

WRITING A SUMMARY

Before writing a summary, it is necessary to carefully read a work/passage. Look up any unknown words or references.

- **A summary is a shortened version of a work.** This includes a single passage, chapter or entire story. The purpose is to capture the author's main ideas without repeating the author's exact words.
- **A summary uses just enough information to present the main points.** It does not include every detail.
- **A summary should follow the same order as the work/story.**
- **A summary paraphrases.** Quotes may be used sparingly only when the author's words cannot be stated any better. If exact words are used, they must be placed in quotation marks.
- **A summary is written in present tense and third person.** It is also written in a neutral tone. The purpose is to repeat the author's ideas, not evaluate them.

The length of a summary depends on the length of the original source, and how much information is needed. The goal is to keep the summary brief, while still capturing the essential points.

Focus on the author's thesis and its development rather than on specific points.

The topic sentence of the summary paragraph should include the title of the reading, the name of the author, a strong verb and the author's thesis.

The conclusion of a summary is the author's conclusion.

A signal phrase, also known as an author tag, is useful in introducing key points or quotations. Be sure to use strong verbs such as maintains, states, reveals, argues, identifies, suggests, write, explains, explores, disagrees. See pages 187-188 of *The Everyday Writer* for more options.