



Annotated models of disciplinary essays

1. Annotated History essay

The essay question

The first year History essay on the following pages was written in response to this question:

Why did the British establish a penal settlement at Botany Bay, Australia?

Essay outline

This outline forms the basis of the History essay

Orientation:

Contextualise period of British decision to establish a penal settlement:

1. imperialism
2. American independence

Thesis

1. traditional argument: overcrowded hulks; loss of American colony
2. counter argument: several reasons for settlement

Argument

Examine traditional argument: overcrowding of hulks and American independence, so alternative prison colony needed

Discuss evidence which suggests conditions had improved in the hulks

Argument

Several reasons for the choice of Botany Bay as penal settlement:

1. advantages for navigation and commerce
2. look at the importance of these factors in assessment of other sites

Argument

Botany Bay offered many advantages

- (one advantage) provision of flax, hemp and timber (naval supplies)

Argument

another advantage of Botany Bay:

- base for trading purposes
- strategic military base in the Pacific

Conclusion

restate main Thesis and main arguments



1. Annotated History essay



2. Annotated Modern Languages essay



3. Annotated Philosophy essay



4. Annotated Creative Arts essay



5. Annotated Management essay



6. Annotated Engineering essay



7. Annotated Sociology essay

Learning objectives

This module will help you to:

- understand how a well written essay is structured
- understand what a well written essay in your discipline is
- use evidence to support and develop arguments
- incorporate references in an essay
- use academic language



Essay annotations

Annotations are provided in the right hand column. These annotations highlight significant features of the essay, such as structure and how evidence for the argument is built up and incorporated. The annotations in 'text boxes' provide further comment on features such as academic language and referencing conventions. For further information on these features see the relevant self access module.

| Student essay | Comments |
|---|---|
| <p>The latter half of the eighteenth century was a time of war and competition for much of the world. It was a time of imperialistic ventures and strategies. It was a time when economic and military gains meant wealth, and wealth meant power. Humiliation by America in the form of revolution and a declaration of independence did not sit well with such a powerful nation as Britain. And to top it all off, the nation was overflowing with convicts waiting to be transported "for [their] country's good."¹ The conditions were right for Britain to reassert her power and extend her influence to a new part of the globe. Thus in 1786, the decision to colonise New South Wales at Botany Bay was declared.</p> <p>The debate as to the overriding motive for the choice of Botany Bay has long been contested. The traditional argument asserts that the primary reason for the settlement at Botany Bay was in reaction to the overcrowded gaols and hulks: New South Wales was to be a dumping ground for the convicts of Britain. However, Botany Bay was attractive for several reasons. One reason was its apparent fertile soil and suitable climate conducive to the transportation and establishment of the convicts. Another reason was the strategic and economic advantages of Botany Bay. Reports from Captain James Cook and Sir Joseph Banks, and proposals by James Matra, John Call and George Young all mention the economic and naval advantages that Botany Bay offered. The more the British found out about Botany Bay, the more attractive the new country became. The question could be posed, if Britain were so desperate to solve the problem of overcrowding in its gaols and hulks, why wasn't the choice of Botany Bay examined years earlier? The cost of sending convicts so far away could be justified by the countless other advantages that could be reaped from the land down under. Thus, it</p> | <p><i>orientation to topic</i> Provides historical context to the period of the British decision to establish a penal colony</p> <p><i>thesis</i> outline of traditional argument (reason for settlement: overcrowding of hulks)</p> <p><i>outline of counter argument: several reasons for settlement (acts as essay thesis)</i> i) fertile soil, suitable climate ii) strategic, economic and naval advantages</p> |
| <p>LANGUAGE FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING: discipline specific language: e.g. imperialism, transportation structural markers: e.g. one reason, another reason nominalisation to thematise issues and concepts: e.g. argument, advantages, humiliation, independence the passive voice: e.g. the decision was declared</p> | <p>LANGUAGE ASPECTS UNSUITABLE FOR ACADEMIC WRITING: contractions: wasn't. <i>Preferable form:</i> was not rhetorical questions: Why wasn't the choice of Botany Bay examined years earlier? <i>Preferable form:</i> This would have resulted in a much earlier consideration of Botany Bay as a penal colony. informal language: so desperate preferable form: urgency, determined colloquial language: down under preferable form: New South Wales</p> |
| <p>1. Frost, <i>Botany Bay Mirages</i>, p.10</p> | |

The Committee was seriously considering the area of Das Voltas Bay based on initial reports of a fertile environment and suitable climate, as well as the presence of copper in the mountains, "a fine Bay and Harbour for the Shelter of Shipping," and also the hope that it might "promote the Purposes of future Commerce or of future Hostility in the South Seas."⁶ However, this option was abandoned when a survey of the area in 1786 yielded very disappointing results. The option of Lemain on the River Gambia was supported by the probability "that it would in a short series of Years be of considerable Advantage to this Country...[as] Gold is often found in the Interior Parts as well s other articles of value."⁷ This scheme, however, had to be called off due to the wet season, and problems with the natives. Thus, an 'ulterior motive' was always a consideration.

elaborates on importance of these factors in the assessment of other potential sites: quotes sources to support argument

LANGUAGE FEATURES (structuring an argument)
 Introducing evidence:
 according to ...
 Adding information:
 it was also; in addition ...
 two advantages

According to the reports of Captain James Cook and Sir Joseph Banks, Botany Bay offered many advantages. These included a coastal area with a sheltered port, friendly natives, a pleasant climate, fertile soil, food sources including wild fruits, vegetables, birds and fish: an environment in which they could be self sufficient in a year. It was also attractive due to its great distance from Britain and the fact that the convicts would have no means of escape. In addition, it offered two significant advantages: it promised to be an important naval store of flax, hemp and timber; and it was a strategic stronghold in the East.

*topic sentence
 Botany Bay offered many advantages as a choice of settlement.*

transition to next paragraph: potential of settlement as source of flax, hemp, timber

Britain needed to find new sources of naval supplies. Its sources had been endangered with the onset of the American Revolutionary War. The timber that it had once obtained from New England was no longer available for obvious reasons, and the flax and hemp that had been secured from Russia was in jeopardy as well due to Russia's sympathy for America. The Seven Years War in 1756-1763 and the American Revolution in 1776-1783 had left the British Navy seriously damaged. In 1781, Sir Samuel Hood described the

*topic sentence
 importance of finding naval supplies of timber, flax and hemp*

quotes source in support of argument

strange fatality that seems to have attended the operations of his Majesty's fleet in these seas for some time past, not four ships in the whole are in a fit state to go any distance with a view of meeting the enemy, being totally destitute of spare masts, yards, sails and every other species of stores.⁸

REFERENCING footnotes: note that a complete list of sources cited in the essay would be included in the reference list.

6. Beauchamp Committee in *ibid* p. 43.
 7. Gillen, (October 1982) 'Convicts, Not Empire', *English Historical Review*, CCLXXV, p. 759.
 8. Frost, *Botany Bay Mirages*, p. 62.

