

Summarization

A summary is a shorter way to tell the events or details of a passage. Only the most important details are conveyed in a summary. A summary allows the reader to see what the passage is about. Look at the passages and summaries below for examples.

Hurricanes

A hurricane is a very powerful storm. It is a cyclonic storm, which means that it has a circular pattern within the hurricane. The name hurricane refers to storms that start over the Atlantic Ocean or eastern Pacific Ocean. Hurricanes are called different names in other oceans of the world. For example, they are called typhoons in the northwest Pacific. They are called cyclones in most of the rest of the world. They all have wind speeds that are mostly more than 75 miles per hour. The winds move in a circular pattern. The central point around which the storm moves is called the eye of the storm.

These storms usually develop in warm, tropical oceans. They take their energy from the seawater that evaporates. Hurricanes weaken as they move over land because they depend on the warm seas to continue to supply energy as the storm moves. Land also has a much rougher surface than the ocean. Land has much greater changes in elevation and surface. Hurricanes lose power when the winds meet the land's surface and cause friction.

Summary of Passage

Hurricanes are powerful storms that usually start in the Atlantic Ocean or Pacific Ocean. These storms rely on the ocean for their power and energy, and they slow down as they make landfall.

A Home After a Hurricane

James Peterson stood proudly with his head high. His blue eyes twinkled as he looked upon the masterpiece he had created all by himself for his 70-year-old neighbor, Mr. Tim Martin. Who would believe that a few months ago this place was nothing but a pile of debris? The hurricane that had struck New Orleans had claimed innumerable lives and caused immense destruction. James had lost his wife and little girl, Maria, to nature's fury, but his zest to live did not fade away. The money Mr. Martin received from the insurance company was insufficient to rebuild his home. So James decided to step in and construct the house on his own, using his experience as a builder.

Summary of Passage

A hurricane in New Orleans led to the destruction of life and property. Despite suffering a great personal loss, James Peterson rebuilt his elderly neighbor's house all by himself.

Summarize and Paraphrase

Two common ways to present information in a different form are paraphrase and summary.

A paraphrase presents written or spoken content in different words for the purpose of making the meaning clearer or easier to understand. A paraphrase can be longer than an original because it contains explanations for difficult words and concepts.

A summary presents content—usually of something written or spoken—in a condensed form. It includes only main points and may even be organized differently from an original.

Example:

Can you write a good one-sentence summary of this paragraph?

The use of lasers is restricted only by imagination. Lasers have become valuable tools in industry, scientific research, communication, medicine, the military, and the arts. Powerful laser beams can be focused on a small spot with enormous power density. Consequently, the focused beams can readily heat, melt, or vaporize material in a precise manner. Lasers have been used, for example, to drill holes in diamonds, to shape machine tools, to trim microelectronics, to heat-treat semiconductor chips, to cut fashion patterns, to synthesize new material, and to attempt to induce controlled nuclear fusion. The powerful short laser pulse also makes possible high-speed photography with an exposure time of several trillionths of a second. Highly directional laser beams were also used for alignment in the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in San Francisco.

EXAMPLE:

Lasers have nearly unlimited uses is an accurate, one-sentence summary of this paragraph. The paragraph does not explain what a laser is or how it works. It simply mentions some of the many applications of lasers.

Summarize, Paraphrase, and Generalize Ideas

Question 1 .

The presidential elections in Iran in June of 2009 created one of the year's most important stories. Incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed victory with over 65% of votes. However, the citizens of Iran had reason to believe that the election was fixed. Mass protests and calls for a new election followed immediately after Ahmadinejad claimed victory.

The election struggles in Iran had many causes. First, voter turnout was over 85% by some reports. This means the population was very engaged in the political process. Second, President Ahmadinejad's main rival was a moderate named Mir Hossein Mousavi. Mousavi excited the country's young people in ways rarely seen before. Finally, the final election results were too one-sided for many in Iran to believe. Because so many of the nation's youth were involved and paying attention, the landslide victory by President Ahmadinejad made some people cry, "fraud!"

