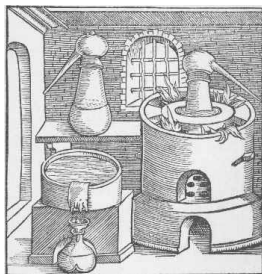


Short Paper 1.2: Summary Of

engl 131 / sec. 0 / autumn quarter 2010-11 / chang



Summary is a skill important to reading, writing, and academic inquiry. On the one hand, summarizing is about distilling or condensing a text, outlining a text's main ideas, putting into your own words an overview of the most important parts of a text. On the other hand, summarizing is about digesting the text, understanding what you need from it so that you can make decisions about the text. What is important about the text? What are its main arguments? Does it connect to your writing, your research? Does it speak to other texts or contexts? In other words, the skill and art of summary is often the first step in reading, writing, and inquiry since you need to "get" the text before you can ask questions of it or enter into conversation with it.

Goals and Outcomes

According to *Acts of Inquiry*, in the chapter on "Summarizing and Documenting Sources," summary

condenses a body of information, presenting the key ideas and acknowledging their source. Summary is not an active way to make an argument, but summaries do provide a common ground of information for readers so that you can make your argument more effectively. You can summarize a paragraph, several paragraphs, an essay, a chapter in a book, or even an entire book (177).

Summary is important when you want to quick gloss, an academic sound bite that provides your writing and your reader with the gist of a useful text. In other words, "because a summary must be concise, you must make decisions about how much of the conversation your readers need to know" (AI 182). Though a summary is not an "active" argument, it is still a kind of persuasion; the decisions you make—what you choose to include or exclude—reveal what you think is key and important.

For this short assignment, you write a **2-3 page** summary of James W. Loewen's "Handicapped by History: The Process of Hero-Making" (in the *Acts of Inquiry* reader). Your summary should be specific, detailed, focused on what you think are the most salient points, and it must express the overall invention of the text. Because the summary is supposed to be short and precise, get to the heart of the matter, make decisions about what is vital to include in your paper, and avoid unnecessary generalizations irrelevant to the text. Your summary should include and address the following:

- 1) A brief introduction to the text, the author, and its main invention or argument
- 2) One to three significant points, arguments, terms, or ideas
- 3) Support your summary with quotes or examples directly from the text

An outstanding summary does more than describe what the text is about or what the author is saying. You are doing more than just retelling the "story" of the reading. An outstanding summary is selective, precise, and connects the details to the text's bigger picture. Finally, an outstanding summary has a goal in mind and reveals the analytical choices you made.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2

Turn in: 23-34 inches, typed, no title page, proper heading, proper format, double-spaced, stapled

Draft Due: Monday, October 11

Final Due: Wednesday, October 13