

Undergraduate Thesis Assessment Rubric
Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis Author: **Jiřina Jarořov**

Title: *Abraham Lincoln and American Civil War*

Length: 35 pages

Text Length: 31 pages

Assessment Criteria	Scale	Comments
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the examined issue. It presents and overview of the thesis.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	See comments overleaf.
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	See comments overleaf.
4. The thesis displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	See comments overleaf.
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	See comments overleaf.
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	On p. 23 the <i>Jaffa (2000, pp. 237 – 285)</i> reference must be wrong: it would hardly take the author 48 pages to make the point in question; moreover, as no direct quote is offered, there is actually no need for the page(s) to be mentioned at all. "Lincoln, Abraham. (1989)" is out of sequence in the list of references.

Comments

The author states in her Abstract that *the main aim of the thesis is to confirm the Abraham Lincoln's important role in the American history* (sic). This seems a curious starting point for research – akin, say, to confirming the role Lenin played in the Russian Revolution or the relevance of Hitler to World War Two. In fact, the title is slightly misleading inasmuch as the author then declares in her Introduction that she intends to go beyond the Civil War itself and analyse Lincoln's character as a man. One problem with this is that a question such as *Was Lincoln "good" or "bad" President?* (p. 1) is indirectly answered in the same paragraph, whose concluding sentence reads: *The main purpose of the thesis is to confirm the important role of Abraham Lincoln in the American history and introduce Abraham Lincoln as a human being who became an American icon.* It is difficult to imagine a "bad" president being afforded the status of an icon.

Purely in general terms, one wonders what the point is in confirming something which is already more or less universally accepted as historical reality. It is thus little wonder that the author's text ends up being entirely descriptive: it offers no new insights, nor any genuinely original analysis. Potentially the most interesting section is Chapter 5, whose nominal focus might have the makings of a bachelor thesis in its own right; here again, however, the treatment is disappointingly stereotypical and amounts to little more than a list of names and titles with a couple of pieces of verse thrown in to make it look nice.

The lack of originality throughout the work still might not have mattered quite so much if only the quality of writing were acceptable for a work of this type. Unfortunately, even leaving aside issues of cohesion, the standard of language use is consistently poor (see below), making this thesis anything but a smooth read.

Language problems (the following list is by no means comprehensive)

The lynching and the murder of abolitionist editor of newspaper Elijah Lovejoy in 1837 led in Lincoln's first fundamental speech in The Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield in Illinois in January 1838 (p. 5)

Lincoln devoted oneself to his law carrier (p. 6)

Heideking (1999, p. 214) highlights that the election turnout was first climbed to 80 percent and Lincoln owed for his election especially to voices of heavily populated states in the North (p. 7)

The desire for the secession he built to the level of anarchy, but he again emphasized that slavery does not intend to question where it already exists (p. 8)

Lincoln had to convey a political idea for people for whom it is worth to bring the great sacrifice (p. 10)

He looked sternly and sorely at first glance, although its true nature was very kind (p. 18)

Whether Mary Todd Lincoln or even other women showed us in their letters, diaries and other writings the Lincoln's personality and the characters of their men and how these women influenced their husbands (p. 20)

Question

In an unreferenced paragraph on p. 19 we are told that:

On the first blush he did not dazzle with his beauty but with his sincerity and kind smile. When he spoke then the President's face shone friendly personality and suddenly was not unhandsome but it looked intelligent and understanding. In Lincoln's face was showing sorrow and struggle of his life but during the conversation or when he solved the problem successfully his face lighted up with enthusiasm and true friendship.

Since the author of this thesis is unlikely to have known Lincoln personally, upon what is she basing her description here?

Recommended grade

The work is a borderline fail on language grounds alone. Whether an outstanding oral defence will be sufficient to offset the linguistic shortcomings and earn a grade of "dobře" will be a matter for the examination board on the day.

Reviewer: Andrew Tollet

Date: 18th May 2015

Signature:

