

Main Idea and Themes

Summarizing

NAME: _____

CLASS: _____

A summary is a short recap of the main parts of a text. It does not include every detail and minor part. If your friend asked you about a news report, you would not tell him about everything you read. Instead, you would make a summary. You would include only the most important parts of the report. Your friend would not have to hear about every detail in the report to understand what it was about.

A good summary includes the most important things that happen in a text. You can make a summary in just a few sentences. To do this, you need to remember five simple words. They all begin with the letter “W.” Your summary should tell: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

► Read this article.



A boy and his family set up a campsite deep in the woods. While his parents were busy putting up the tent, the boy wandered away from the campsite. He wanted to find a place to go fishing. Before long, the boy was lost in the woods. He was very scared. After many hours, a forest ranger found the boy and brought him back to his parents. They had been looking for the boy all afternoon.

In retelling information in this news report to a friend, you might say: “The report I read is about a boy who went camping with his family. He wandered away from the campsite and got lost. But a forest ranger found him and returned him to his parents.”

In the summary of the report about the lost boy, the five “W” words are:

Who: a boy

Where: in the woods

What: He got lost.

Why: He wandered away.

When: on a camping trip

► Read this article.



About 2,000 years ago in ancient Rome, Julius Caesar made a new calendar similar to the one we have today. Caesar was the first to have a “leap day” every four years. We still have this today. This extra day helps to keep the calendar correct.

Pretend you are a news reporter and need to find the facts. Answer these questions and then write a short summary.

Who: Julius Caesar

Where: ancient Rome

What: added a “leap” day

Why: to keep the calendar correct

When: 2,000 years ago

Summary: About 2,000 years ago in ancient Rome, Julius Caesar added a leap day to keep the calendar correct.

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► Read these paragraphs and answer the questions that follow.



Leonardo da Vinci was born in the town of Vinci, Italy, in 1452. As a boy, he was curious about everything around him. He wanted to understand it all. He always looked closely at the world. It gave him ideas of his own. He began to make sketches of his ideas. On paper, he created new machines: a giant mirror, a flying machine, and a submarine.

Summarize what you have read by using the five “W” words.



1. Who _____
2. What _____
3. When _____
4. Where _____
5. Why _____
6. Summary _____



Jane Goodall arrived in Tanzania in the summer of 1960. It took Goodall some time to get the chimps to trust her. They were wild and free and had lived their whole lives in the rainforest. Most had never even seen a human before. At first, they didn't know what to think of Goodall. Soon they started to realize that she was kind and gentle. They could tell she would not harm them.

Summarize what you have read by using the five “W” words.



7. Who _____
8. What _____
9. When _____
10. Where _____
11. Why _____
12. Summary _____

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► Read this paragraph and answer the questions that follow.



More than 5,000 years ago, people were using make-up in ancient Egypt. The people of ancient Egypt wore color around their eyes because they thought it made them look more beautiful. People today wear make-up for the same reason. But back then, the thick, dark lines had another purpose as well. The lines helped cut down glare from the bright sun.

Summarize what you have read by using the five “W” words.



- 13. Who _____
- 14. What _____
- 15. When _____
- 16. Where _____
- 17. Why _____
- 18. Summary _____
