

The Use of **ENGLISH** and **COMMUNICATION** **SKILLS**

For Tertiary Education

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Summary writing By Emejuru, O.A. and Njemanze, Q. U. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

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Chapter Six

SUMMARY WRITING

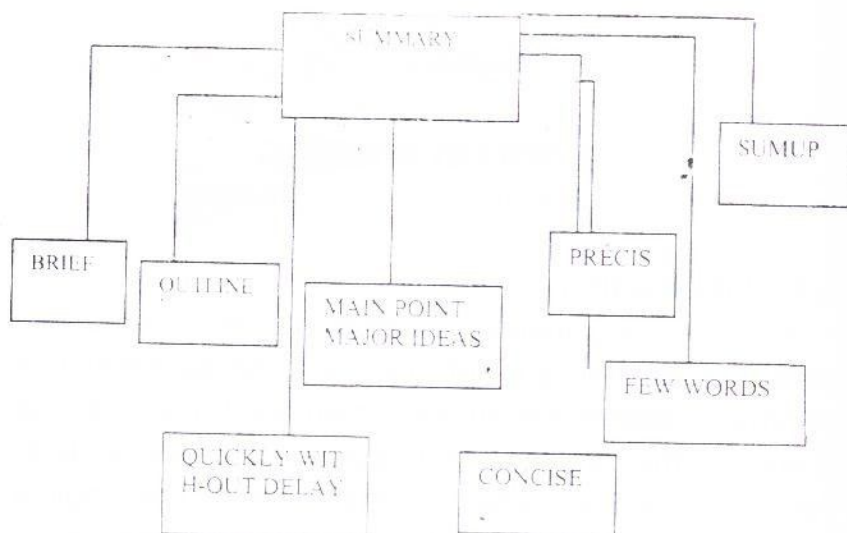
Obiajulu A. Emejulu and Queen Ugochi Njemanze

6.1 Introduction

Summary is generally a common type of academic writing. It requires a lot of practice to be successful. A summary restates the author's main point, purpose and intent in the writer's own words. It gives a brief description of the content of a document. The original document is usually reduced to a minimal size. Summary refers to a brief statement that presents the main points in a concise form (Perl 2007).

Summary writing helps the writer to reduce the size of a lengthy article or book to a paragraph size. According to Ihejirika (2002), summary is a brief and clear statement in connected and readable shape of the substance of a longer passage.

The word *summary* is associative in meaning. It accommodates such expressions as *the main points*, *ideas*, *précis*, *in few words*, *sum-up*, *concise*, *brief*, *quickly*, and *without delay*. This could be represented thus.



In other words a summary is intended to highlight objectively the main points of another writer's work. The summary writer uses his own words to summarize the main points of the original writer. He does not include his own opinion in the summary. It is naturally shorter than the original. Summary ranges from one fourth to one half the length of the original work.

6.2 Techniques in summary writing

The writer should be able to:

- * Cross out the less important details.
- * Underline topic sentences and key ideas.

- * Jot down the information that clarifies those major ideas (topic sentence) (Greenway, 2007).

Annander (2007), also posits that to create a successful summary, consideration is given to the various stages of the writing process:

- * planning
- * drafting
- * revising
- * editing

Planning: The planning stage of summary writing requires the writer to gather and organize his materials. The writer reads through the write up, previewing, predicting and questioning where necessary. This will help him develop an understanding of the main ideas.

Drafting: The writer makes his draft, stating in order, the main ideas in the material. He writes down the core ideas expressed by the author in the text.

Revising: Every piece of writing requires revision. Reread the summary to be sure the author's main idea is clearly stated, check to see that the points flow. Rewrite the sentences in their proper order.

Editing: Here the writer reads his summary aloud and

checks for misspelled words and run-on sentences. He makes final corrections.

