

# Teacher Explanations for Response to Text Summary: Secondary

## Active Voice

Reinforce the use of active voice in *summary* writing. In general, active voice is clearer and more direct than passive voice. While the passive voice is often more confusing than active voice, it is sometimes used when the actor is unknown, unimportant or when the writer specifically does not want to specify the subject of the action (i.e., Nixon’s famous statement: “Mistakes were made.”).

## Admit Slip

Begin a class discussion using an admit slip in order to assess their prior knowledge about the writing genre. (The admit slip activity is a type of quick write that generates thinking about a topic. The term comes from an admit slip given to students by a school’s attendance office when re-entering class after an absence.) At the beginning of the class session, give each student a slip of paper (about one-fourth of letter-sized paper). Instruct students to not put their names on the slip. Encourage students to write down everything they know about writing a problem/solution essay in two minutes (i.e., words, lists, phrases, sentences or any combination). At the end of two minutes, instruct students put their pencils down and collect all slips. Then read each admit slip aloud. [Note: Avoid excessive repetition and scan for appropriateness of content.]

## Annotating the Text

The purpose of the following activities is to explicitly point out important points or themes from the text. Begin by discussing the word “annotate”: To mark a piece of writing with critical commentary or explanatory notes. Point out to students that this is a very important reading and study skill that encourages reflection and analysis (i.e., it helps students to separate the main ideas from the supporting details). Guide students to make annotations on important ideas. Some guidelines for annotation include:

1. Preview the article before reading it.
2. Indicate the author, title and author’s purpose or intent with an arrow.
3. Read the article through quickly and completely before making any notes.
4. Read the article again and circle the main idea. (Keep in mind that the complete main idea may not be evident until the end of the article.)
5. Go back through the article to look for supporting details. Underline each supporting detail and label it with #1, #2 and #3.

[Note: Marking systems are very personal and may vary widely from reader to reader. Encourage students to use any combination of underlining, margin notes, symbols and highlighting, as long as the system makes sense to them.] In the Interacting with the Text activity, build on the annotations by asking complex questions.

## Big Picture

The purpose of the following activities is to foster coherent, organized essays by guiding students to analyze their essay structure. [Note: These organizers and outlines are scaffolded by proficiency level.]

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### Catcher: Expository

The purpose of this activity is practice academic speaking. Remind students that expository writing informs or explains something. Direct students to take turns using the catcher and respond according to the category.

### Clipboard

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to organize their ideas and record key ideas as they prepare to write their essays.

### Cloud Map/Clouds

The purpose of the following activities is to understand the criteria for a response to text summary. Reinforce deductive reasoning by encouraging students to infer or guess the criteria for this genre as they choose the ten clouds that they think might support this genre. Use the Understanding the Criteria activity to guide students to check their clouds and restate each criterion in their own words.

Prepare the clouds as follows:

1. Copy enough mats (first activity page) on colored paper for every pair of students.
2. Copy enough cloud pages with criteria on white paper for every pair of students.
3. Copy enough Student Scoring Guides for every student on white paper. When activity is finished, direct students to place scoring guide in their Writing Tools Folder for future reference.
4. Cut out clouds that have criteria.
5. Place one set of clouds and one mat in an envelope for each pair of students.
6. Distribute one envelope to each pair of students.

Model the process of deciding and selecting correct summary criteria with a student. Direct students to choose the clouds that they think make up the rubric criteria for this genre and place them onto the mat. Guide students to check their answers by comparing their criteria to those on the Student Scoring Guide and restate the criteria in their own words with their partner.

### Cornell Notes

The purpose of this activity is to organize main ideas and supporting concepts. Explain that notes are a written memory of the class or text, as well as a starting point to interact more in-depth with the text. Guide students to focus on key concepts, questions, and connecting ideas to broader concepts when using Cornell Notes. Suggest that students use abbreviations: **b/c** - because; **s/t** – something; **s/o** – someone;! – something important;

? – need clarification; **ex** – example; **V** – very; and **tho** – thought.

### Cube: Expository

The purpose of this activity is practice academic speaking. Remind students that expository writing informs or explains something. Direct students to take turns throwing the cube, as they would a die, and respond according to the category.

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### **Cube: Summary**

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### **Did I?**

The purpose of this activity is to revisit the rubric criteria in another format. Instruct students to organize their essay ideas by analyzing the characteristics (i.e., rubric criteria) of summary writing.

### **File**

The purpose of keeping a writing file, a management system for daily writing, is to organize pre-writing activities to reference during the writing of rough drafts. Typically, the contents in the writing file include writing works in progress, quickwrites, grammar exercises, resources on writing, and any other instructional materials. Some teachers use manila folders in a crate in the classroom; others use a three-ring binder with sections and folders. Some teachers use a combination of folders, notebooks and online resources.

### **Flipchart**

The purpose of this activity is to engage students in meaningful conversation around a text. Guide small groups of students to read, discuss, and summarize a text. On the flipchart, students will summarize key ideas, create a representative icon or sketch, connect their new learning to other contexts, and choose a powerful phrase or sentence.

### **Frames: Multi, Paragraph, Sentence**

The purpose of this activity is to provide students genre-specific language structures at various language proficiency levels. While some frames should be used for writing, others are most effectively used in developing oral language (i.e., Practice Strips). These language frames will help students internalize the forms (grammatical structures), as well as the functions (purpose for writing) for each writing genre. Frames provide students with the opportunity to practice using the correct parts of speech, conventions and syntax of Standard English.

### **Genre Icon Cards**

The purpose of these cards is to provide students with a visual to reinforce the acquisition of new genre-specific vocabulary. These cards can be cut out, hole-punched, and put on rings for quick, easy reference.

### **Gist Cards**

The purpose of this activity is to begin the first step in the summarization process by guiding students to identify the main points in the text and write them in their own words. This process of re-presenting the text is the first step to paraphrasing or summarizing.

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### Gist Cube

The purpose of this activity is practice academic speaking. Remind students that gist summary writing answers the who, what, where, when, why and how around a topic. Direct students to take turns throwing the cube, as they would a die, and respond according to the category.

### Gist Sentences

Explain that two common types of summaries include a single sentence summary (gist summary) and paragraph summary. (In this genre, instruct students to summarize the specific incident in the first paragraph.) Guide students to create single sentence gist summaries using the information from Getting the Gist. With this hands-on activity, create sentence strips and ask students to complete the key information on each strip. Direct students to cut apart the strips and practice rearranging the information, writing different gist summaries. Guide each group to share its favorite gist summary.

### Identifying Author Bias

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to be aware of an author's bias and to recognize how words shape meaning; the words that an author uses can convey a value judgment or bias (i.e., freedom fighter vs. terrorist). Other word choices are more subtle.

#### Notes:

Both (a) and (b) are biased.

Example (a) suggests that the event was a success (i.e., "more than 1000 people", "staggering", "enormous", "colossal", "12 times greater", and "fewer than") and the example (b) suggests that it was not a success (i.e., "a few hundred people", "self-defense", and "discontents.")

### Name/Reflect/Act

The purpose of this activity is to encourage critical thinking around a topic. Help students recognize their roles as change agents for themselves, their families and their communities. Based on the ideas of Paulo Freire's work in critical pedagogy, this activity enables teachers and students to examine the role they play in the school, local or community world. This type of analysis enriches the writing process by developing critical thinking skills.

Example:

Name: There are too many people and too little water in California. Some people fill their swimming pools, and water their lawns everyday. Other people plant drought-tolerant plants and try to conserve drinkable water.

Reflect: How do I use water? How does my family use water? How does my school use water? What can we do differently?

Act: I will turn off the water while I brush my teeth. I'll ask my parents to sweep the driveway instead of washing it down. I'll get involved in the after school ecology club.