Which sentence from the article supports the main idea sentence, "The presidential elections in Iran in June of 2009 created one of the year's most important stories"?

- A. "Incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed victory with over 65% of votes."
- B. "Mass protests and calls for a new election followed immediately after Ahmadinejad claimed victory."
- C. "Second, President Ahmadinejad's main rival was a moderate named Mir Hossein Mousavi."
- D. "This means the population was very engaged in the political process."

Question 2 .

The Calling

Like a dazzling swan, Reese graced the dance floor in her gorgeous white dress—her figure oozing elegance and poise. Her parents waited with bated breath for their princess' first public performance.

As she stood there waiting for the music to start, the past flashed through her mind. "Dance can be your hobby but should not be made into a serious profession!" her grandfather's stern voice rang in her ears.

Reese's mother had felt that since she was good at mathematics, she should pursue a career in science or engineering. Her father had a bent toward art, though. "My princess is an artist!" he would exclaim. "One should discover one's calling."

Mathematics was no doubt her strength, but it was not her calling. Dance gave her exceeding joy, and she loved it with a deep devotion. So, why was she so confused? Where lay the point of conflict?

She was lost in deep thought and a voice from her conscience seemed to speak to her: "Dance is sacred to me, and I can't treat it as a means of making money. I want to spread the art form but without charging a penny.

Reese was jolted back to reality when one of her troupe members nudged her to go on stage. The performance began with a stunned silence in the packed hall, as the audience witnessed a marvelous exhibition of art—a perfect blend of dance, emotion, and drama. Reese's troupe received a standing ovation, and a teary-eyed Reese bowed in gratitude.

Her mother embraced her and remarked, "The pride in our hearts and the applause of the people are your wealth. Dance is your passion, and I am glad you followed your instinct."

The thought of opening an institute for the performing arts, where all would be welcome without having to pay any money, was considered foolish by everyone except her father, and his constant support gave Reese the courage to follow her heart.

What is the general idea of this passage?

- A. The general idea of the passage is that while choosing a career, a person should identify one's area of interest while ensuring that it brings monetary rewards.
- B. The general idea of the passage is that while choosing a career, a person should identify one's area of interest and recognize one's calling by self-analysis.
- C. The general idea of the passage is that while choosing a career, a person should recognize one's calling by seeking the opinions of others.
- D. The general idea of the passage is that while choosing a career, a person should identify a profession that would enable a rich and comfortable life.

Question 3 .

Students at Dessau Middle School can have fun with math at their first Olympic Math Game Night. It is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday in the school gym. Students will compete in math-related games with the encouragement of their parents. Pizza will be available in the cafeteria. The Austin Astronomical Society will bring its telescopes for stargazing in the parking lot.

The event is designed to take away some of the fear of math in preparation for the April 16 state-wide math test. It is free and open to parents and students at Dessau Middle School. For more information, call the school at 989-5891. Ask for teacher Marsha McNeill.

Which is the best way to summarize this passage?

- A. Students at Dessau Middle School will enjoy math-related games, pizza, and stargazing on Thursday night. The Austin Astronomical Society will bring the telescopes.
- B. Teachers at Dessau Middle School really care about how their students do on the state-wide math test. That is why they want to get parents involved in homework.
- C. Students at Dessau Middle School will take a state-wide math test on April 16. For more information, call teacher Marsha McNeill at Dessau Middle School by Thursday.

D. Dessau Middle School is offering a night of fun math-related activities on Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. They will help ease students' fears about taking the state math test.

Question 4 .

Left to his own devices, John Adams might have lived out his days as a Massachusetts country lawyer, devoted to his family and friends. As it was, events swiftly overtook him, and Adams—who, David McCullough writes, was "not a man of the world" and not fond of politics—came to greatness as the second President of the United States, and one of the most distinguished of a generation of revolutionary leaders. He found reason to dislike narrow-minded wrangling even more in the aftermath of war, when Federalist and anti-Federalist factions vied bitterly for power, introducing scandal into an administration beset by other difficulties—including pirates on the high seas, conflict with France and England, and all the public controversy attendant upon building a nation.