After giving due consideration to these writing processes, the writer should be able to compare his summary to the original work and ask himself such questions as:

- * Have I rephrased the author's words well?
- * Did I change any meaning?
- * Have I restated the main ideas and supporting points accurately? These will help in self-evaluation

Learners need to understand how to summarize the contents of texts. This will help their understanding and comprehending ability. They need this skill throughout their formal schooling and even beyond. They should be able to identify important information, recapitulate and organize the information.

Students should also know other summary techniques to represent the contents of a text such as the following: hierarchical summary and 'mapping'.

Hierarchical Summary: The hierarchical summary is composed of main ideas and important details of the passages. It is usually used for summarizing passages with headings and sub-headings.

The main idea of a text is the most significant idea in that text. Some main ideas are conspicuously placed in a text while some are hidden. A reader searching for any main idea has to read, synthesize, paraphrase, create meaning and summarize in order to pick out the main idea.

Baumann, (1986) confirms this statement by saying that the comprehension of the main idea is a process that involves the ability to read, identify, remember, summarize, and create meaning. This is because a prior knowledge of the subject being read can have both positive and negative impacts on the reader's construction of meaning of a text. This will help the learner differentiate between themes and topics.

Mapping: This is another way of summarizing a text. It requires writing only the key words. It is used with texts that have no headings and sub-headings. The learner is made to read the text and pick out the main topics. These topics are written in a clockwise manner and also in phrases so as to minimize writing. Boxes are drawn around the topic which is written at the centre of the book; with each box containing a topic with minimized information under it.

To illustrate this technique, read the story below:

PASSAGE

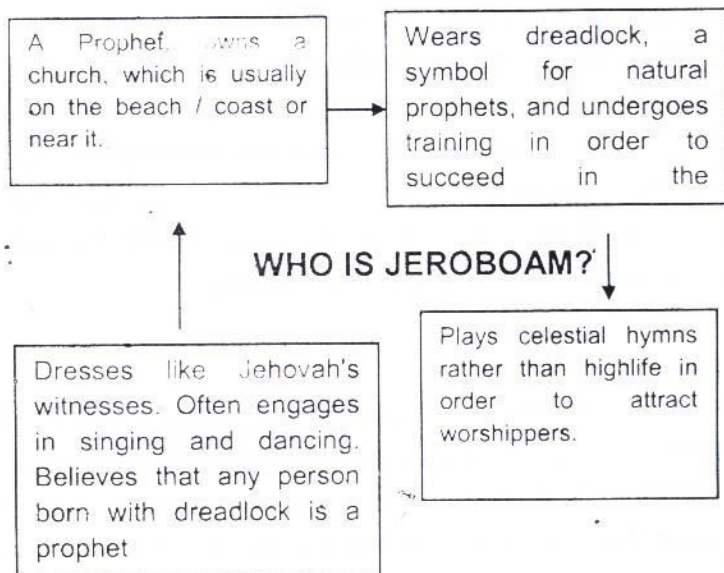
JEROBOAM: I am a prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination. You have probably seen many of us on the streets, many with their own churches, many in land, on the coast, many curing the deaf, many raising the dead. In fact, there are eggs and there are eggs. Same thing with prophets. I was born a prophet. I think my parents found that I was born with rather thick and long hair. It was said to come right down to my eyes and down to my neck. For them, this was a certain sign that I was born a natural prophet. And I grew to love the trade. It used to be a very respectable one in those days and competition was dignified. But in the last few years, the beach has become fashionable, and the struggle for land has turned the profession into a thing of ridicule.

Yes, it did come to the point where it became necessary for the Town Council to come to the beach and settle the prophets' territorial warfare once and for all. My master staked his claim and won a grant of land. I helped him with a campaign led by six dancing girls from the French territory, all dressed as Jehovah's Witnesses. What my old Master did not realize was that I was really helping myself. The beach is hardly worth having these days. The worshippers have dwindled to a mere trickle and we really have to fight for every new convert. They all prefer High Life to the rhythm of celestial hymns. And television too is keeping our

wealthier patrons at home. They used to come in the evening when they could not easily be recognized. Now they stay at home and watch television.

(Culled from *The Trials of Brother Jero* by Wole Soyinka)

A MAP OF THE JEROBOAM TEXT



6.3 Types of summary

The major goal of summarizing a material is to distribute the writer's original ideas to other people using fewer words. In order to achieve this, Bleek (2007) articulated three types of summary while Ntia (2001)

articulated the fourth one:

- (a) Restatement or précis summary
- (b) Descriptive summary
- (c) Analytical summary
- (d) Itemized summary

Restatement or précis:

A Précis is a shortening, in your own words, of a text of written work. You are expected to give the main assertion of the original. This type of summary writing does not require details or concrete examples, just accuracy. All you say about the text must be factually correct. To achieve this, the writer must carefully read the work at least three times before writing.

Descriptive summary

This type of summary requires the writer to provide the reader a map of the original material giving an indebt details. The writer must go beyond giving an information, for instance, giving evidence of an action and also showing how the evidence is organized or realized. The writer should avoid giving concrete examples or paraphrases from the essay within the summary.

Analytical summary

Here the writer gives all information contained in a

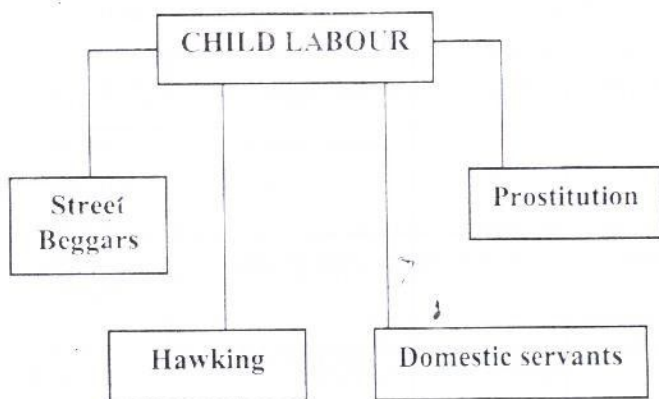
descriptive summary and goes beyond it. This type of summary requires the thematic structure of a central idea, a thesis statement. It may allow one or two quotations from the document. Analytical summary must provide the reader with a clear and effective understanding of the message contained in the original.

Itemized summary

This is the process of summarizing a written material using minimal words or expressions. The ideas can be compressed through:

- (a) symbols
- (b) abbreviations
- (c) graphic numbers
- (d) dashes

Example (a)



(b) Using the diagram in (a) above write three sentences relating to child labour.

- (i)
 (ii)
 (iii)

(c) In four sentences summarize the implications of prostitution as a form of child labour.

- (i)
 (ii)
 (iii)
 (iv)

(d) Using a table represent three implications of each form of child labour

CHILD LABOUR

CHILD LABOUR

A	STREETBEGGARS	HAWKING	DOMESTIC SERVANT	PROSTITUTE
i.	Highly dependent	Victim of accidents	Usually battered	Prone to diseases (STI's)
ii.	Lacks creativity	Victim of Rape	Often starved	Unwanted pregnancy
iii.	Lacks education	Lacks quality education	Deprived of education	Prone to HIV/AIDS

- (e) From the information represented in the table above write a summary of about ten lines on child labour.

6.4 Summary Writing Processes

To write an effective summary:

- * Read a text bearing the writer's purpose in mind.
- * Underline the major points bearing in mind that you are summarizing a text.
- * Be concise using co-ordination and subordination to compress ideas. Check your summary to be sure that you have properly documented any word(s) or phrases that you have taken from the original.
- * Write, revise and edit to ensure the accuracy and correctness of your summary.
- * Check your summary for objectivity. Your opinions are not part of the original work. Read the summary to a teacher or peer for additional feedback.
- * You may make a final statement reflecting the significance of the article from the writer's point of view.
- * Ask for feedback.
- * Use the feedback to make changes that will improve the quality of the summary.

