

Examples of RPPF comments

Biology

First Reflection session

After brainstorming my interests, I found that they were all about health. One idea was the causes of allergies as I am the only person in my family with allergies. However, research was scarce and would limit my exploration. Therefore I decided to look at food poisoning as I have worked in the food industry. This brought me to a possible research question that concerned sanitation. A possible approach to this question is cutting surface texture. From my reading, I have determined that new plastic and wooden boards are equally sanitary but after repeated use, weathered plastic will trap more bacteria than wood. I will continue with journals such as “Transfer of Campylobacter and Salmonella from Poultry Meat onto Poultry Preparation Surfaces” by Amreeta Sarjit.

Interim Reflection

When I began experimentation, I struggled to produce a method that worked and would answer my research question that I developed: To what extent does the porosity of fomites allow for the growth of Escherichia Coli? The first method tested was to grow bacteria directly on the board, which did not work as the bacteria lacked nutrients. From this, I learnt about the optimal environment for bacterial growth, so I provided the bacteria on the board with glucose, water and heat but still, no growth occurred. I continued to research the nutrients that E. coli require to grow and decided that I would need to use agar plates. This method allows me to answer the research question that I have developed whilst obtaining interesting data. From my failed trials, I learnt that consistent, smaller reflections are required throughout the scientific process to determine how a procedure can be improved.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

I am proud of my final essay and the work I have put into it. Throughout the research process, my critical analysis skills were improved as I learnt how to choose appropriate sources and considering what I needed to know to complete an effective investigation of my own. By completing the research phase early, I had time to reflect on my learning before completing the experiment and decide how to manage my time. However, I found that translating the new information I had learnt into concise language was challenging. Thus, I took my time to ensure I was effectively communicating my knowledge by frequently reviewing my work and comparing it to essential points that I had decided would have to be included. I was challenged during the experimental process given that it did not work three times; once for a lack of nutrients with the bacteria, the second time because of inappropriate growing environment and the final due to out of date materials. Although this was frustrating, without these setbacks I don't believe I would have evaluated my choices for the essay with such detail, leading to insubstantial analysis of my investigation skills and of the results and method of the experiment itself. Overall, the EE has shown me that scientific research can be a rewarding process and I will consider pursuing it in the future.

Word count: 500

Chemistry

First Reflection session

Starting the Extended Essay process was not as straight forward as I had envisioned. With Chemistry as the topic of the essay, I immersed myself into several potential topic ideas. It proved challenging to find an angle to take on these topics in which I could balance a feasible experiment in a high school lab and bring a new perspective. Reading other essays helped me understand that the endpoint of the essay is not the goal; it's the processes in achieving the endpoint which matter.

I knew that an experimental aspect to my paper would be important, as I could generate my own primary source of data to inform my research question. I have family friends who are in the wine industry with vineyards, in which the chemical processes interested me. I am taking this interest further and am looking at the chemical processes in making wine and how this affects the buffering capacity and sugar content of the wine.

Interim Reflection

After beginning the initial research, I became interested in acidity, particularly titratable acidity. This prompted me to investigate the relationship between little understood buffering capacity and well-researched titratable acidity. My access to laboratory resources reflected those of an enologist, making my experimental research highly applicable.

However, the main challenge whilst experimenting was determining the colour endpoints, as the Rosé especially had a unique colour. I managed this by adding a preliminary titration for each wine for the endpoint to be used as a point of reference.

To better understand my topic, I arranged to interview a professional enologist, Dave Whyte. He was able to help me understand the importance of titratable acidity, as well as show me how they physically make wine. This experience connected theory and real life for what I had researched, enriching my understanding and fascination with winemaking.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

Overall, the Extended Essay process was a very rewarding experience for me. At the start, I underestimated the importance of meticulous notes and knowing the topic thoroughly before starting to write. Throughout the investigation, one of the challenges was recognising that the essay is not an internal assessment. Whereas an internal assessment prioritises experimental work, experiments are an additional aspect in the context of an investigation anchored to real life in the Extended Essay. I had to ensure that my experimental work did not dominate the essay, rather it built on the overarching argument I was constructing.

