



Writing a synopsis

History essay synopsis

You have probably come across examples of synopses, or abstracts, at the beginning of academic journal articles when researching your assignments. If you have read these synopses, you'll already know that a synopsis is a summary of the article; its arguments and conclusion. Consequently, a synopsis is very useful in helping you to decide if an article is relevant to your research, and if it is worth reading. Synopses are also an integral feature of conferences: presenters are required to submit an abstract or synopsis of their papers, which conference delegates later receive. This helps the delegates decide which presentation they will attend.

As a student you may be required to submit a synopsis to accompany a long essay or report. Your synopsis should include an overview of your arguments and conclusions. Synopses are generally only one or two paragraphs long, and they are placed before the beginning of the report or essay.

The following synopsis is of a first year student essay which answered this question: *Why did the British establish a penal settlement at Botany Bay, Australia?*

Student history synopsis	Comments
<p>The decision to establish a penal colony at Botany Bay was based on more factors than just the need to dispose of convicts. Besides the suitable conditions of the area that promised to make the convicts self-sufficient within a year-favourable climate, fertile soil, ample food sources and friendly indigenous people-and its safe distance from Britain, several other aspects of New South Wales made it appealing to the country. It offered an abundance of flax, hemp, and timber, which were much needed by the Navy at the time, as well as a strategic stronghold in the Pacific, which would be useful in trade and defense. In addition, news of French interest in the area motivated quick action on the part of the British to claim the area using the most convenient reasons – the need for a dumping ground for convicts.</p>	<p><i>Thesis statement for essay</i></p> <p><i>Summary of supporting arguments</i></p>
<p>Though the overcrowding of hulks in Britain is often offered as the primary reason for the establishment of a colony at Botany Bay, the decision to reinstitute transportation was actually made when numbers were down and conditions were improving in the hulks. Thus the British must have had other motives behind the choice. The government was not ignorant of the economic and military advantages of the area – numerous proposals by Matra, Call and Young made sure of that. And these considerations were not unique to Botany Bay. The economic and military values of Das Voltas and Lemain, among others were examined as well. Though the need to dispose of convicts may have been the stimulus behind it, the decision could not possibly have been made without looking at the larger picture.</p>	<p><i>Conclusion (restates thesis)</i></p>