

Undergraduate Thesis Assessment Rubric

Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis author: Jan Vála

Title: The causes and effects of the American Civil War

Length: 29

Text length: 26

<i>Assessment Criteria</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the examined issue. It presents an overview of the thesis.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
2. The thesis shows the author's appropriate knowledge of the subject matter through the background/review of literature. The author presents information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources are included (if appropriate).	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
3. The author carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Ideas are richly supported with accurate details that develop the main point. The author's voice is evident.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
4. The thesis displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
5. Conclusion effectively restates the argument. It summarizes the main findings and follows logically from the analysis presented.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
6. The text is organized in a logical manner. It flows naturally and is easy to follow. Transitions, summaries and conclusions exist as appropriate. The author uses standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
7. The language use is precise. The student makes proficient use of language in a way that is appropriate for the discipline and/or genre in which the student is writing.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	

8. The thesis meets the general requirements (formatting, chapters, length, division into sections, etc.). References are cited properly within the text and a complete reference list is provided.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
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Final Comments & Questions

At the very beginning of the work (Abstract) the author submits the following object of the thesis: *"The object of this thesis is to track the events and historical development of the US... and to discover the causes and effects that led to the American Civil War."* In the Introduction he provides another formulation of the object, namely in the following way: *"The aim of the thesis is to provide a thorough analysis of the main events that led to and caused the ACW..."*. One of the essential problems of the work is the fact that the aim cannot be a mere description of historical events and development. Within his thesis the author cannot discover the causes and effects of the CW; what he only can do about them is to state them from the literature. If he wanted to make discoveries of any kind (and necessarily from a new point of view so that the work could be an innovative contribution) he would have to work with primary sources, make an analysis and draw his own conclusions from these.

As for the Introduction chapter, the structure should mainly include (apart from the presentation of the aims) the explanation of the author's approach to the research and a brief survey of the thesis structure. Instead, the author extensively deals with the description of historical events (including references to the literature), the following short paragraph (absolutely not integrated in the context) announces who was Abraham Lincoln and the Introduction ends with the presentation of the aim. The author writes: *"The aim of the thesis to provide a thorough analysis of the main events that led to and caused the ACW..."*. I have to object that this thesis definitely may be anything but not an analysis. Furthermore, the author presents a timeline of historical events as one of significant findings of the research, although this is the most trivial requirement of any historical research.

Chapters 2 – 6 are a mere **compilation of paraphrases and citations** taken from technical literature. What the reader gets is actually copying of information devoid of any possible creativity or invention, of any research method including original research outcomes. The given chapters do not content a single paragraph of the author's own ideas; it is only a chain of paragraphs paraphrased from the sources.

Conclusion is (apart from other things) again a mere brief summary of historical facts and conclusions that, however, were made earlier by someone else.

The substantial problem of the whole work is **zero research, a zero analysis** (even if it were an analysis of technical sources), and consequently **no output results or innovative approach** to the topic selected.

In addition, the work is linguistically rather weak; what especially stands out are stylistic shortcomings in many clumsy formulations (e.g. p. 4: *"The northerners were partially dependent on the south because they gave jobs to the people of the North"*; p.25: *"The main reasons for the actual conflict along with the historical development of the war is based on my background reading of books related to the CW..."*). Another (grammatical) problem is disunity of capitalization: *"the Civil war"* vs. *"the Civil War"*; *"The Kansas-Nebraska act"* vs. *"the Kansas-Nebraska Act"*; *„republican"* vs. *„Republican"*; *„president"* vs. *„President"*; *"south vs. North"*, which makes an impression that the author did not pay much attention even to the formal aspect of this academic work.

To summarize, the submitted work is not a result of an original approach or innovative research, it is a presentation of generally known facts, extracted from technical literature. These facts are moreover presented as findings of an analysis, while there is none.

The text definitely does not reach the required level of an acceptable bachelor thesis.

Opponent: PhDr. Naděžda Stašková, PhD.

Date: 17th August 2015

Signature:

