

KEY TERMS

argument (from the Latin *argumentum*, meaning evidence or proof):

- a process of reasoning; a series of reasons: *I did not follow his argument.*
- an address or composition intended to convince or persuade
- subject matter; theme: *the central argument of a book*
- an abstract or summary of the major points in a work of prose or poetry or of sections of such a work

Random House Dictionary of the English Language

main, central, or controlling idea/thesis

A writer has a belief, a theory, an interpretation, an understanding, or a feeling about something which she/he wants to communicate. This belief, theory, interpretation, understanding or feeling is the central or main idea of the paragraph, article, essay, book, poem, play, etc. and is what you state in your summary.

Example

Alice Miller, in *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, explores how the “gifted” or sensitive child recognizes at a very early age his parents' needs and of his adaptation to these needs (back cover).

paraphrase

- State the writer's ideas, supporting evidence, and argument in your own language; in effect, you are translating into your own words what an author wrote.
- Use your own sentence structure; do not imitate the sentence construction of your source.
- Do not add your thoughts, responses, or judgements.
- If you include the author's phrasing, enclose it in quotation marks.
- You may have to use some of the key words in the passage.
- Your paraphrase will generally be as long as the original passage—and may even be longer.

summary, synopsis, abstract, précis

- In your own words, condense the central idea or argument of a passage, a paragraph, an article, or an essay to a few sentences or a paragraph. The summary of a book may require greater length.
- Exclude background information, supporting evidence, specific details, illustrations, narratives, and less important ideas. Ask yourself, what is this author explaining or proving?
- Do not add your ideas, feelings, or judgments.
- If you include the author's phrasing, enclose it in quotation marks.
- You may have to use some of the key words in the passage.

analysis

You break a whole (e.g., an idea, an object, an event, a book) into its parts.

Example

The government of the United States consists of three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary.

evaluation

You make a judgment:

Example

good and/or bad, beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral, clear or confusing, persuasive or unconvincing, logical or illogical, rational and/or emotional, elitist and condescending.

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