



Summary, Paraphrase, and Quotation Some Examples

The Original Passage

By and large Yosemite has been preserved as though it were a painting. The boundaries of the park are the gilt frame around a masterpiece, and within the frame we are urged to take only pictures, leave only footprints. There are enormously important reasons to do so—there are too many people coming to the park to do it any other way—and yet I cannot help feeling something is sadly missing from this experience of nature. Looking is a fine thing to do to pictures, but hardly an adequate way to live in the world. It is nature as a place in which we do not belong, a place in which we do not live, in which we are intruders. A tourist is by definition an outsider, a person who does not belong, a stranger in paradise.

Solnit, R. (1999). *Savage Dreams: A journey into the landscape wars of the American west*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Legitimate Summary (condenses, captures only main points, and re-expresses in new language)

Conservation efforts traditionally have represented Yosemite as a work of art marked by distinct borders (Solnit, 1999, p. 263). While Solnit acknowledges that this representation may serve to protect the park, she also suggests that it limits the individual's relationship to the landscape (p. 263).

Legitimate Paraphrase (captures the entire passage and re-expresses in new language)

Solnit (1999) argues that because conservation efforts have conceived of Yosemite as a work of art, the park is represented as nature appropriately experienced as one might experience a painting: through sight only (p. 263). While this representation makes sense in light of the throngs of people flocking to Yosemite, it limits the ways in which an individual might experience the park's landscape, since it implies that that nature is to be viewed and not altered, that it is to be visited and not lived in (Solnit, 1999, p. 263).

Legitimate Quotation (captures sections of the passage verbatim and integrates smoothly)

Efforts to preserve Yosemite "as though it were a painting" create a distance between the visitor and the landscape (Solnit, 1999, p. 263). Solnit worries that such a distance between nature and visitor implies that nature is "a place in which we do not belong, a place in which we do not live, in which we are intruders" (p. 263). This distanced relationship with a place differs drastically from one in which the individual interacts with and relies upon the land, sometimes altering it and sometimes being altered by it.

Plagiarized Version (creates a mosaic of copied language and sentence structure)

Yosemite has been preserved as though it were a framed masterpiece. Within the frame of this masterpiece—within the park boundaries—we are urged to take only pictures. Although this is an important approach to take in visiting national parks, it is not an adequate way to live in relation to a place. When people are told to look but not touch, they are sent the message that this is a place in which they are intruders, a message that may preclude a healthy relationship with the natural world (Solnit, 1999, p. 263).

On summarizing with purpose

“Many writers shy away from summarizing—perhaps because they don’t want to take the trouble to go back to the text in question and wrestle with what it says, or because they fear that devoting too much time to other people’s ideas will take away from their own. When assigned to write a response to an article, such writers might offer their own views on the article’s topic while hardly mentioning what the article itself argues or says. At the opposite extreme are those who do nothing but summarize. Lacking confidence, perhaps, in their own ideas, these writers so overload their texts with summaries of others’ ideas that their own voice gets lost. And since these summaries are not animated by the writers own interests, they often read like mere lists of things that X thinks or Y says—with no clear focus.

As a general rule, a good summary requires balancing what the original author is saying with the writer’s own focus. Generally speaking, a summary must at once be true to what the original author says while also emphasizing those aspects of what the author says that interest you, the writer. Striking this delicate balance can be tricky, since it means facing two ways at once: both outward (toward the author being summarized) and inward (toward yourself). Ultimately, it means being respectful of others but simultaneously structuring how you summarize them in light of your own text’s central claim.”

On paying attention to signal verbs

“In introducing summaries, try to avoid bland formulas like “she says,” or “they believe.” Through language like this is sometimes serviceable enough, it often fails to reflect accurately what’s been said....The authors you summarize at the college level seldom simply “say” or “discuss” things; they “urge,” “emphasize” and “complain about” them. To do justice to the authors you cite, we recommend that when summarizing—or when introducing a quotation—you use vivid and precise signal verbs as often as possible.”

VERBS FOR MAKING A CLAIM

argue—assert—believe—claim—emphasize—insist—observe—suggest

VERBS FOR EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

acknowledge—admire—agree—endorse—extol—praise—reaffirm—support—verify

VERBS FOR QUESTIONING OR DISAGREEING

complain—complicate—contend—contradict—qualify—question—reject

VERBS FOR MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

advocate—call for—demand—encourage—exhort—implore—plead—recommend—urge—warn

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