

Unit 2: Introduction



Summary & Critical Response

In your previous Composition I course, you may have been required to complete a Summary and Strong Response Essay, asking you to summarize and respond to the writing of others, using short examples and anecdotes from our your own lives to support your responses. In Composition II, we take this assignment to a new level. We will be summarizing a more complex and sophisticated piece of writing, and we will then be analyzing it from a critical perspective, determining the successfulness of the author's strategies.

Unit 2: Reading

Though the content is very similar, the specific page numbers of your reading assignment may vary depending on your edition of the textbook.

11th Edition Reading Assignment:

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, Chapter 12, page 500 through the bottom of page 512 (stopping just before the section entitled "Synthesizing"). Also, read "Working at McDonald's," from the bottom of page 247 through the top of page 250, as this is the article you will be using as the basis of your Summary & Critical Response assignment.

10th Edition Reading Assignment:

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, Chapter 12, page 521 through the bottom of page 533 (stopping just before the section entitled "Synthesizing"). Also, read "Working at McDonald's," pages 260-262, as this is the article you will be using as the basis of your Summary & Critical Response assignment.

Older Editions:

The page numbers listed above are for the two latest editions of our textbook. If you have the 9th edition, please read page 575 through the bottom of page 588 (stopping just before the section entitled "Synthesizing"). Also, read "Working at McDonald's," pages 280-283, as this is the article you will be using as the basis of your Summary & Critical Response assignment. If you still have the 8th edition, please read pages 584-598 in Chapter 12, stopping just before the section entitled "Synthesizing." Also, read "Working at McDonald's" on pages 283-286. (For the 7th edition, please read pages 583-597. Also, read "Nickel and Dimed," pages 269-273, as this is the article you will be using as the basis of your Summary & Strong Response.)

Unit 2: Assignment -- Summary & Critical Response (Part I)

Major Paper #1—Summary & Critical Response

We will be working on this assignment for the next two units. In this unit, we will focus on the summary. In Unit 3, we will focus on the critical response. The paper will be due at the end of Unit 3.

Purpose:

Most of us use critical reading strategies everyday to effectively process all of the information we are consistently bombarded with. This assignment allows you continue to explore ideas of reading and writing rhetorically, as you will use different strategies to write your summary and your strong response.

The Assignment:

This assignment will have two parts:

In this unit, we will be focusing on Part 1: The Summary.

The Summary

Summarize in 150-200 words the article your instructor has chosen from the assignment. Please use "Working at McDonald's" from the bottom of page 247 through the top of page 250 on your 11th edition textbook (or on pages 260-262 of your 10th edition textbook, or pages 280-283 of your 9th edition book). In this summary, you should relay the article's main points, completely and accurately, in your own words. If you find yourself in a situation in which the author's words needed to be quoted directly (perhaps for emphasis), you must make it clear that these words are the author's by using quotation marks appropriately. You will not want to quote anything over one sentence in length, and you will want to limit yourself to no more than 2-3 direct quotes, if you use any at all. Remember that the whole point of this portion of the assignment is for you to restate the author's points objectively in your own words.

In general, I recommend you structure your first sentence something like this:

In "Working at McDonald's," Amitai Etzioni argues that...

This will function as the thesis statement of your summary, so this first sentence will need to convey the main point(s) of the article to give your reader an overall view.

Please be sure to review the Submitting Your Assignment of Unit #3 section for specific instructions on how you should turn in your work for grading. The Summary & Critical Response Essay with both required sections is due at the end of Unit #3.

NOTE FOR THOSE WITH OLDER EDITIONS: If you have the 8th edition, please use "Working at McDonald's" on pages 283-286. If you have the 7th edition, please use "Nickel and Dimed" on pages 270-273.

Unit 2: Lecture Notes

What is a summary?

A summary is simply a recounting of the main points of an article. But what should it really include? How is the summary formatted? The best way to learn how to write a summary is to read and examine someone else’s summary.

Before you read the rest of this lecture, please read the short essay entitled “Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names,” available here in .pdf format:

[Sticks and Stones and Sports.pdf](#) 

After you’ve read this essay, then please continue with the lecture.