Which of the following best paraphrases the passage above?

- A. Despite his disdain for politics, John Adams became a great political figure.**
- B. John Adams would have rather been a small town lawyer than president.**
- C. John Adams went from country lawyer to the American president.**
- D. John Adams came to dislike politics more and more throughout his life of service.**

Question 5 .

Lobsters are easy to cook, a fact that people do not share. They can be broiled or grilled. They are also delicious when boiled or steamed. Boiling is probably the simplest method. Just make sure a large stockpot is available. Place the lobsters inside of the pot while the water is still cool and allow it to heat up. If you drop them into a pot of boiling water, they may try to climb back out. The cooked lobsters need only melted butter as an accessory.

Which statement best summarizes this passage?

- A. Boiling is the easiest way to cook lobsters. You only need a large stockpot.**
- B. Lobsters are very easy to cook. They can be cooked in several different ways.**
- C. Cooked lobsters do not need a lot of different spices. They only need butter.**
- D. People do not like to share how they cook lobsters. Some people boil them.**

Question 6 .

Your friend missed school yesterday because he was sick. He asked you to tell him what he missed in social studies class. You tell him that the teacher lectured for the whole class period about the organization of the federal government. The teacher explained many new vocabulary words and gave the class the definitions they would need to know for their next test.

Would a summary of the teacher's lecture or a paraphrase be more helpful to your friend?

- A. a paraphrase because the social studies teacher tells lots of funny stories while he lectures that have nothing to do with the topic**
- B. a summary because your friend doesn't have a lot of time to prepare for the test**
- C. a paraphrase because your friend isn't very smart and wouldn't understand the new vocabulary**
- D. a summary because it will include all the important points from the teacher's lecture, including vocabulary and definitions**

Question 7 .

Marathon Kids is a special running program sponsored by RunTex. For five months, children run a half-mile to one mile at a time until they reach 26.2 miles. This is the total distance of a marathon. Students who have participated this year will cross the 26-mile line on Saturday, February 16. On that day, kindergartners through fifth-graders will receive their Marathon Kids medals. The Final Mile Medal Celebration will be held at Burger Center, located at 3200 Jones Road.

In a short summary of this article, which detail would be most important to include?

- A. how many RunTex stores are in town**
- B. the site of the Final Mile Medal Celebration**
- C. the history of child marathon runners**
- D. how to be part of Marathon Kids next year**

Question 8 .

Mustard gas is not what it sounds like. It is a deadly chemical agent that causes blisters on the skin and respiratory problems. In some forms it is yellowish but its actual aroma has been compared more to the smell of horseradish, garlic, and apples than to actual mustard. At room temperature, it's actually a liquid rather than a gas, but the name "mustard gas" has stuck since it was used in notorious gas attacks during World War I. adapted from <http://www.terrorismanswers.com/weapons/mustard.html>

How would you paraphrase the passage above?

- A. Mustard gas got its name because it smells exactly like mustard.**
- B. The name "mustard gas" is misleading because it has nothing to do with mustard.**
- C. Mustard gas is different from ketchup gas.**
- D. Mustard gas is a deadly nerve agent classified by the U.S. military as a "Weapon of Mass Destruction."**

Question 9 .

The Scientific Revolution

The Scientific Revolution took place during the 16th and 17th centuries. Many cultures influenced the beginning of the Scientific Revolution, including Greek, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim cultures.

In the ancient world, Greek was the language of science. Greek sharply decreased in usage as the Roman Empire expanded and the use of Latin became more widespread. During the Renaissance, scholars became increasingly interested in classical ideas and philosophy. They studied Greek again and were able to translate texts that had been otherwise lost.

