

Book Summary: 1 *full* page (minimum) summary description of your self-selected book-length work for your Unit 4 Research Essay. This assignment is worth **20** homework points.

As you know by now, your last essay of the term, a research piece, will ask you to write an extended critical evaluation of a book of your choice. When you write about your selection, you should be careful to assume an "ignorant audience" (an audience who has no advance knowledge of the reading selection) - this is the convention in academic work. And because you're now presenting your long critical evaluation of your book to an ignorant audience, it's your responsibility to "acclimate" us to your selection, properly contextualizing your analysis first by fully introducing and summarizing the reading selection so that we'll understand what you're critiquing later on in the body of your essay. In order to be able to do that summary work effectively, you'll need to read your book slowly and carefully (and preferably more than once), annotating your text with questions and marginal comments as you go, glossing paragraphs for key points and examples that are advanced by the writer(s) to emphasize his/her most important points and arguments.

As you hopefully recall from the first unit of the term, summarizing is an extremely important skill - we need to learn how to articulate what we see before we are able to effectively critique it, and you will be using your summary skills throughout your academic career in many different contexts once you leave this class. When you summarize something, you are forced to pay close attention to everything that is said as well as how it is said and who is saying it and why he or she is saying it - knowing these things helps you as a reader understand a text well enough to begin questioning it, challenging it, and understanding it.

Take a moment to recall for a moment how a summary is different from an analysis: when you summarize something you do not evaluate it or analyze it: you only report what you see, using academic language, without any editorial comment or opinion.

For this Summary Description assignment, write a full page summary introduction and description of your chosen book length work you've read for the Research Essay work this unit. Practice your summary skills here once more, slowly and methodically, as a way of helping you with your discussion forum work in which you'll be discussing and analyzing your book at length - something that can really only be done effectively if you're able to summarize and synthesize the writing first.

Doing this kind of summary work should also help remind you, of course, of the kind of formal writing I always want: honest, academic, thorough, and detailed. (Finally, remember that a revised and condensed (3-5 sentences) version of this summary can be imported into the opening thesis paragraph of your eventual essay, as you'll want to do the same thing there in condensed form that I want you to do here: introduce, describe and summarize your book selection to an imagined ignorant audience, using academic language and being careful to avoid any analysis or critical evaluation work.

Again though, please be extremely careful not to "analyze" the book here - I do not want your evaluation of the writing or your opinion about its ideas, nor do I want you to quote the text *anywhere* in your summary description. This is summary work only, written for an ignorant audience whom you must assume has no idea about the work until you tell us (you are not writing for me, or for yourself - you are writing for someone who has not read the work but who needs to know about it). Use only your own words - do not cite or quote the text at all in this assignment, and remember not to write about yourself but rather the text and only the text.

Review the lesson materials back in Unit 1 to recall key summary writing skills and strategies if you need to. Review the Sample Summary Essay there as well to see what a good summary should look like - it is written by a composition student just like you.

Formal Guidelines:

1. In your paragraph, use the present verb tense to discuss the text, NOT the past tense: For example, you would write "The editors of *Rereading America* write that..." NOT "The editors of *Rereading America* wrote that..." You do this even though a text is clearly written in the past, and deals with events that happened even farther in the past. Treat the text like it and its author are sitting next to you as you write about it. This is the standard rule of college composition writing that you are required to adhere to from now on in all of your formal analysis writing work in this class.
2. Use only the 3rd person point of view (*he, she, it, they, the reader, the editors, the text, etc.*)
3. Do NOT use "you" or "your" or "I" or "me" anywhere in this assignment - that kind of language is used in personal narrative writing, not academic writing
4. Proofread your work carefully and repeatedly to eliminate all sentence-level errors before submission. I will only accept error-free work that has clearly been proofread numerous times to eliminate all sentence-level errors. Watch out for things like spelling errors, sentence fragments and run-on's, and problems with pronoun agreement, because these are things that will force me to return your work ungraded.