The major conclusion I drew from the investigation is that buffering capacity is a potential indicator of quality. Nonetheless, it would be difficult to integrate into the winemaking industry as quality of wine is perceived as independent of laboratory measures, mostly determined by cultivated choices of the enologist. Thus quantifying quality is controversial in its real-world applications.

From the experience as a whole, the opportunity to discuss and debate my topic and the experimental techniques with my supervisor deepened the complexity of my arguments and investigation. Those interactions drove my choices in writing, especially around the winemaking story.

Word count: 499

Economics

First Reflection session

I have chosen to write my essay about the impact of food delivery services on businesses in my local region of Brighton. I am very intrigued by the apparent disparity between the popularity of such services, and the frequent news coverage suggesting they are harmful. To me, there seems to be a clear uncertainty here as to if small businesses are helped or harmed by these services' rising popularity, I plan to conduct my own research via a survey to come to a conclusion as to what effects these services have, although as this will be my first ever attempt at conducting such research, I am somewhat nervous as to how it will be received by the target businesses, and whether or not this approach will be successful. My primary concerns going into my research phase are that businesses will either refuse to help with the research, or the results will be effectively meaningless.

Interim Reflection

I ultimately chose to structure my draft by beginning by explaining the most likely impacts using my knowledge of economic theory, and use the bulk of my essay to go through all six questions of my survey, the overall results of each, and the implications of those results on the possible outcomes described at the beginning. The survey in question was at first difficult for me to conduct, but I discovered renewed confidence after, to my great surprise, almost all people surveyed were happy to help me out. The results also did in fact reveal clear trends, and even additional factors to consider when analysing them, such as the relative scale of the area. By exploring these additional complexities, I believe I have been able to convey a more complete image of the food delivery issue in the Brighton region than that I could previously find passively from the media. Thanks to the surveys, not only have I been able to extend upon my initial ideas for the essay, but I have developed increased confidence too. This process was difficult, but very rewarding.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

Looking back at my EE journey, I believe I have achieved my original aims to a standard I am happy with, although I have also learned several lessons along the way. My final report largely differs from the draft in its structure: Rather than focus on sequential survey questions, I realised that my findings would be more easily presented via focusing on the key discoveries themselves, using the survey questions to support them. My two most important takeaways from this experience are that I more fully understand the value of second opinions, and data collection seems less frightening. My supervisor gave me some very useful feedback on the direction to take in my research and writing, but I feel that I could have utilised this valuable resource more than I did. The people I surveyed were surprisingly willing to help me, so I have ultimately grown more confident and feel that, in the future, data collection will seem like a less daunting task.

Word count: 500

Geography

First Reflection session

I was first made aware of the situation in the South China Sea (SCS) through recent events occurring in the news, but as the IB geography course touched on the importance of the region, my interest was sparked. I knew I wanted to focus on geopolitical factors surrounding China's rapid expansion but was unsure of where to begin. After discussing the topic with my supervisor, we spoke about examining issues with multiple perspectives which lead me back to the controversial claims surrounding the SCS. After continued research, I learnt that my interest was naturally swaying towards the political side of events, which lead me to the current title of: 'The geopolitical factors affecting China's expansion in the SCS'.

Interim Reflection

I was finding it hard to maintain a geography focus in my writing due to my natural inclination to focus on the political side of the issue. Whilst I fear that I may have forgotten I was writing a geography essay, in order to overcome this issue I've tasked myself with focusing on the spatial aspects with a particular focus in mapping the situation. Through this process, I was able to achieve a better understanding of what was actually happening but it also aided in orientating my thought process when writing about the topic. Whilst undertaking further reading, specifically on hydrocarbon resources, I noticed conflicting claims being made by that of the Chinese and USA's governments which made cautious about the accuracy of my data. Despite these concern, I quickly discovered third party entities such as the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative which offered unbiased information and was likely going to be far more reliable than that of the bias parties.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

I am very pleased with how the essay has turned out. Skills wise, I had no problems with referencing, which I continued to make note of throughout the writing process. This was extremely effective. However, the initial issue, which was noted in the interim reflection, meant that at the conclusion of the draft, I had to rewrite significant portions. Due to my unconscious interest in geopolitics, I had strayed away from the spatial and geographical aspects to my topic. Whilst this was extremely frustrating, one strategy that aided in the completion of the paper was the constant reminder and questioning of my thought process to bring it back to the important geography concepts. I believe that this notion of revisiting a topic, even when trying to rewrite, allowed for a greater understanding and that the act could be extrapolated to countless other tasks. In terms of what I learnt about myself, I learnt that I need a clear structure and plan in order to comprehend and undertake such a large task. Through the undertaking of this broad topic, I believe that I've been able to enlighten the complexity of the tensions in the South China Sea as well as expose the various implications which may or may not come as a result to this ever-changing and ongoing issue.