Also, due to the Medieval Crusades, Europeans began to have more contact with the Middle East. As a result, the Western world benefited greatly from contact with Islamic cultures. Knowledge of science, medicine, and even architecture were shared between the two cultures.

In addition to the sharing of ideas between Europe and the Middle East, the humanism movement of the Renaissance furthered the Scientific Revolution. This European humanist movement focused on human potential. The movement valued logical

reasoning and observation over the Christian values of humility and passivity. This movement developed from the rediscovery of Greek and Latin texts.

Finally, global exploration also served as a springboard for the Scientific Revolution. As explorers came back from the New World and Asia, they shared new information and new goods. People became curious about the knowledge and the practices of other cultures. People wanted to know even more about the world and how it worked.

Determine which four events form a clear summary of the passage and place them in the correct order. *Place an "X" in the space that does not contribute to a clear summary of the passage.*

- The Scientific Revolution took place during the 16th and 17th centuries.
- Foreign exploration opened new channels of learning.
- Understanding how to read Greek was key to scientific study.
- There were critical exchanges in ideas between the East and West.
- Only scholars with knowledge of classical languages made progress.

Question 10 .

The orchid family is one of the largest families of flowering plants. There are twice as many species of orchids as species of birds. There are four times as many species of orchids as species of mammals. Charles Darwin wrote a book about orchids in 1862. The book studied the way in which orchids evolved to attract birds and insects. It is suggested that for every different type of bird or insect, there was an orchid that matched in appearance. This in-depth study on orchids helped Darwin develop his ideas on evolution. Orchids can survive almost anywhere—even underground. The only place they cannot survive is in glacial regions, like Antarctica. They grow best in tropical regions that are hot and humid. Some scientists believe that orchids have been around since the time of the dinosaurs.

Which one of these details is most important to include in a summary of this passage?

- A. Charles Darwin wrote a book about orchids in 1862.
- B. They grow best in tropical regions that are hot and humid.
- C. There are four times as many species of orchids as species of mammals.
- D. Orchids can survive almost anywhere—even underground.

Answers

1. B
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. D
7. B
8. B
9. --
10. D

Explanations

1. The question gives you the main idea: "The presidential elections in Iran in June of 2009 created one of the year's most important stories." This main idea is supported by the sentence, "Mass protests and calls for a new election followed immediately after Ahmadinejad claimed victory." The notion of mass protests and upheaval in governmental processes are events that can be rightfully described as "important stories".
2. The correct answer refers to the main idea of the passage and stresses the importance of identifying one's passion and following one's heart. The other answer choices do not interpret the message or the general idea of the passage correctly.
3. A good summary is a shorter way to tell a passage. It only includes the most important details. In this passage, the important details are (1) Dessau Middle School is hosting a math game night on Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m., and (2) the activities will help students feel better about taking the state math test.
4. A summary tells the main idea of something, but it doesn't give all the details found in the original story. This is a good summary because it avoids bogging down the reader with too many details
5. A good summary is a shorter way to tell a passage. It should only mention the most important details from the passage. This is already a short passage. The most

important details in this passage are (1) lobsters are easy to cook, and (2) there are many ways to cook lobsters.

6. A summary will be most helpful because summaries cover all important points. Also, the teacher gave new vocabulary and definitions; therefore, a paraphrase will not be helpful.

7. A good summary includes only the most important details from an article. In this summary, one of the most important details is the location of the big celebration for the kids who ran 26.2 miles over five months. The things described in the wrong answer choices are not mentioned in the article.

8. The paragraph explains why the name mustard gas is misleading.

9. A summary is a shorter way to tell the events or details of a passage. The passage discusses the scientific revolution. This is the correct order of details that summarize the passage:

The Scientific Revolution took place during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Understanding how to read Greek was key to scientific study.

There were critical exchanges in ideas between the East and West.

Foreign exploration opened new channels of learning.

10. A good summary only mentions the most important details. The right answer choice explains where the orchid can survive. The wrong answer choices feature minor details.