6.5 Key Features of Summary

- (1) It is shorter than the source.
- (2) It repeats the ideas of the source in different phrases

and sentences.

- (3) It represents its source accurately and comprehensively.
- (4) It does not accommodate external examples or explanations.

6.6 Advantages of Summary Writing

- * Summary writing enhances the ability to write in a concise and quick manner.
- * The learner's intellectual background is expanded from numerous readings.
- * Summary is used in rating a student's ability to discern main points in a topic.
- * Summary assesses the flexibility of the writer.

6.7 Organising Your Summary

To write a well-organized summary, Jamieson (1999) advocates the following format:

- (a) The Introduction
- (b) The body of a summary
- (c) Conclusion

The introduction: This is usually written in one paragraph. It contains a one-sentence thesis statement that sums up the main point of the source. It is a one-sentence summary of the entire text.

- * The introduction gives the title of the source.

- * It provides the name of the author of the source.
- * Sometimes it also provides pertinent background information about the author or text to be summarized.

The body of a summary:

- * This contains one or more paragraphs.
- * It paraphrases and condenses the original piece.
- * Only important points are written.
- * One or more of the author's examples or illustrations are added if these take up extensive portion of the original and there is emphasis on them.

The conclusion:

There is customarily no conclusion in summary writing. You are only required to summarize the source text. Do not add any conclusion.

2.8 Model Summary Exercises

Model Summary One:

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow:

For general reading, there are several hints you might bear in mind; you will say, 'How very obvious these hints are.' Agreed; but are they so obvious that they have become second nature? Don't expect the literature of

knowledge or information -- expository books -- to contain a 'story'. If the information (history, geography, criticism, science, technique, etc.) is conveyed in an orderly, lucid manner, that should be enough. In fact, however, you will find much history, geography, criticism and even science is attractively written, but you have no business to expect it to be attractive. The pleasures of expository literature are primarily intellectual, only secondarily aesthetic.

On the other hand, don't expect the literature of imagination -- poetry, drama, novels, short stories -- to have a moral or 'message', for primarily it is not didactic. It aims to delight -- to enrich us emotionally -- to move us. Nor is imaginative literature a matter of logic -- of arguments and propositions; it is not to be criticized by the standards applicable to the literature of knowledge, except in so far as all literature whatsoever should be artistically coherent and consistent.

Midway between the literature of knowledge and the literature of imagination stand the essay and the imaginary conversation of which the latter usually approximates more closely to the literature of knowledge, whereas the former may emphasize either the one or the other. Do not, therefore, be dogmatic about this halfway literature, wherein the writer has considerable freedom.

As, on the one hand, the literature of knowledge may

be structural, as in history; analytical; structural and critical, as in philosophy; or persuasive, as in theology or propaganda: so, on the other hand, the literature of imagination is of various kinds, poetry being epic, lyrical, dramatic, reflective, etc: drama being comedy, farce, tragedy, tragedy-comedy; fiction being short or long, the novel itself being historical, domestic, adventurous, satirical, etc. be careful not to condemn one genre for differing from another.

(Culled from English: A Course for Human beings,

Questions: by Eric Partridge)

(1) State four objectives of general reading.

Answers:

- (i) It should be informative.
- (ii) It should be orderly.
- (iii) It gives emotional delight.
- (iv) It transfers morals.

(2) List three qualities of literature of knowledge.

Answer:

- (i) It has to be structured.
- (ii) It must be analytical.
- (iii) It must be critical.
- (iv) It must be persuasive.

(3) Mention types of poetry listed in the passage.

Answer:

- (i) Epic poetry
- (ii) lyrical poetry
- (iii) dramatic poetry
- (iv) reflective poetry.

