

Summarizing and Responding to Readings

The final assignment for this week is to summarize and respond to the ideas and perspectives presented in the assigned readings. A **summary** is a way of condensing all the key ideas an author has presented in a longer selection or section of a chapter. To write a summary, you must:

- (1) identify the author's perspective
- (2) identify the support that the author gives to support her/his perspective
- (3) identify what the author wants you to think, know, or do in response to his/her perspective

When you have identified this information, you have all of the information necessary to write your summary. Here are some things to keep in mind when you write your summary:

- Include all of the main points the author presents in the section.
- Do not add anything beyond the author's ideas such as your opinion or personal examples.
- Write the main points in your own words.
- Your summary should be about 1/4 the length of the original passage. For example, if the original passage is four paragraphs, your summary should be about one paragraph in length.

Watch the video below for additional guidance on writing summaries.



Once you have written your summary, the next step is to write a **response** to the key ideas of the reading selection. In writing your response, you should:

- (1) clearly state your perspective or opinion on the issue the author presented in the reading selection
- (2) explain why you hold your perspective on the issue, using details and experiences that support your perspective

As you write your summary-response, be sure to follow the steps outlined above and to use the tips offered in the video. The following summary-response example might also help you as you complete this assignment.

Sample Summary-Response

Name

Date

Course

Summary Response #1

Article #1: "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (Jean Anyon)

Summary:

In the reading selection for this week, "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work", Jean Anyon discussed how American schools are set up to fully educate students from upper-class backgrounds and to give a limited education to students from lower-class backgrounds. She conducted studies of several public schools in the New Jersey area and she found that wealthier schools prepared the students for high-paying careers, while schools in poorer areas prepared students for low-wage work. This was accomplished by giving the wealthier students exposure to advanced math and science courses, along with language arts courses that really taught the students how to read, write, think, and speak in ways that required for success in college and in professional life. Student in less wealthy schools were taught only very basic math and very basic grammar, which makes it almost impossible to get into college or find a well-paying job. Anyon concluded that this how the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor.

Response:

Although Anyon's points about education are eye-opening in a way, I do not totally agree with her conclusions. I do not believe that students who attend poorer schools cannot get into college and will not be able to find a high-paying job. Even with all of the

problems in schools, there are many people who find a way to climb the social ladder. To say that the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor really takes away from the American dream. Yes, it may be more challenging for a poorer person to make it than for a person who comes from a wealthy family to make, but it can be done. If where we end up in life is all based on the schools we find ourselves in, why should anyone bother to even try? If we all take what Anyon presents as the ultimate truth, we will be hopeless.

Article #2: "Against School" (John Taylor Gatto)

Summary:

In his article, "Against School", John Taylor Gatto presented a critique of public schooling in the United States. Gatto, a 30-year veteran public school teacher, explained that the public schooling system was never set up to empower the students. Instead, he argued that the public schooling system was designed to control students and to direct them to their predetermined roles in society. According to Gatto, this is accomplished through the "six covert functions of public education". Each of these functions serve to ensure that students from upper-class backgrounds become upper class adults and that students from lower-class backgrounds become lower class adults. Gatto concludes that the only way for students to get around this rigged system is to be homeschooled.

Response:

Much like Anyon, Gatto presents a very bleak view of education in our country. While I agree that there are many things about public schooling that need to be fixed, I do not buy into his conspiracy theory that schools are set up to control and disadvantage certain groups of students. Our society is filled with individuals who attended public schools and who have been able to climb the social ladder. If Gatto's ideas are accurate, how did these individuals attend public school and still manage to move into a higher social class? I also found Gatto's solution of homeschooling to be totally unrealistic. There

are very few parents with the knowledge and resources to homeschool their children. To conclude, Gatto's ideas are interesting, but he seems a bit pessimistic in his outlook and unrealistic in his thinking about possible solutions.