Summary /ˈsəmərē/ : a brief statement or account of the main points of something.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *synonyms:* | abridged, [abbreviated](https://www.google.com/search?safe=strict&biw=1366&bih=623&q=define+abbreviated&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEh-e-h83KAhUJVz4KHcNBDx0Q_SoIKzAA), shortened, [condensed](https://www.google.com/search?safe=strict&biw=1366&bih=623&q=define+condensed&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEh-e-h83KAhUJVz4KHcNBDx0Q_SoILDAA) |

What do you often get when you ask students to summarize – a paraphrase, a retelling, something unintelligible? Often, I’m not sure students know exactly what we mean by “summary.” They may have been told somewhere along the way, but can we be sure? I hypothesize that students often think of summarization as retelling or paraphrasing, when in fact it means to boil down to only the most critical. Yes, they ***should*** now what it is by now and how to write one, but what if they don’t, or they’re not sure?

We must be explicit in what we ask of them, and in some cases teach or re-teach skills we think they ***should*** have mastered by now.

**Summarization** is a skill that is specifically addressed in the **Common Core Literacy Standards**:

**Reading Standards for History/Social Studies:** [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/2/)
*Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.*

**Reading Standards for Science/Technical Subjects:** [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RST/9-10/2/)
*Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text's explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.*

Over the next couple of weeks, I’ll be sending out a few summarization strategies that can be adapted for any content. Our first one is called “**Pyramid Summary**.”

You may use the template on the next page, have students draw it themselves, or create your own. For each line, give instructions in this pattern:

**Line 1:** Character’s name
**Line 2:** Two words describing the character
**Line 3:** Three words describing the setting
**Line 4:** Four words stating the problem
**Line 5:** Five words describing one event
**Line 6**: Six words describing another event
**Line 7**: Seven words describing a third event
**Line 8:** Eight words describing the solution to the problem

…or for Social Studies:

**Line 1:** One word for a significant location

**Line 2:** Two words describing location

**Line 3:** Three words describing climate of the location

**Line 4:** Four words describing location’s impact on people living there

**Line 5:** Five words describing conflicts in this area

…and so on…

Students will then write a summary using their pyramid as a guide.

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