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### **Outlines**

The purpose of the following activities is to foster coherent, organized essays by guiding students to analyze their essay structure. [Note: These organizers and outlines are scaffolded by proficiency level.]

### **Peer-Editing Clock**

This purpose of this activity is to provide an opportunity to edit and revise writing. As with all peer-editing activities, it is important to establish guidelines to foster respectful, positive interaction (i.e., use a separate paper to make comments; do not mark on the rough draft). First, review the rubric criteria. Guide students to exchange papers (in pairs) and sign each other's editing clock. At each hour on the clock, introduce one rubric criterion. Try to limit the amount of time on each element. Example: Your group has five minutes to answer the following question: "Are the ideas in this essay clearly organized?"

### **Pictograph**

The purpose of this activity is to engage students in meaningful conversation around a text. Encourage students to capture the main idea and intent of the reading using pictures. Guide them to demonstrate expertise regarding their assigned text (i.e., question meaning, use dictionaries). After expert groups negotiate the important information from their assigned text, direct students to create their pictograph posters. Encourage them to reflect on and include the underlying meaning of the article. Direct students to use a flipchart to create a pictograph poster that includes: one powerful image about the text, the title and author of text section, the main idea, and three bullets of significant supporting details (words/phrases) in the order they appear in the original text.

### **Plagiarism**

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to think critically about plagiarism, its causes and its implications. Explain that plagiarism is derived from the Latin verb meaning "to kidnap." In order to avoid plagiarism, encourage students to (1) restate original information in his/her own words by paraphrasing or summarizing the passage, or (2) copy the original author's words exactly as they are written and put them in

### **Portfolio**

A portfolio is a compilation of work that has been put together for a specific purpose. The First-Year Writing Portfolio at Spelman College has four primary purposes:

1. Demonstrate your achievements as a writer and critical thinker during your first year at Spelman.
2. Enable assessment of your work as a writer and critical thinker. This includes your own self-assessment as well as assessment by a faculty jury.
3. Evaluate your level of preparedness to continue in more advanced writing and critical-thinking projects as you continue your education.
4. Determine what additional support you may need as a writer and critical thinker.

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Strong portfolios are built through a process of *collection*, *selection*, and *reflection*. In other words, the portfolio is more than just a showcase of your work; it is a location in which you make judgments about how best to present yourself as an academic "composer," and in which you provide reflective writing that helps you and your readers better understand how the portfolio was developed.

<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/academic/tesol/WJFiles/pdf/TaejoonParkForum.pdf>

### QPS

Use an original source to distinguish between *quoting*, *paraphrasing*, and *summarizing* information. Remind students to use quotes directly from the work sparingly in summary writing. Sometimes quotes are the only way to avoid plagiarism.

### Reciprocal Teaching

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce good comprehension skills. Dialogue during this activity is an interactive strategy structured by the use of four learning strategies: questioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting.

Above-the-Surface Reading (what the text says) summarizing; paraphrasing; telling what happens; clarifying; questioning: who, what, where, when

Below-the-Surface Reading (what the text means) predicting, speculating; challenging, stating opinions; evaluation, reflection; connecting to self, other texts, and ideas about the world; reading between the lines, filling in gaps; questioning: why, how, would, should, could

### Results Chart

The purpose of this chart is to record student scores and examine how or if students are progressing in writing. Often, teachers use the data from this chart to inform their own classroom instruction.

### Reciprocal Teaching Bookmark

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce good comprehension skills. Distribute reciprocal teaching bookmarks (two copied back-to-back). In pairs, guide each partner to read the assigned text and take turns *questioning and responding* to the questions on the pages [Model this activity with a volunteer student before assigning this to students.]

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### Socratic Seminars

Engage students in thoughtful dialogue by conducting a collective inquiry process called Socratic Seminar. While there are several ways to manage the process, try the fishbowl design (half the class in the center facing each other and half the class in a circle observing the inner circle) to begin this process. Not only does this activity build summarization skills, but it also develops analysis and inferential reasoning skills.

