

National Writing Board

730 Boston Post Road, Suite 24, Sudbury, MA 01776 USA

Author Report

14 July 2003

Title of Paper: The Sacco & Vanzetti Murder Trial Code Number: 0703-KASH-00127

Author: Name Withheld School: Private High School

Home Address: Peabody, Massachusetts

Total Score: (5-30) Reader One **19** Reader Two **24** **Final 21.5 (Good) (4)**

28-30 = A+ Superior (reported score of 6) (1 in 100 papers rated)

23-27 = A Very Good (reported score of 5)

18-22 = B Good (reported score of 4)

13-17 = C Average (reported score of 3)

8-12 = D Poor (reported score of 2)

5-7 = F Very Poor (reported score of 1)

Category (check one): Short (1,500 to 2,500 words) Actual length: 6,137 words
x Long (4,000 to 6,000 words)

Each paper is read by two Readers, and significant differences in scores are mediated by a coordinator, all senior secondary instructors in history.

I. Reading (Sources)

Score: (1-6) Reader One 4 Reader Two 5

Reader One:

You offer a productive bibliography, but given the thousands of books, articles, and commentaries on the subject, you could have gathered more titles. There are many periodicals you might have employed, and you must understand that textbooks are not scholarly sources. They should not be used save for an explicit purpose, one that specifically requires it.

Reader Two:

There is a terrific and thorough annotated bibliography. There is a good mix of recent historical analysis and primary documents. You have a good sense of looking at contemporary attitudes toward this historical event. Good incorporation of reading into the essay.

II. Thinking (Understanding)

Score: (1-6) Reader One 4 Reader Two 5

Reader One:

As you examine these events that eventually demanded the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti, have you thoroughly assessed the other side of the argument? That is always a profitable exercise for any historian...Were they simply victims of a brutal, paranoid and uncaring society? If they were, why didn't most of their peers in the immigrant

community demonstrate the same sense of rage and alienation? These are questions that come to mind in a reader, and you must address them in order to deepen your own understanding.

Reader Two:

The author has a very good sense of interpreting the significance of the trial in its historical context. The failure to mention the Russian Revolution in this context seems like an odd omission. Perhaps a more complex development of the conclusion paragraph would make the paper more original. Mostly, this paper is a retelling of events, rather than the author's own independent thinking about what he/she discovered.

III. **Elaboration** (Use of evidence)

Score: (1–6) Reader One 3 Reader Two 4

Reader One:

Use Turabian for proper formatting and citations. All historians compile bibliographies—and make footnotes—according to this (University of Chicago) guide. Don't string together citations bearing on one source. See, for example, footnotes four through nine. Beware of unsupported generalizations. For instance, not all Americans were xenophobic—And most scholars would agree that European immigrants were not "lured" to the U.S. They were not so foolish as to be disappointed over the lack of streets of gold.

Reader Two:

Aside from a few quotations which lack citation, the author has made good use of source material, offering evidence through endnotes. Most of the assertions and claims here are presented as straight facts, even those which are biased or interpretive (e.g. the only comfort they had in jail). If such interpretations are taken from other historians, sources should be noted in the text (e.g. "As Russell observes...")

IV. **Writing** (Use of language)

Score: (1–6) Reader One 4 Reader Two 5

Reader One:

Take more care with paragraph construction, remembering that each paragraph must be limited to one main idea. Beware of the details as you write, and subject your work to a rigorous proofreading at the end. For example, Boston most assuredly did not have 343,000 steelworkers in 1919. Your writing style is animated and interesting, and it communicates an element of sincerity that gives an added texture to your prose.

Reader Two:

The author writes clearly and well. The coherence of the first two pages is loose and choppy, but then the paragraphs begin to tighten up nicely. You have a great sense for developing context, then weaning to narrative. This is a very easy and interesting paper to read.

V. **Overall Result**

Score: (1–6) Reader One 4 Reader Two 5

Reader One:

Sacco and Vanzetti continue to stir Americans to think about our institutions and national ideals, and your treatment of the case is filled with interesting observations...Were the men innocent? Were they good citizens, or was their public

posture such that one could not blame Bay Staters for their disapproval? What about the bigotry factor? Xenophobia? How does one measure the influence of European radicalism in the years following the Russian Revolution? The circumstances that caused ideological combativeness and social discontent during this period are terribly complex. Your work suggests that you have begun an academic journey. One hopes you continue the exploration.

Reader Two:

This is a nicely done paper. The author presents a clear and succinct location of the Sacco & Vanzetti trial in a context of xenophobia and the Red Scare. More independent analysis of the trial's significance today (post 9/11) would make the paper more original and sophisticated.

Total Score (5-30) Reader One: 19 Reader Two: 24

Final 21.5

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