

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE SUMMARY (50 POINTS POSSIBLE)

A summary is an organized reconstruction of the essential claims, evidence, and analysis of a text. A good summary provides both the essential ideas and overall argument of a text as well as a sense of what the summary writer believes to be important based on the organization that information. To write an effective summary, you must both read and understand the nuances of a text, then cohesively reorganize it around what you consider to be the most important ideas to share with an audience and what connects those ideas.

DIRECTIONS

A. Taking Notes

As you prepare to write a summary, you must read the text, and take notes. If you are inexperienced in writing formal summaries, I recommend that you write directly on the text itself in the form of annotations. Your annotations should accomplish three things:

1. Provide you with a visual map of where the key ideas and arguments of a text are located for your reference (e.g., the underline function).
2. Provide a basic, functional analysis of the key ideas of the text by organizing them using basic schema (i.e., lists, diagrams, flowchart, etc.) to facilitate your own ability to synthesize knowledge from them.
3. Provide your response to these ideas in your own words. The degree to which you are able to “talk back” to a text in the form of an educated opinion is indicative of your ability to use the ideas from the text constructively, either in the form of a summary or another type of analysis.

B. Composing Ideas

Once you have completed your close reading of the text to be summarized, take your annotations and transcribe them into a document. As you do so, keep three things in mind:

- First, your notes do not need to be a word-for-word transcription of your annotations. You can expand some of your more fruitful notes or ideas, and completely disregard others.
- Second, you may include critical direct quotes (e.g., a definition of a key term) in your notes, but you should not use it in your summary unless they are truly critical. For example, a key technical term with precise language that is interrogated as the argument of the text you are summarizing. Otherwise, no quotes.
- Third, you can add to your notes as you read through them, but most importantly, begin to structure your ideas into the order that you want to address them in a summary. Be sure that while you do so, you identify and write out what the key argument of the text is (in your own words). Organize your notes into the points you wish to address. If your summary was particularly complex, you would print your notes, and reannotate them, but you do not need to do that here. You also don't need to use all of your notes if you have many. Choose the best ones.

C. Drafting the Summary

Once you have an adequate base of notes from which to work, you are prepared to draft your summary. For this assignment, your summary should be two paragraphs long and have a distinct strategy for each paragraph and how the two paragraphs fit together. For example, you might want your first paragraph to focus on articulating what “critical thinking” is in the context of college-level writing. Then your second paragraph could demonstrate what that might look like in practice in Gita DasBender’s classes.

EVALUATION

This assignment is worth 50 points (~5% of your final grade). You will be graded on your ability to demonstrate effective process in composing a summary by showing the work you have done at each step below, and then producing a cohesive summary that is formatted in MLA format and shows evidence of editing. The deliverables for this project are:

1. Your annotations of the article itself (bring in the paper article with your name on it for me to evaluate).
2. Your composed page notes (print and attach to article).
3. The edited two-paragraph summary (uploaded to Drive in doc format).

Keep in mind the following requirements;

- Your summary must be in MLA format, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf file formats. For this assignment I will not accept Google Docs, printed summaries, or .pdf documents.
- You can find an example of MLA format on the Purdue OWL by searching for "[MLA Sample Essay](#)."
- Your summary should be revised and copy-edited before you hand it in. Your notes do not need to be.
- This assignment is due on Tuesday, September 17th.