A Sample Summary

The following is an example of how one student summarized the article “Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names.” (Remember: “Sticks and Stones” is not the article that you will be reading and responding to. However, this example does provide a good example of how to craft summaries in general.) As you read this example, ask yourself what you notice about the summary—in terms of purpose, focus, tone, organization and formatting.

Summary of “Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names”

In “Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names,” Richard Estrada argues that sports teams should not be allowed to continue using ethnic-based names and mascots. Estrada claims that teams such as the Braves, Indians, Seminoles, and Redskins—no matter how established or popular—should change their team names and mascots, which are degrading to Native Americans. He further suggests that the stereotypes accompanying these mascots, such as “tomahawk chops and war chants,” dehumanize and single out Native Americans, setting them aside from the rest of society. “Nobody likes to be trivialized or deprived of his or her dignity,” Estrada asserts, and yet allowing ethnic-based mascots enables—and even promotes—such trivialization. What makes matters worse, according to Estrada, is that such mascots target one of our nation’s least politically powerful ethnic groups. He provides examples of other possible team names based on other ethnic minorities (such as the “New York Jews”), which would never be tolerated in our society. As a result, Estrada concludes that Native Americans should be treated with simple human dignity, just like everyone else. 178 Words

So what did you notice? What does the summary include? How is it formatted?

Perhaps first you noticed that the student writer’s opinion of “Sticks and Stones and Sport Team Names” is not included. Rather, the student is trying to simply convey the main points of Estrada’s original article. Remember: Whether you liked the article or didn’t like it, whether you agreed with the author or disagreed, your opinion does not belong in the summary.

Second, you may have realized that the first sentence is very important in the summary. The first sentence must to three things clearly and concisely: 1.) Mention the name of the original article; 2.) Identify the author of the original article; 3.) give a sense of the overall claim or point the author was trying to make.

Maybe next you observed that the original author was referred to in some way in every sentences. *Richard Estrada argues, Estrada claims, He further suggests, Estrada asserts, according to Estrada, He provides examples, Estrada concludes*—these are all called “attributive tags.” Attributive tags are designed to remind the reader that these are Estrada’s ideas (not yours), and thus give proper credit where credit is due. Notice how the student writer in the example above has varied his attributive tags, using different ways to refer to the author (Estrada and he), and using different verbs to explain what Estrada was communicating. The student writer also varied the placement of the attributive tag in several places. (Often the attributive tag comes at the beginning of the sentence, but sometimes an attributive tag will fit into the middle or end of the sentence. You will also want to include an attributive tag in each sentence of your summary, and you will want to vary these references.

You may have also noticed that the student writer who is summarizing Estrada’s work has used direct quotes very sparingly. Any time he did use even a phrase of Estrada’s word-for-word, he put it in quotation marks to indicate this. ***NOTE: While in most papers you would need to use intext parenthetical citations with the author’s last name and page number such as (Estrada 280) any time you summarized any ideas or material from your source, these are not necessary in a contained summary such as this. They will be necessary in future assignments such as the research paper.*

Next, you may have observed how the last sentence of the summary really seems to wrap things up and provide a sense of conclusion. You will want the last sentence of your summary to provide the reader with a sense of conclusion as well.

Finally, you probably noticed the word count, included at the end of the summary. Sticking within 150-200 words is important in the summary, so I will want you to include your word count.

But how do I get from here to there?

I recommend you use the concepts discussed in your reading from Chapter 12 as a sort of step-by-step guide to get you organized to write your summary.

- 1.) **Annotate.** Read and re-read the essay “Working at McDonald’s,” and take notes. Mark things in the text that you think are important, especially noting what seem to be the main points of the article. Write questions you have in the margins, and note places where you are convinced or skeptical. (This will also help you in the next unit when you’re trying to get ideas for your strong response.)
- 2.) **Take Inventory.** Group your notes in a way that makes sense to you.
- 3.) **Outline.** This does not have to be a formal outline in any sense of the term. But it can be a good idea to try to list or map the main points of the article, before you actually start drafting your summary.
- 4.) **Write your summary,** restating the article’s main points in your own words.

Unit 2: Example

A Sample Summary

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