Word count: 500

History

First Reflection session

During a conversation with my family about my grandmother who had experienced the effects of the cold war in fleeing from East Germany in response to the building of the Berlin Wall, I was instantly intrigued in the topic and as we were studying the Cold War as part of the IB history course, I knew that I wanted to focus my extended essay around the Berlin Wall. My mother informed me that my grandma wrote a book, called "Der Efeu Blüht" and after reading it I was amazed at her experience. However, when discussing my topic and interests with my supervisor, I realized that I needed to specify my topic and although I was attracted to research the rise of the Berlin Wall, we had a discussion that made me want to focus on the fall of the Berlin Wall and how that meant two completely different cultures had to be reunified.

Interim Reflection

Deciding on a guiding research question that encapsulated what I wanted to focus on was a struggle for me. After multiple drafts of the research question, my supervisor and I came up with an acceptable one that would allow me to construct valid arguments. Instead of focusing on the Berlin wall, I was going to focus on German reunification and how that has impacted East Germans. An interesting idea about oral history was raised in my history lesson and me think I could base most of my evidence on oral testimonies of East Germans. This was a really exciting way of researching and eliminated the problem of feeling overwhelmed by millions of articles on German reunification. Evaluating what these oral testimonies reveal and comparing their statements to what is stated on paper, referencing unemployment statistics will allow me to gain further insight into the process of eastern integration into the west. Constructing a concrete plan of what I wanted to focus on, regarding my question, helped me to remain on track and focused. I am considering further researching the social and economic consequences of reunification.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

With the Extended Essay completed, I feel relive but also as though I have grown as a learner and student. The process and journey, which my supervisor and I reflected upon was filled with challenges and struggles that I ultimately had to overcome. Focusing on a specific topic and sticking to it, not getting caught up in research too much and just taking the plunge and start writing were some of my initial struggles. However, the overwhelmed feeling and anxiety that surrounds this task does truly help you become prepared for future tasks. It was taught be how to structure an essay logically, which I am still learning to master, and overall helped me to decrease my narrative tone at times. I believe I have created a piece of work that encapsulates the East German experience during their integration into the west during German reunification.

Word count: 483

Literature

First Reflection session

I first read Samuel Wagan Watson's collection 'Smoke Encrypted Whispers', collating them into levels of interest and whether they would be suitable for an extended essay. I decided on the poems, "white stucco dreaming", "jetty nights" and "night racing", with a focus on the charting of childhood innocence to adulthood experience. I had initially wanted a topic focused around aboriginality. However, I failed to realise his poetry discussing child and adult experiences is also from an aboriginal perspective, and it would be unwise to exclusively talk about his aboriginality because of my lack of sufficient understanding of the culture or the cultures that surrounded it in 1980's Brisbane.

Interim Reflection

Initially the focus of my research question was agency, and how it develops through the age progression in the three poems. However, after writing and conducting a deeper analysis of the poems, I realised the growth had a greater focus on the speaker's perspective of the world around them, rather than their agency within it. This led me to refine my research question to 'How do different stages of development and age influence perspective, understanding of their heritage, sense of rebelliousness and identity within Samuel Wagan Watson's poetry?' Challenges I've faced include the exploration of specific poetic devices and how to incorporate them into my thesis, rather than a focus purely on the themes of the poem and where they are expressed.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

