How to Write an Article Review/Abstract

As an AP student, you are embarking upon a course of rigorous study that will include readings in primary sources as well as various historical monographs and supplementary materials. In addition you will write extensively to develop and demonstrate your critical analysis, evaluation and understanding of historical methodology. By analyzing the work of professional historians, you’ll learn to identify arguments, assess evidence and methods, and increase your understanding of specialized topics in history.

Formatting Guidelines

• The review should be 2 to 2.5 typewritten pages, double-spaced, using a standard font (10-12 pts) and standard margins.

• Evidence should be cited using parenthetical notation indicating the page number where the information can be found in the article. For example: “In arguing against historians who have read the lessons of the Vietnam War into the American Revolution, Higgenbotham seeks to assert that “the present is the product of the past,” and not the other way around. (10)

• Place the correct citation at the top of the first page.

For an article in a journal:

Author’s Name. “Article Title in Quotes.” Journal Title in Italics. Volume and Issue and/or Date. Pages.

For a book or essay in a book:

Author’s Name. “Title of Essay in Quotes, if there is one.” Title of Work Underlined. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

See examples below:

John P. Student
9 September 2004
AP US History
Article Review #1


Content Guidelines

Your paper should contain the following in each section:

**Author's thesis.** Early in the review you should state clearly and succinctly what the author’s main point is. What is the primary argument that the author is trying to prove or present in this article? Describe the thesis and themes of the article as clearly as possible. Is the thesis proven in the text? (NOTE: You must carefully assess this point; all good essays have a primary argument about the subject.)

**Summary of the Scope of the Article.** In the body of the review, you should summarize the content of the article. This is not a fact-by-fact replay, but rather an overview of the work as a whole. Accompany both the summary and evaluation with discussion of the kinds of evidence the author uses to make this point. Does he/she simply assert statements or does he/she supply evidence to support them?

**Reaction.** In the final section of the review, supply your reaction to the article. In your reaction, you may choose to address questions such as:

- How does the book contribute to historical study and understanding?
- How would you rate the way author approaches the topic, the rigor of the research and scholarship, the clarity and logic of the argument, and the readability of the prose.
- Are the sources of material (facts) documented or otherwise attributed?
- Were primary sources used? Does the author distinguish between fact, fiction, and opinion?

Style Guidelines

Your paper must be written in formal style. Avoid first person, even in your reaction.

Refer to the author in the following ways:

- The author argues...
- Richard S. Dunn holds...
- As Dunn points out...

Use strong action verbs:

- Shows, demonstrates, argues, contends, proves, holds, establishes.
- Disproves, debunks reinterprets, revises, challenges, disputes

You may add flavor to the review by including striking or revealing quotations from the article and/or notable facts or findings. Quotations should be referenced through page-number citations placed in parentheses directly following the quotation.

Be specific. Give details. Try not to be too abstract or vague. Avoid writing generalizations such as “the author challenged traditional views” unless you complement these with specific examples.

Don’t use first person narrative. Don’t write “I felt this article helped me understand more about the plight of coal miners and other laborers.” Instead, you may choose “This article highlighted the plight of industrial laborers in the late 19th century.”