Prof. Scanlan spring 2011

**The Summary: The following is a guideline and not an ironclad law.**

Critical reading for summary:

Critical reading is important for writing an accurate summary. If you can’t remember what you read, then have you really read it?

1. Identify the main points in the first paragraph. Underline or make margin notes (or both). The main point of this paragraph is often the main point of the entire work.

2. Identify the main idea of each subsequent paragraph and mark the text.

3. The final paragraph often contains the conclusion or confirmation of the author’s thesis. Compare the main idea of the first paragraph with the main idea in the final paragraph. Did you notice any changes in the author’s ideas?

Guidelines for writing summaries:

1. Read over your notes or margin notes.

2. Reread the entire work carefully.

3. Determine the structure of the writing.

4. Who, or what, are the main characters?

5. What is the style of the writing? Is it humorous, angry, scientific?

6. What is the author’s conclusion?

**Now, using your notes, write a draft of your summary following this four-point guide:**

**a. Author’s thesis. Identify the author’s name and the title of the writing**

**b. Author’s more specific thesis and plot outline (if applicable)**

**c. Author’s structure and style**

**d. Author’s conclusion**

Examples: Put these sentences in the right order.

Example 1:

\_\_ To lead us out of such trouble, Graham suggests that we develop a new model for love and relationships.

\_\_ In her article “The Future of Love,” Barbara Graham describes how our unrealistic expectations about passionate love can lead to a troubled marriage.

\_\_ Ultimately, Graham claims that really understanding how relationships work can help couples and perhaps help us to dispel harmful myths surrounding love and marriage.

\_\_ In order to prove her argument, she uses current research on biochemistry and psychology to push against popular myths about love.

\_\_ Her style is factual and balanced; she gives even-handed credit to several popular ideas of romance.

Example 2:

\_\_ The narrative style of the story is third person.

\_\_ But, shockingly, at the end of the story, her husband Brently Mallard walks through the door completely unharmed and Louise dies.

\_\_ \_\_ Kate Chopin’s very short story titled “The Story of an Hour,” is about Mrs. Louise Mallard, a woman who has heart trouble.

\_\_ When Louise hears that her husband has died in a railroad accident, she begins to imagine a better life.

\_\_ Louise’s inner thoughts are crisply described and the scene outside her window is vividly revealed to readers.

\_\_ Ultimately, the story is about a “joy that kills.”