Through writing this essay I was able to further expand my understanding and appreciation of aboriginal culture, and the struggles they face growing up in a country that no longer propagates their values or needs. Further, as a white Australian I believe Samuel Wagan Watson's poetry, accompanied by secondary sources exploring similar themes, gave me an insight into how my experience differs to native peoples and how we separately connect to our culture. Skills-wise, I implemented techniques of poem analysis which I have refined over my time in Literature and since my last reflection, and hence found examining diction and punctuation choices interesting and enjoyable. However, I struggled to examine overarching voice and style without specific in-text examples. In order to develop this, I aimed to form connections between each poem through key images and themes and therefore display how the examples developed over time. This challenge taught me to value the tone in which poems are delivered, and not exclusively focus on specific diction choices, and further, how to explain this in my writing. Additionally, Upon my first reading of the poems I misunderstood the progression of the speaker, believing "night racing" to be the second poem in the progression, this additionally demonstrates my misunderstanding of tone. However, after exploring this with my mentor I came to understand how the tonal changed favoured "night racing" to be the final poem in the progression. Furthermore, this misinterpretation exposed how the poem's aboriginal speakers and I differed in our experiences and development. Overall, I gained both analytical skills, developed my weaknesses, and gained a new perspective from my EE.

Word count: 500

Mathematics

First Reflection session

My initial extended essay topic is “to discover the relationship between the area, sides, diagonals and the angles of an n-sided polygon”. I'll start my EE by exploring the properties of Heron's/Bretschneider's Formula and contrasting it with other formulas for area of a triangle. I will start with calculations of a cyclic pentagon and gradually develop area a formula for n-sided polygons. My plan is to evaluate my formula and discuss the possible ways of simplifying representations for the most elegant rule and to deal with any anomalies, should they arise.

Interim Reflection

From my initial research question, I found it hard to develop a concise formula for the area of the n-sided polygons. The formula I developed get more complicated than just adding areas of triangles. Therefore, I decided to change my topic to investigate the most cost-efficient way of laying pipelines in water. My inspiration for a new method came from reading a novel for my English class. The idea that the path taken by the light represents the path of least time to travel from two points. As I investigated further into this idea, I was able to produce a different set of solutions where the path taken by the light represents the most cost-efficient oil pipeline system. I found it challenging to reach a conclusion for the 2-platform situation with the algebraic method due to the degree of difficulty of the formula generated. To produce a more sensible conclusion, I approached the question from the geometric aspect (The light path method). Surprisingly, Fermat Principle, one of the rules I investigated while I was doing my original topic “finding the area of a n-sided polygon”, turned out to be useful. With this, I was able to locate the position of the meeting point of the pipelines connected to different platforms. By showing a clear similarities and differences between the two methods, I explored the strengths and weaknesses of both methods.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

In general, I was satisfied with the mathematical aspect of the extended essay as I was able to produce a hybrid formula which represents both the minimum cost and the position of the oil pipeline. The strength of the geometric method was it clearly showed the position of the pipeline while the algebraic method effective in representing the minimum cost. Due to word restriction, I was not able to explore the extension of the n-platform and nth dimensional situation through a similar process. Also, I was not able to incorporate the economic and environmental costs into my model. The inclusion of the three dimensional diagram also helped me communicate my understanding and analysis to the reader. However, I believe my research model can still be a useful tool as it allows the reader to understand the minimum cost with stated constraints through geometric and algebraic method including calculus.

Word count: 481

Music

First Reflection session

Recently, I have found Russian music and its particular characteristics fascinating, especially through the lens of harmony and rhythm. The Russian Five composers have been of particular interest to me, as their unique compositions unveil many aspects of the music style of both Russia and Europe in the 19th century. From my passion towards music, I decided that this would be a very suiting area of investigation for my Extended Essay. My initial idea was to begin an in-depth analysis on the compositions of the five composers. I am really grateful that I speak and understand Russian, as it allows me to access information in both languages. I have experienced a few setbacks; one was that some essential music scores had specific parts that were missing/destroyed. Whilst it would not be simple, as suggested by my supervisor, I was able to “restore” parts of the music whilst adapting important skills/techniques such as transcription and notation that I will be able to utilise in my further research.,

