worst of situations.

Word Count: 281
Abstract

In this experiment I will be looking at an unsolved question of: “Does the concentration of amylase affect the eating speed and beverage intake of an individual while eating?” My hypothesis is that amylase will affect it. The eating speed is defined as how long the individual takes to eat one slice of pizza. The concentration of amylase pertains to the general amount of amylase in that individual’s saliva. Beverage intake on the other hand, is defined as the amount of beverage drank while eating the slice of pizza because of thirst. I will be explaining further in this paper the general concentration of amylase and the beverage intake. I have produced a procedure in which I can test this. A summary of the procedure is picking out testers to eat a slice of pizza, and while they are eating I will be timing how long it takes them to finish a slice of pizza. As soon as they have finished I will take their beverage, Crush Orange pop in this case, and measure the remaining with a graduated cylinder. In the lab I will be using Benedict’s reagent, some starch soluble, and my tester’s saliva to get a color which will tell us how much amylase was in the saliva. Then I will be comparing each tester’s saliva solution color to determine who has a higher amylase concentration. In the end, the result came out to be similar to my expectation, the amylase did have an effect on the eating speed and the beverage intake of an individual, but the way it affected it was different. Thus I concluded that amylase alone had no effect on the eating speed and beverage intake.

Not above exactly how you collect all your data.
Abstract
This essay studies the effects the change in vertical centre of gravity has on the stability of a canoe. The research is conducted with the performing of an "inclining test". Moving the Vertical Centre of Gravity (VCG) by adjusting the height of a 10 kg deadweight by moving it upwards an locking it in different position on the mid pole. And for each new position add increasing weight on the side to create an overturning moment, causing the canoe to gain an angle of inclination. The results were recorded by suspending a plummet from the top of the mid pole, so that it hung freely and would not be subject to any other forces than gravity. Thus whilst gaining an inclination angle, the plummet will react accordingly. Making the angle of inclination calculable by trigonometric. In calculating the VCG of the canoe, the canoe was hung on the side creating measurable force pairs, which then made the VCG calculable. Also, all equipment mounted in the canoe was weighed, and its momentum calculated relative to the height it was placed at. Giving the overall VCG when all equipment was mounted in the canoe.

The research showed an exponential relation between VCG and inclination angle, as the VCG also affected other factors involving the stability of the canoe. Overall this investigation shows that the VCG is a substantial factor in the stability of a canoe, although different hull constructions might be affected differently, it will still remain one of the most important factors.

Word Count: 252
Abstract

My essay looks at some of the many cryptographic methods currently available, and determines which of these is the most useful to most people. The essay begins by introducing cryptography, and its significance to modern society. The essay then starts to look at some methods, quickly increasing in complexity, going through three different ciphers where one letter/symbol represents another in the cipher. For these methods, I encrypted a message using the system, and then showed how it could be broken using cryptanalysis. I next looked at the Vigenère cipher and its vulnerability to cryptanalysis, and the perfect security provided by one-time pad. I then moved to the main point of the essay, which is the choice between RSA and elliptic curve calculus. I encoded and decoded a PIN number using each, and explained what makes them so effective as methods of cryptography. Finally in my evaluation, I looked at some statistics for RSA and ECC, and concluded that for a couple of reasons, ECC was the most useful cryptographic method. I suggested that this was likely to change before too long due to advances in technology and mathematics. Many of the methods I have looked at have been explained by numerous textbooks, and I used some of these to help me to understand how and why they worked. I have then used some of these methods to present my essay, but using my own numbers and doing all of the calculations myself.