Examples of Summaries (Read the short story Miss Brill)

**A Summary of the Short Story**[**"Miss Brill"**](https://www.thoughtco.com/miss-brills-fragile-fantasy-1690510)**by Katherine Mansfield**  
"'Miss Brill' is the story of an old woman told brilliantly and realistically, balancing thoughts and emotions that sustain her late solitary life amidst all the bustle of modern life. Miss Brill is a regular visitor on Sundays to the Jardins Publiques (the Public Gardens) of a small French suburb where she sits and watches all sorts of people come and go. She listens to the band playing, loves to watch people and guess what keeps them going, and enjoys contemplating the world as a great stage upon which actors perform. She finds herself to be another actor among the so many she sees, or at least herself as 'part of the performance after all.' One Sunday Miss Brill puts on her fur and goes to the Public Gardens as usual. The evening ends with her sudden realization that she is old and lonely, a realization brought to her by a conversation she overhears between a boy and a girl, presumably lovers, who comment on her unwelcome presence in their vicinity.

Miss Brill is sad and depressed as she returns home, not stopping by as usual to buy her Sunday delicacy, a slice of honey-cake. She retires to her dark room, puts the fur back into the box and imagines that she has heard something cry." -K. Narayana Chandran.

**A Summary of Shakespeare's "Hamlet"**  
"One way of discovering the overall pattern of a piece of writing is to summarize it in your own words. The act of summarizing is much like stating the [plot](https://www.thoughtco.com/plot-narratives-1691635) of a play. For instance, if you were asked to summarize the story of [Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,'](https://www.thoughtco.com/hamlet-scenes-breakdown-2984983) you might say:

*It's the story of a young prince of Denmark who discovers that his uncle and his mother have killed his father, the former king. He plots to get revenge, but in his obsession with revenge he drives his sweetheart to madness and suicide, kills her innocent father, and in the final scene poisons and is poisoned by her brother in a duel, causes his mother's death, and kills the guilty king, his uncle.*

This summary contains a number of dramatic elements: a cast of [characters](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-character-literature-1689836) (the prince; his uncle, mother, and father; his sweetheart; her father, and so on), a scene (Elsinore Castle in Denmark), instruments (poisons, swords), and actions (discovery, dueling, killing)." -Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike.

Steps in Composing a Summary

The primary purpose of a summary is to "give an accurate, objective representation of what the work says." As a general rule, "you should not include your own ideas or interpretations." -Paul Clee and Violeta Clee

"Summarizing condenses in your own words the main points in a passage:

1. Reread the passage, jotting down a few keywords.
2. State the main point in your own words and be objective. Don't mix your reactions with the summary.
3. Check your summary against the original, making sure that you use [quotation marks](https://www.thoughtco.com/guidelines-for-using-quotation-marks-correctly-1691757) around any exact phrases that you borrow." -Randall VanderMey, et al.

"Here...is a general procedure you can use [for composing a summary]:

**Step 1***:* Read the text for its main points.  
**Step 2***:* Reread carefully and make a descriptive [outline](https://www.thoughtco.com/outline-composition-term-1691364).  
**Step 3***:* Write out the text's [thesis](https://www.thoughtco.com/thesis-composition-1692546) or main point.  
**Step 4***:* Identify the text's major divisions or chunks. Each division develops one of the stages needed to make the whole main point.  
**Step 5***:* Try summarizing each part in one or two sentences.  
**Step 6:** Now combine your summaries of the parts into a [coherent](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-coherence-composition-1689862) whole, creating a condensed version of the text's main ideas in your own words." -(John C. Bean, Virginia Chappell, and Alice M. Gillam, *Reading Rhetorically*. Pearson Education, 2004)

Characteristics of a Summary

"The purpose of a summary is to give a reader a condensed and objective account of the main ideas and features of a text. Usually, a summary has between one and three paragraphs or 100 to 300 words, depending on the length and complexity of the original essay and the intended [audience](https://www.thoughtco.com/audience-rhetoric-and-composition-1689147) and purpose. Typically, a summary will do the following:

* **Cite the author and title of the text.** In some cases, the place of publication or the context for the essay may also be included.
* **Indicate the main ideas of the text.** Accurately representing the main ideas (while omitting the less important details) is the major goal of the summary.
* **Use**[**direct quotations**](https://www.thoughtco.com/direct-quotation-composition-1690461)**of keywords, phrases, or sentences.** *Quote* the text directly for a few key ideas; [*paraphrase*](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-paraphrase-1691573) the other important ideas (that is, express the ideas in your own words).
* **Include author tags.** ("According to Ehrenreich" or "as Ehrenreich explains") to remind the reader that you are summarizing the author and the text, not giving your own ideas.
* **Avoid summarizing specific examples or data** unless they help illustrate the [thesis](https://www.thoughtco.com/thesis-composition-1692546) or main idea of the text.
* **Report the main ideas as objectively as possible.** Do not include your reactions; save them for your response. -(Stephen Reid, *The Prentice Hall Guide for Writers*, 2003)

A Checklist for Evaluating Summaries

"Good summaries must be fair, balanced, accurate, and complete. This checklist of questions will help you evaluate drafts of a summary:

* Is the summary economical and precise?
* Is the summary neutral in its representation of the original author's ideas, omitting the writer's own opinions?
* Does the summary reflect the proportionate coverage given various points in the original text?
* Are the original author's ideas expressed in the summary writer's own words?
* Does the summary use attributive tags (such as 'Weston argues') to remind readers whose ideas are being presented?
* Does the summary quote sparingly (usually only key ideas or phrases that cannot be said precisely except in the original author's own words)?
* Will the summary stand alone as a [unified](https://www.thoughtco.com/unity-composition-1692572) and coherent piece of writing?
* Is the original [source](https://www.thoughtco.com/primary-source-research-1691678) cited so that readers can locate it?"