Interim Reflection

My initial thought was focusing on the Russian Five composers, but after a discussion with my supervisor, I narrowed down to a single composer and one of his works. My initial research was interesting and very productive, at times I found myself exceeding parameters I had set for myself due to my fascination in the topic. This allowed for a much deeper understanding on the matter, allowing an advanced development on the subject. However, after the topic change, I found myself re-working a very large portion of the essay which occupied a lot of time. In the beginning, I think that I did not establish a strong outline, which meant the draft somewhat lacked clarity. Another reason could be the broadness of the knowledge question that I had. I have begun reconstructing my essay with the new knowledge question and supporting research. Already, I feel much more in control and on the right track.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

I am delighted to look back at my final Extended Essay version and despite challenges/difficulties throughout the ‘journey’, I am very pleased with how the essay has taken shape. Throughout the process, the close music analysis of the particular scores allowed me to open a new perspective on transcription and composition. I always enjoy writing music and seeing the features and characteristics famous composers implemented in their music has left me with many ideas and thoughts. Due to my high interest in the topic, I feel like having the desire to research one step further than what I needed was helpful. This extra information allowed a stronger sense of understanding for myself and whenever I encountered any queries, I was able to use this research to my advantage. This aspect also helped me overlook the word limit, 4000 words, which at first seemed somewhat frightening. For future EE-undertakers, I strongly encourage to establish a well-developed plan in the beginning. This will allow for a much more structured research plan and will assist in obtaining the most relevant information efficiently.

Word count: 500

Physics

First Reflection session

Throughout my physics classes, I have consistently enjoyed and taken interest in the field of electricity and magnetism. Because of this, I have chosen to pick an EE research question related to this unit. While I initially wanted to investigate something related to electromagnetism, ultimately I decided this was not very practical so I instead am investigating Lenz' law. I am interested as to the efficiency of the transfer of energy between two charges that are being affected by Lenz' law, and I have been utilising google scholar, educational websites and scholarly articles in order to research this phenomenon further. Currently my primary concern is the methodology of my experiment so I will be researching how to make a practical and accurate experiment on these magnetic phenomena.

Interim Reflection

After careful reconsideration of my goals and desires in pursuing the EE, I elected to shift my topic from Lenz's law and magnetism to Torricelli's law and viscosity. I felt that I would enjoy learning about fluid mechanics more than electricity and magnetism, and the experiments I had in mind didn't feel like they were engaging me on a personal level. This has definitely been a setback in terms of productivity, and going forward I definitely need to reconsider how I allocate time and prioritize tasks and due dates. However, I believe that I have made good progress on the new topic. I usually dislike experiments, but I really enjoyed setting up and executing the experiment for this essay, and enjoyed the process of setting up the tubes and watching the water pour and dissipate. Even in the face of the pandemic and lockdown, I have confidence that I will be able to persevere with this new goal in mind.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

The writing of the Extended Essay has been an exhausting but fulfilling process that has taught me a lot about the value of hard work and dedication. I took particular interest in the concept of laminar/turbulent flow during the later stages of writing the essay, and found that it was surprisingly relevant to my new EE topic. It turns out that the state of flow of a fluid is determined by its Reynold's number, which in turn is related to the viscosity of the fluid itself. This allowed me to draw an unexpected relation between two parts of Physics that I had previously never considered to be related, and I found this sudden connection to be incredibly engaging. Overall, while I found working with fluid dynamics and viscosity to be engaging, the material was probably too ambitious for a year 11/12 student and ended up being a very difficult opponent to grapple with. With this in mind, allocating time more efficiently and getting a consistent amount of work done each week would have probably been a wise target to set, as I frequently dealt with troughs of motivation that were difficult to work out of given the daunting nature of the essay.

Word count: 495

Psychology

First Reflection session

My extended essay research topic was inspired by the movie 'Inside Out', which fascinated me because emotions were responsible for everyone's actions instead of humans. I pondered who is controlling us? In IB psychology we study the effect of biological factors (such as hormones and genes) on behaviour. I focused on adolescents because it is more interesting and applicable to me. Originally, I did not know whether to study decision making behaviour or risk taking, however I found risk taking more interesting in relation to adolescents, as I find myself taking risks for no good reason. I have found relevant studies published in reputable journals. The next research I am planning to read and take notes on is about the contribution of testosterone in adolescent risk taking, by Jiska S. Peper.

