

Name: _____ Color: _____ Date: _____

The Summary Paragraph: A Helpful Guide

Definition: A summary paragraph expresses the main idea and some key facts in order to give an overview of a topic.

How To

- Give a one-sentence overview or topic statement: “The Red Sox beat the Yankees last night and won the game 5-4.”
- List or explain key details: “The game was tied until the bottom of the eighth inning, when the Red Sox scored the game-winning home run.”
- Leave out irrelevant or unimportant details. A great summary doesn’t recount the entire baseball game play by play; it just shares the highlights and most interesting moments.

Steps

- Skim the text to get the basic idea of what the text is about.
- Mark/highlight key words and details using online tools, Post-It notes, and so on.
- Ignore details that are not important.
- Create a topic sentence to begin the summary.
- Take notes along the way.
- Review and organize the notes.
- Draft the summary

An Example

Full Article: Portugal's "Triangle Trade"

During the 1400s, Portugal was looking for an ocean route for the East Indies. The Portuguese were tired of the Italian merchants controlling the trade of cinnamon, peppercorn, and cloves from the East. To compete with the Italians, they sent ships south along the coast of Africa, seeking a route to India. Along the way, they began to trade with African nations, giving cloth, knives, and guns in exchange for gold and ivory. In 1498, they finally reached India.

At about the same time, Portuguese ships also landed in Brazil and started a colony there. The colonists set up sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations, using local people as workers. However, the native workers soon came down with smallpox and measles, diseases that the Portuguese brought with them. Many of the workers died. As a result, the plantation owners needed new workers to harvest the sugarcane.

Portuguese merchants began to trade for slaves from Africa to work in the sugarcane fields. Ships would sail from Portugal to Africa with cloth, knives, and guns to trade for slaves. Then they would sail from Africa to Brazil with slaves. Finally, they would sail back to Portugal with sugar, cotton, and tobacco. Their trade routes formed a triangle in the Atlantic Ocean, often referred to as the "Triangle Trade."

Summary of the Article: The Trade Triangle

Portugal's "Trade Triangle" began with Africa and Brazil around the beginning of the 1500s. Up until that time, the Portuguese traded with African nations for gold and ivory. After they colonized Brazil, however, they soon found that they needed more workers. The natives they had been using were dying from smallpox and measles, diseases that were brought in by the Portuguese. They decided to use Africans as replacements and began trading cloth, knives, and guns for human beings. The Portuguese then took the Africans to Brazil to work as slaves. From Brazil, the traders completed the triangle when they returned to Portugal on ships loaded down with sugar, cotton, and tobacco.