(4) How many types of novel were mentioned in the passage? List accordingly.

Answer:

- (i) historical novel (ii) domestic novel
- (iii) adventurous novel (iv) Satirical novel.

Model Summary Two:

Read the following passage and answer the questions asked.

When six members of the varsity football team were suspended for fighting, it marked yet another instance where an athlete from this school has come under fire. Last August former wide receiver Connie Moore was arrested in his college dormitory in Arizona for involvement in an attempted robbery the previous March. This year, six more players continue the trend. The suspended players, among them starting from wide receiver Malcolm Tatum and quarterback Mack Merritt, who had since moved away, were forced to miss the game against Braddock on September 21.

"Anytime you lose players on your team for any

length of time it hurts your program", assistant football coach said.

According to Tatum, the trouble started when Merritt got involved in some trash -- talking on the basket ball court with some guys who do not attend Palmetto "Mack was talking to some guys and then they started fighting and I went over there to defend Mack", Tatum said.

The problem of athletes in trouble is not limited to this school. Sports figures all over, in any level of competition, are finding themselves in trouble for things more serious than fighting.

In a recent incident, former Maimi athlete was caught using and dealing on cocaine, one was arrested for rape; another accused of murdering his cousin. The other athlete has been a known wife-beater. The list goes on and on. Cespedes says that life must go on when players are suspended. "We will try to continue to be successful no matter who we lose", he said.

Many sport psychologists believe the problem with athletes stem from their early day of playing sports when they are reared to be tough, dominant, and in charge. Psychologists feel discipline boundaries should be enforced during adolescence, instead of giving athletes free education and getting upset when there are problems.

(Culled from The Panter Maimi Palmetto South High School, Florida by Stephen Hills)

Questions and answers;

(a) In a few sentences summarize this passage.

Answer:

Athletes often get into trouble for breaking the law and this affects their teams. Psychologists attribute this tendency to break laws to the athletes' training early in life and advocate tougher discipline for them in adolescence.

(b) Choose the most appropriate title for this passage.

Answer:

- (i) Violence among athletes
- (ii) School athletes under fire
- (iii) Breaking of laws by athletes

(c) From the passage describe a typical athlete

Answer:

- (i) He is tough.
- (ii) He is dominant.
- (iii) He is in charge.

(d) List five offences prevalent in an athlete's life.

Answer:

- (i) Fighting
- (ii) Drugs / Cocaine deals
- (iii) Rape

- (iv) Murder
- (v) Wife battering.

Model Summary Three:

Read the passage and answer questions appropriately.

Trust, communication and involvement are perhaps three most essential elements of a successful relationship. Many teenagers find that these areas are difficult to maintain with their parents. A new product called Drug Alert seems as if it will only augment the problems of already tumultuous teen/parent relations.

Drug Alert is a \$20 kit that can detect traces of up to 30 illicit drugs from marijuana to heroine. Parents can purchase a kit which contains a moist pad they can wipe on their child's belongings. They can send the pad back to the manufacturers for scientific analysis for which confidential results are available.

Although this may sound like sure fire way for parents to detect drug use, it can lead to false conclusions. Traces of drug could be inadvertently picked up or left from another person. The entire process itself, secret and covert, could undermine the trust in a child/parent relationship, especially if false accusations are made.

However, this is not an effective way to detect or combat the problem. Continuing education and open,

honest communications are the only real solutions to America's teen drug problem. This kit disregards all rights to privacy and will only create or widen gaps of trust and communication. (Culled from-*THE AXE*-South Eugene, Oregon).

Questions and Answers:

(a) What titles do you consider appropriate for this passage?

Answer:

- (i) Drug Alert kit: sure fire way for drug use detection'
- (ii) America's teen drug problem
- (iii) Drug Alert undermines trust and communication
- (iv) Drug Kit: Problematic.

(b) In One sentence summarize the passage.