Interim Reflection

In the beginning I found it difficult to understand the journal articles I had sourced, as the language used was highly scientific and specific to what was being studied. To gain meaning from these articles I searched unknown words and wrote summaries of each article using my own words. This helped me immensely, and I immediately found it easier to write the essay. It was difficult to structure my essay in a way that was scientific, whilst still easy to follow. I decided to focus first on the testosterone data, as this was a key part of my research question. From there I discussed other aspects affecting risk taking, for which there was less evidence. Forming a conclusion was another challenge; since the data was generally inconclusive I focused on the findings, and what required further research.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

My final extended essay turned out very well and successfully answered the research question. The most rewarding aspect of the process was learning about how sex hormones can affect behaviour from reading journal articles and writing on the topic. I was able to learn a vast amount of information about this topic that was really interesting to me, and can have applications in my own life. I found the least rewarding aspect editing the essay and cutting out information I had found really fascinating to learn about. I did include sources that contradicted the general ideas of my research as it became clear that sex hormones were not the only factors that impact risk-taking behaviour. Including sources that delved into the role of other hormones, or brain structures, provided a more holistic view of risk-taking and the biological processes that modulate it. I am left with the unanswered question of whether social or cultural factors also play a part in risk-taking behaviour, as this was something I did not explore in the essay. It could be hypothesised that social aspects such as peer pressure and toxic masculinity would have a role in risk-taking. It would be interesting also to discuss hormones that are common for all adolescents, such as cortisol, to see if their levels are similarly altered during puberty, and what this could mean for risk-taking.

Word count: 500

Sport Exercise & Health Science

First Reflection session

My distinct interest in indigenous Australian culture and its history meant that I initially considered examining indigenous cultural practices specifically. However, when I began research, I discovered that few verified indigenous people's accounts actually exist. For this reason I began analysing the colonial discourse around the time and its description of indigenous people as essentially savages. This led me to my initial research question of "To what extent was the 'hunter-gatherer' label assigned to Australian indigenous groups an excuse for establishment of a British colony in Australia in the 1700s?". I have now allocated time to broaden my research, reading primary accounts from colonial settlers as well as historian analysis.

Interim Reflection

After extensive research, I began to understand the process of Australian settlement as something that occurred up until federation in 1901, meaning that I needed to establish a clear timeline to frame my RQ within. Furthermore, as I read in greater detail, particularly through book sources I realised that settlers' perceptions differed. My original RQ almost inherently suggested that Terra Nullius was an excuse whereas the research I had done demonstrated the mindset of settlers as something more complex through primary accounts with additional historian commentary. This meant I altered my RQ to "To what extent was the 'hunter-gatherer' label assigned to Australian indigenous groups used an excuse in the informing of Terra Nullius and subsequently, the establishment of British colonies in Australia from 1788-1838?". I am now looking forward to expressing what I have learnt throughout the drafting process, and refining what I have completed thus far.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

Overall, this has been a thoroughly satisfying experience. I enjoyed exploring a topic I hold great interest in whilst developing my skills around academic writing and how to conduct high quality research. My engagement with the subject at times made it difficult for me to maintain focus on the demands of the essay question and remain within the word limit. However, this was an opportunity for me to learn the importance of selecting not only relevant and reliable sources, but those which most articulately aid the response to the research question. As we begin to question the morality and outcomes of European colonialism across the world, I was delighted to explore the issue in context of my own country, especially as I began to realise that the prejudice held by settlers at the time is not dissimilar in its roots to the issues surrounding prejudice we confront today. This encouraged me to consider the complexity of our prejudices and developed my thinking on how we judge historical figures as simply 'good' or 'bad' whilst failing to consider cultural context of the time. Without doubt, the extended essay has been a challenge; the process of taking so much research and organising it into a coherent structure was something I struggled with. Nonetheless, this experience has encouraged me to question and evaluate our interpretation of motivations for Australia's settlement in a way I would have otherwise never considered.

Word count: 500

Theatre

First Reflection session

I was drawn to physical theatre as in class I was introduced to it through Kabuki. I initially considered writing about physical imagery but quickly realised that it was too broad of a topic, so I decided to relate it to a style of theatre I have seen performed on numerous occasions called Cirque Du Soleil. I am interested to find out how they use physical theatre in one of their most recent productions. The challenges appear to be finding enough video content to back up evidence. Through contacts and written articles, understanding how Cirque du Soleil incorporates physical theatre into the production of Kurios should be achievable.

