

Writing an Essay Abstract

In order to help you prepare for an essay composition, I would like you to write a one page abstract. An abstract serves as a discussion of your ideas prior to writing the essay, and it will give me the opportunity to assess the quality of your ideas. Submit this to me before going further in the writing process so that I can provide feedback prior to a completed draft.

- ❖ The first sentence of the abstract should announce your paper's thesis—the argument you will prove or the main idea you will try to convey.
 - If you compose a piece of fiction, it still must have some core idea(s) that motivated you to write it. Therefore, I say that whatever kind of writing you do, and you will try various types this year (story, screenplay, poem, analytical essay about literature, argumentative/persuasive speech, descriptive nonfiction, skits, musicals, and on and on), you undoubtedly have something in mind that you find worth communicating. But if you don't know how to name that "something in mind" quite yet, do your best to **at least name the general topic and why anyone should bother thinking about**. I will help guide you in the thesis-statement-making process.

- ❖ Most (80%) of the sentences of the abstract should tell what main points you will address to prove your thesis—your evidence and how you plan to use it. You may also raise questions that you plan to answer.
 - Synthesis. Be bold! Connect various examples from your life's experiences, historical events or trends, primary or secondary source material, and fiction you have studied. Prove your argument or convey your main idea through varied approaches of organization and style. Having the idea only began this journey; you now must follow through to create a writing composition that holds together.

- ❖ Conclude with a sentence or two that addresses why your argument is important in thinking about this text.
 - The ending of your abstract should serve as proof to yourself that what you will spend time composing and drafting for many hours REALLY DOES capture your mind, passion, or interest! Fill in this blank: "I think my paper topic is worth writing about because _____." If you cannot fill in this sentence with anything but "I think it's really interesting," then you SHOULD not continue. Why would you? That would be a waste of time, no? Choose a topic or an idea that stimulates your mind and warrants further investigation. You get my drift? Write about what you CARE about or ditch it.

Essay Abstract Example -- *Romeo and Juliet*

I'm going to analyze how Romeo and Juliet's untimely demise is due to Romeo's immaturity and rash behavior.

I'll start off with how when we first meet Romeo he establishes himself as a man driven by his emotions and how his father says nothing good can come of this. In act one, scene one, his dad comments how Romeo, "Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out/Black and portentous must this humor prove/unless good counsel." I'm going to analyze how his father's words show Romeo's extreme emotion and then focus on the word "portentous".

Next, I'll look at how his emotions change quickly. Even though he's so lovesick about Rosaline he quickly changes his love and passion for Juliet ("Did I love before now?") and then go on to look at later when he's banished how emotional he gets with the Friar, so much so that the Friar says to him, "Oh then I see that madmen have no ears"(3.3). I can talk about how it's significant that the Friar calls him a "madman" and reflects Romeo's behavior as irrational.

Then, I'll look at all the places where he seems willing to put himself or Juliet at risk due to their love. He climbs the walls of her home, for example, and risks getting caught. Later, when he is banished, he hangs out in her room when it's morning and says he'll stay and be killed if that's what Juliet wants. All of this behavior suggests that he does desperate things and probably encourages Juliet to do the same, which she does do when she goes to the Friar demanding help or she'll kill herself.

Finally, I'll analyze how he kills himself when he finds Juliet "dead" which is a final act of irrationality--sure he should be desperate and devastated, but to end his life is the ultimate extreme reaction. If he hadn't done so, Juliet would have awoken and they would be together, happily ever after!

The idea that Romeo is the cause of their deaths is an interesting one to look at because Shakespeare claims that it is fate, but I think it really has to do with human behavior, and in this case, Romeo is most to blame.

Essay Abstract Example -- *The Scarlet Letter*

I'm going to analyze how Hester Prynne's exile from her society provides her with the knowledge that ultimately establishes her as a leader in her community.

I'll start off with how Hester's society is so distinct from Hester herself. I'll look at the Puritan society and how Hawthorne describes it on page 59: "stern and tempered" and the "somber sagacity" of the age. Then I'll look at how Hawthorne's description of Hester's letter 'A' on page 62 contrasts with the society because the letter is "so artistically done" with "so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy."

Next, I'll look at the ways even though she is rejected by society she is still embraced by it, such as the parts where they come to her for her sewing.

Then, I'll look at how Hester's society condemning her leads her to a deeper awareness of herself. I'll also look at how her knowledge of herself helps her to have deeper insights about those who condemn her. On page 78, Hawthorne writes that Hester realizes that "the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, "a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom." I'll then explain how she is able to find a connection with humanity and explain how through this she becomes more aware of how openly wearing her sin helps her.

Lastly, I'll look at the end of the book and analyze the description of her where she is alone in her house, isolated in some ways, but also a healer to other women. I can't find the example of it yet, but I know it's there and I can use it. I'm interested in exploring the irony that Hawthorne sets up: through her rejection by society, Hester seems to become an integral part of it. I'd like to somehow incorporate this into my ideas but I'm not sure how yet, but I think figuring it out is important to Hawthorne's message in his book.