Answer: The Drug Alert kit apparently seems a reliable way for parents to detect their teen children's use of drugs but it has been seen that it can destroy the trust between such a child and his parents.

(c) In two sentences explain how this kit is used?

Answer: Drug Alert is a kit which contains a moist pad which is rubbed on a child's belongings. The pad is sent back to the manufacturers

for analysis; which either proves that a child is involved in drug use or not.

(d) State ways of controlling Drug use in America.

Answer: This can be achieved through; Continuing education and open, honest communication between parent and child.

6.9 Summary Writing Activities

Read the passages and answer the questions that follow them.

Exercise 1

For almost 350 years, horses have been ridden into the River Eden to be washed. But this year, the annual ritual at Appleby Horse fair ended in a sickening spectacle. Although dozens of horses swam safely in the water by the bridge in the Cumbrain Town, one appeared to lose its footing and drowned despite frantic efforts at a rescue by onlookers.

The fair for horse trading began at the site in 1685. It is attended by 25,000 visitors each year. At the event, horses are raced in front of prospective buyers. They are washed in the Eden. The animals are ridden bare into water. When their feet come off the ground, they begin to swim. Tradition dictates that the horse's head should be dunked beneath the surface before it is

ridden-on to dry land again. This distressed animal pulled away from its owner in a panic, lost its footing and possibly broke a leg. It sank beneath the water and re-emerged, but its rider continued the ritual; dunking the horse's head under the water. The animal disappeared, but did not surface again. It was dead. The rider fled.

Questions:

- (i) Suggest a title for this passage.
- (ii) In three sentences explain the incidence that this writer is trying to narrate. Do not lift sentences from the passage verbatim.

Exercise 2

A great deal has been said and written on the cultural development of the people of Africa. It is commonly said in high places, 'what we need in Africa today are cultural revolutions equal to its political revolutions.' These are great and noble words indeed but what has been done to implement them? I wish to forward a few suggestions.

To me theater has always meant two things - acting and writing. These two aspects are inseparable; they are interdependent. The death of either means the death of the theatre. The purpose of theatre is to express the ideas and actions of individuals or groups; to translate into life, on the stage, the way of life of people; to let them see themselves as sages or

absurdly mirrored. Perhaps a second purpose is the one of providing simple entertainment. And in these days entertainment is a very welcome panacea to the harassed thousands living on the brink of nervous breakdowns.

In Africa today, we live in a period that does not seek to involve only a few intellectuals, but whose urgency must embrace and entangle all groups. It is very disconcerting to hear of the numerous cultural centers purporting to disseminate culture among the people of Africa when in reality these centers are mere nesting homes for a group of hand-picked intellectuals who bluff themselves into a false sense of satisfaction and achievement.

(Culled from *Theatre and the Common Man in Africa* by Bob Lesshoai)

Questions:

- (a) How does this writer think theater can play a role in the cultural development of Africa?
- (b) In your own words explain what the writer thinks is wrong with cultural centers in Africa today.
- (c) Suggest a title for the passage.

Exercise 3

Science and technology are veritable tools in the social, economic and political development of any

society. Evidence of their importance is seen in the areas of health services, communication, food supply, housing, energy, transportation and education. Science and technology control almost all human activities in the world today; and a large number of these activities involve reading, comprehension and interacting with human and non-human materials in the individual's environment. This underscores the importance of reading and comprehension and the application of the substance of reading to daily living. Safety, sustainability, personal development and the improvement of the society depend to a large extent on the ability to read and understand print and graphic materials.

In terms of science and technological development, a child must be able to decode scientific ideals, principles and concepts which are encoded in written materials and apply them to solving the science related problems the person will come across in life. It is on this premise that a child should master reading and comprehension skill early in life.

(Culled from *Journal of Applied Literacy and Reading Vol.2*)

Questions:

- (i) What title is appropriate for this passage?
- (ii) Summarize this passage in two sentences.

