



### What is a Summary?

Imagine that you are a soccer fan, and you are busy during your team's game, so you are forced to miss the game airing on TV. How do you find out what happened? In this situation, many people watch the game highlights, which show all of the major events throughout the ~90 minute game (e.g. goals, near misses, free kicks, penalty shots, yellow/red cards, etc.). The game highlights are often only a few minutes long, but they capture all of the significant moments of the game—and this is just like your summary. For anyone who cannot locate the article, does not have time to read the article, or just wants to know what the article is about (at least on a surface level), your summary is like a “highlight reel,” providing all of the key information in just a short space.

Let us consider one more analogy. Sometimes we are interested in a movie, but for whatever reason, we do not (or cannot) take the time to watch the whole thing. So, we might visit a website that describes all of the film's key plot points in just a few short paragraphs. Afterward, we basically know what happened in the film without actually viewing it. Again, your summary performs a similar function; just like the movie summary describes the major events in film within a limited space, your article summary condenses the information in the article into a concise review, so that anyone who reads your work understands the article without actually having read it.



### Why care about the Summary?

The Summary assignment develops a variety of skills that are useful not only for ENGL 135, but also for all academic courses, as well as for life outside of school. Some of these skills include:

- ★ Learning how to close read a text
- ★ Improving reading comprehension
- ★ Paraphrasing (explaining someone else's ideas in your own language)
- ★ Distilling a significant amount of information into a concise report
- ★ Judging what information is crucial and what is not (i.e. what details should be included/excluded)



These summarizing skills are transferrable and will help students with research papers (across all disciplines) in the future. For example, research paper assignments usually ask students to construct an argument by compiling evidence to support their thesis; this process necessarily entails reading and summarizing scholarly works that either confirm the student's argument or serve as a foil (providing an opposing argument). Many research papers also include a Literature Review section, which requires students to summarize the work of scholars who have already investigated their topic.

Moreover, being able to summarize information (e.g. plays, novels, theory texts, academic articles, reports, etc.) is a useful skill, whether you are providing a summary for friends, family, professors or employers. In addition, there is a current societal trend of condensing information into smaller forms; funding proposals (“describe your project in 2 pages”), project abstracts (“provide 500 words”), presentations (“explain in 15 minutes”), different social media outlets (“write a 140 character tweet”), and more, all impose length restrictions. Now, this observation is not meant to suggest that this trend is necessarily positive or beneficial (indeed many would argue that it is not), but rather to indicate the usefulness of a skill such as summarizing in various pursuits today.

