

Abstracts

- An abstract is a short summary of an article, book, long student paper, thesis, or research project.
 - A good abstract should be able to stand alone. Readers should not have to read the entire work to understand the essence of the work.
 - It is usually written by the author of the work.
 - It is an original work and not a passage from the larger text.
 - It does not attempt to evaluate the larger text.
 - The body of the work is generally short – 150 to 300 words.
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- The purpose is to give readers an overview of the work before deciding if it will be useful for their own research.
 - An abstract is often required for conference papers or publications.
 - Abstracts of peer-reviewed articles are often used by online databases. Therefore, abstracts should contain keywords and phrases to allow easy searches.
 - The form varies depending on the discipline but most share certain elements:

Common elements:

1. The first sentence or two provide background information.
2. The next few sentences describe the problem to be addressed.
3. The following sentences explain the research methods used.
4. The conclusion gives the findings/results and details the implications of the findings.

Abstracts begin with a complete citation of the source. This is situated before the body of the abstract.

The following example is an abstract for a dissertation in literature. The numbers are in reference to the following elements and would not appear in the final version.

(1.) Background information.

(2.) The problem to be addressed.

(3.) Research methods. Because this abstract is in the humanities, this section is quite different than if it were in the sciences.

(4.) Conclusion.

Campbell, Catherine. *Hearing the Silence: A Legacy of Postmodernism*. Lettres et sciences humaines – Thèses et mémoires doctoraux [766] , 2003.
<http://savoirs.usherbrooke.ca/handle/11143/2735>

Abstract

(1.) Although there would seem to be a paradox involved, the practice of examining silence through literature actually has a long and varied history. There are examples to be found in the work of Mallarmé and the other symbolists of the 19th century. Views of silence change from one society to another and one age to the next. (2.) Where Canadian and Québécois postmodernism are concerned there is a difference in the treatment of silence in early postmodern novels and its treatment in later postmodern novels by the same authors. Early novels treat silence as a fascinating albeit frightening alternative to language which has been disappointing. In later novels language and its effects are still under scrutiny but silence is viewed as more of a companion to language than an alternative. Along with the shift in the view of silence, there is a change in narrative style from early to late postmodern novels. (3.) Early novels were marked by fragmentation and discontinuity. Later novels show a distinct return to a more coherent storyline. Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976) and *The English Patient* (1993) provide the clearest example of these changes. Nicole Brossard brings a decidedly feminist perspective to the mix. The transition from *Le Désert mauve* (1987) to *Baroque d'aube* (1995) shows the previously mentioned changes but her feminist agenda places greater emphasis on the effect language and silence have on our experience of "reality." The view of silence and language offered by Obasan (1981) is coloured by Joy Kogawa's Asian heritage. *The Rain Ascends*, on the other hand, reinforces the view that enforced silence can only be seen as negative. (4.) In all of these novels, the return to a more coherent storyline is accompanied by a heightened awareness of the act of writing and its consequences.

References:

Writing an Abstract for Your Research Paper – The Writing Center – UW–Madison (wisc.edu)
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