Interim Reflection

At the beginning I found it challenging finding enough information to formulate an argument as my topic was quite niche. To gain more knowledge I watched the live performance of Kurios which helped me to understand more about physical theatre and circus. This led me to come up with a new research question which was far more refined. I began structuring my work according to the different aspects of traditional circus within the context of Kurios. From reading a book on physical theatre by Dymphna Callery I realised I needed a specific definition of physical theatre which is why I emailed the artistic directors of Cirque du Soleil. I read a lot of articles and listened to interviews as well as referring to the video of the live performance I had seen. I was challenged by the different ideas of defining physical theatre as it is a style that is evolving with the emergence of new theatre groups, so I chose Callery due to her extensive research in this field.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

I am delighted with how my essay turned out. At first, it was a challenge to reference correctly, but I soon got the hang of it. If I were to redo this essay, I would have planned my structure more thoroughly before starting, that way I could have gained a better sense of what to incorporate in each body paragraph. At the start of the essay, I questioned whether I had the correct definition of physical theatre and if other people saw it in the same way as me but when I got in contact with some primary resources it reassured me that I was on the correct path. Approaching people directly was a challenge but I soon realised that people are eager to talk about their work and this encouraged me to approach other contacts. I believe I have been able to highlight how circus has been transformed into Physical Theatre through physical imagery in Cirque du Soleil's production of Kurios. The study has provided me with a better understanding of the use of Physical theatre in performances. I was able to see a live performance which formed the basis of my essay and the intention was to see a second performance again after the first draft which was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID situation.

Word count: 500

Visual Arts

First Reflection session

After visiting Bill Henson's 'Untitled 1985-86' exhibition, I was captivated by the elegant manipulation of light in his landscape photographs. On googling his name, I discovered that numerous sources including the ABC and Australia's previous Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, had critiqued the controversial subject matter of his 2008 exhibition, described by Henson as "young people modelling." This interested me, as it diverted the landscapes in his exhibition, while simultaneously confronting my knowledge of the importance of ethics in art. This suggested to me that perhaps negative media attention altered Henson's output to avoid controversy. I've been in contact with the curator of the exhibition and hope to interview Henson.

Interim Reflection

During my research, I learnt that cultural biases were largely impacting the source materials I read, as many held extreme views on the matter, because it was so controversial. I responded to this by seeking information from a combination of gallery officials, such as the historian from the National Gallery Australia, and book authors including David Marr, to obtain as balanced a perspective as possible. This primary sourced information was more challenging to obtain, but the interview I conducted with the historian greatly improved the quality of my discussion. While initially my RQ was focused more on the authority of Henson's controversial output, upon evaluation, I have refined it to be focused more on the changes in his output, and whether they were resultant from the public media debate. This was because I could more objectively and critically analyse his artworks before and after the 2008 incidence, rather than getting side-tracked by the ethical discussion.

Final Reflection – Viva Voce

With the IB art's consideration of "appropriateness", I was concerned that the focus of my extended essay may have been too taboo to sit within the guidelines. I ended up contacting external IB coordinators outside my school to interrogate this concern, and initially thought I may need to remove certain photographs/phrases to address this. While I did not end up altering any of these things, I learnt how to consider my work from alternative opinions, and address my concerns by seeking external help. Despite Henson's opinion contradicting the conclusions made in my research, I chose to include this as I was able to closely look at why he thought the controversy did not change his work, and critique his statement's credibility against an analysis of the similarities and differences between his art before and after 2008. I think this strengthened my overall argument. In my opinion, a key strength to my essay was its structure, as it mirrored Henson's 2019 exhibition, which was separated into a 1985-6 series, and a 2019 series. This structure worked well as I could first analyse photographs in the absence of controversy, and subsequently, after the peak of the controversy. A main drawback to my essay, however, was that this structure partially confined my conclusions to a specific exhibition of works. I could improve the conclusions of this essay by exploring Henson's photographs outside of the exhibition I visited.

Word count: 500