

## Summarizing

A summary is shorter than the original text, film, event, etc. because it only includes the main idea(s) and points and eliminates unimportant details. We summarize all the time in our daily lives:

- When someone on a plane asks what our book is about
- When a classmate asks about our essay
- When we tell a friend about a movie we just watched

In these instances, no one wants every detail, just the gist of the book/essay/movie. But how do we decide what information is most important? Perhaps without even realizing what we are doing, we read the rhetorical situation by implicitly answering at least some of the following questions:

- What is my purpose of the summary?
- Who is the audience of the summary?
- In what genre will the summary appear?
- What is my stance toward the topic of the summary?
- What type of media and design will be most effective for delivering the summary?

To return to the movie example, let's say that someone enjoyed a movie so much that they want to watch it again, and they want to persuade their friend to go with them. Maybe the movie was an action movie in which the lead characters hook up. Their friend loves romantic comedies and hates action flicks. How can they summarize the movie to make it sound appealing? Or perhaps the movie was a romantic comedy in which a woman dates a baseball player. How can they summarize this movie with an emphasis on sports to convince their sports-obsessed friend to watch the movie?

Tips for summarizing in academic writing:

- Read the rhetorical situation by explicitly defining the purpose, audience, stance, genre, and media/design
- A writer writes summaries in their own words, though they can quote unique language within the summary but must remember to cite it
- To begin, introduce the summary with a signal phrase to indicate the origin of the source that the summary discusses
- Throughout the summary, be transparent that it is a summary of someone else's work