Important reminders:

- There are no right answers.
- This is not a debate.
- There is no need to raise hands.
- Avoid side conversations.

### Summary Is – Is Not/ Sort

The purpose of this activity is to Explore the characteristics of summary writing. First review the definition of a summary: a summary objectively synthesizes and paraphrases the main ideas and significant details of text to help the reader understand the author’s message. Secondly, guide students to consider the key elements of summary writing by analyzing what summary writing is and what it is not. [Note: The answers for the hands-on activity are not exclusive to these responses. It is, however, important to make the distinction between an example of summary writing (short and concise) and examples that contain aspects of summary writing.]

Extension: It may be helpful to compare and contrast *summary writing* to writing a response (i.e., a reaction, reply or answer; a statement made in reply to a question, request or criticism; a personal reaction that draws a connection to one’s experience).

### Summarize It!

The purpose of this activity is to explicitly show students how examples tie back to the main idea. Model the thinking process and “think aloud” to show how a writer supports the thesis with specific examples. Generate at least three examples to support a key point.

### Summary Writing in our Lives/Example

The purpose of this word web activity is to expand the discussion of summary writing to include the multiple roles of summary writing in daily or workplace writing. Questions to consider: How is summary writing used in our everyday lives? How is summary writing similar and different in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_?

### Summary vs. Retell

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate the difference between retelling and summarizing a text. Facilitate a discussion by comparing and contrasting retell and summary. What is the same? What is different?

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## Summary Verbs (1 and 2)

The purpose of this activity is to build vocabulary through creating classroom wall charts. These charts assist students in paraphrasing as they provide supporting evidence from text to support their thesis statements.

## Summing Up a Textbook

The purpose of this activity is to explicitly teach students how to analyze and deconstruct their textbooks for relevant information.

## Summing Up Me/Sort

The purpose of this activity is to connect students to the concept of summarization by encouraging them to summarize themselves. Explain and define each category as you model this activity. Use the vocabulary sort to build new vocabulary in each category.

## Summing Up the News

The purpose of this activity is to explore international, national and community problems that may exist and how they are reported through the media. Students identify strategies used by the media and then analyze the validity of arguments set forth in public documents, newspapers and media. Students collect information to report back to class. Guide students to compare and contrast the ways in which media genres cover the same event. Encourage a personal connection to a topic (see Summing up Water and Me for an example) in order to foster interest in reading a selected text.

Encourage students recognize their roles as change agents for themselves, their families and their communities. Based on the ideas of critical pedagogy, this activity enables teachers and students to examine the role they play in the school, local community or world. This type of analysis enriches the writing process by developing critical thinking skills.

Teacher-recommended news sources:

National Geographic, New York Times Student News, CNN Student News,  
The ESL Free Press

## Thesis Statements

Reinforce the idea that the thesis statement needs to show one main idea, supported by convincing examples. This activity reinforces the idea that thesis statements express a specific perspective in the text. Use a sample essay to show how topic sentences directly support a thesis statement. Model the thinking process and “think aloud” to show how a writer supports the thesis with specific examples.



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## Third Person

The purpose of this activity is to teach students that summaries are written in the third person point of view.

1. Define neutral voice as objective and explain that this most often manifests in writing by leaving out the pronoun 'I' in sentences.
2. Show examples of "I" statements; then re-write them using third person.
3. Divide the class into two groups: Insiders and Outsiders.
4. Have the two concentric circles of students stand and face one another. The teacher will ask the inside circle to orally make up an 'I' statement. The outside circle student will restate the sentence in third person. For example the phrase 'I like ice cream' converts to 'Susie likes ice cream'.
5. At a signal, the outer circle will rotate one position to the left to face a new partner. Repeat activity as many times as necessary.

Following group activity, direct students to edit and revise summary drafts to ensure third person point of view in their writing. Note: Third person point of view is just one step toward using neutral voice.

## Topic Sentences

Reinforce the idea that the topic sentence needs to show one main idea, supported by convincing examples. This activity reinforces the idea that topic sentences express a specific perspective in the text and support the thesis statement. Use a sample essay to show how supporting details directly support a topic sentence. Model the thinking process and "think aloud" to show how a writer supports the topic sentence of a paragraph with specific examples from the text.

## Synthesis Paper

The purpose of writing a synthesis paper is to make thoughtful connections from two or more sources. Critical for writing research papers and literature reviews, synthesis papers include annotating, summarizing, quoting, citing, and analyzing skills. Guide students to organize and chunk key ideas among the texts.

Synthesis Writing Process:

1. Chose a topic.
2. Read and annotate two or more texts on the same topic.
3. Summarize each text (notes or paragraphs).
4. Make connections among the texts. (Decide what the central concepts are.)
5. Support the connections with evidence (quotes and citations) from the texts. (Create a Works Cited page.)

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## Transitions (1-3)

The purpose of this resource is to introduce different transition words and the categories to which they belong. In modeled writing, show how transitions, a term that comes from the Latin “transire,” which means “to go over or across,” connect one topic sentence to another to support the thesis statement. Discuss each word from the word bank and provide several examples. Guide students to analyze transition words or phrases and then sort and categorize each word according to their function. Consider using chart paper to expand the word bank. Remind students that transition words, which are often followed by a comma, are like bridges that provide a structure, convey sequence, and link or connect ideas.

## Types of Summary

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce the key aspects of each summary writing style in order to later apply the summary skills to broader academic writing. In the sentence (gist) summary, the focus is on answering the ‘who, what, where, when, why and how’ in a clear, succinct sentence. In the paragraph summary, the emphasis is on introducing the idea being summarized and providing a general description including two or three key points. In the essay summary, the focus is on introducing the topic being summarized and identifying three key points to support. The connection between summary writing and writing across genres cannot be emphasized enough. Developing summary writing skills is fundamental to good writing.

## Understanding Criteria

Guide students to first use the criteria to check their cloud answers and then to restate each criterion in their own words.

## Vocabulary Notebook (Example, Context, Word Box)

Guide students to keep a Vocabulary Notebook. Keep in mind that this activity is one of the most effective and efficient techniques to acquire vocabulary. After assessing your students’ vocabulary needs, choose appropriate word lists for their proficiency level (i.e., Dolch List, Fry’s List, University Word List, Academic Word List, etc.) Also encourage students to keep their own word lists based on their readings and core content texts. The goal is to use the same format (i.e., word/meaning/example) in all classes and encourage frequent use of the notebook. Also, consider the following when creating word lists:

1. Chunks: groups of words or phrases that can be identified as a single unit of meaning (i.e., "Do you mind if I...")
2. Collocations: words that are frequently partnered with specific words (i.e., good luck, bright future, widely known facts.
3. Common Verb Expressions (phrasal verbs): Get dressed, take it easy, etc.

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### Vocabulary Summary

The purpose of this activity is to explicitly teach the vocabulary words specific to the genre.

### Windowpane

Use teacher-modeled drawing, gestures and repeated phrases to introduce the *key vocabulary* and concepts of the rubric criteria. Instruct students to “say what I say and do what I do” for each blank pane. After sketching each pane, model the script and motions for each pane. Be sure to do this with your students! Direct students to stand up, chant, and gesture after each pane.

Guide students to identify and label key vocabulary by asking, “What specific language or vocabulary did we use to describe the writing style?” Record the students’ answers directly onto each pane. Ask students to model the windowpane to a partner.

Encourage students to use their windowpane copy as a reference when working through the writing process.

### Word Transformation (1-2)

The purpose of this activity is to determine word meaning and to expand vocabulary by exploring word functions. Encourage students to complete the vocabulary matrix with words from the text. Then orchestrate a class dialogue by eliciting student responses to create a collective word bank. Guide students to notice how the author uses these words to explicitly convey meaning or intent. Encourage students to refer to their dictionaries to clarify definitions.