**Summarising your Reading**

**Aim:** To introduce students to some basic processes that will develop their summarising techniques by encouraging an active reading process as opposed to a more technical approach. Their application of the process uses the theme of social injustice based on race and class and their intersectionality. This material is intended to be a vehicle through which the academic skill of summarising is developed, rather than it become the topic of the class. However, by using the sample reading (on the effects of racism, and its intersectionality with class, on a community’s access to biodiverse environments), students are encouraged to consider nuances of social injustice and inequality that they may not have considered or encountered before, and for some of them to feel their experiences are acknowledged. This enables some students to bring their lived experiences into the classroom, but it is also intended to challenge other students’ perceptions of racial equity and inequity and open up conversations about this and the ways in which it can be addressed.

**LOs:** Explain what summarising is

Analyse the relationship between active reading, summarising, and synthesising

Apply techniques to write a summary

**Level**: 4

**Duration:** 1 hour (with suggestions for developing it into a longer session with more focus on synthesis)

**Numbers refer to slides**

1. Highlight the LOs to them here but tell them that they will see what these mean as the class progresses (e.g., what active reading and synthesis mean) so that you can get straight into the first activity. This is so the students are actively involved in their learning from the start.
2. 10 minutes for the activity and responsive discussion. The students can just think about this on their own and note down their thoughts, or they could discuss and share in pairs first. To get their responses, you could use a whole group Q and A or ask them to contribute to something like a Google Jamboard (the QR code or link for this could be added to the slide). This would be a way for them all to contribute anonymously and therefore feel safe and secure, encouraging honesty.

This question is being used to give them an opportunity to talk about how they may be feeling about their experiences so far, whether that is about their academic work (e.g., feel they’re struggling, feeling confident with good grades, unsure about what is expected of them), or the more personal (e.g., they feel they don’t belong, or they’re loving it). This also enables them to feel they’re bringing their lived experiences into the classroom, that you’re letting them in, and that those experiences are valid even if they don’t fit the ‘expected’ norm. Therefore, spend some time responding to what they have put, maybe highlighting some common themes or interesting points.

Of course, as well as encouraging some reflective thought, this is a way of starting a class on summarising because it will show them that we summarise all the time: they haven’t told you in detail every single experience they have had, they have selected particular ones or pulled a few together to make a general point; they have chosen what to say for a reason (responding to the question but also possibly because they have wanted to present a particular impression/point). Don’t highlight this yet as it’s the starter for the next slide but just so you know where this is going.

1. 3 – 5 minutes. This is where you explain the relevance of what they have just done to this lesson on summarising – it highlights the features of a summary and helps them to realise that it’s not as complicated as some would have them think. To exemplify the points here, you could refer back (e.g., you didn’t tell me something about every class you have had or every single thing you have felt on each day). The point about active reading only needs a very brief explanation (literally that it is just not copying out word for word, but that this is what you’ll move onto now).

Although it could be expected to be included here, there’s nothing on the slide about summarising helping to avoid plagiarism here because it can often end up in quite a deficit conversation and, for some students, they are made to feel terrified about it early in their degree, making it (and perfect referencing) their focus rather than starting to engage in their subject and develop their understanding. Instead, just noting orally that using their own words also helps avoid it is enough.

1. 5 minutes. These are the key points. You could be explicit about how they may have been told, or may have read, about summarising being a very technical process in which they have to change the order of a sentence, turn nouns into verbs and vice versa etc but that is unnecessary, overly complicated, and actually results in writing that doesn’t make sense. It’s especially worth pointing out that just changing the odd word is still not enough. Instead, it’s all about the active reading (these key questions) and having a focus on meaning and selection. Ideally exemplify with a few examples (e.g., you could give an interesting piece of information tangentially related to a specific topic in your subject area but then explain how it doesn’t answer the question of X).

This is a good place to address the issue of ‘just put it in your own words’. Students often say that this is all they are told about summarising, but they are never told **how** to do that. This questioning approach and the suggested process on the next slide are intended to address that. However, it could also be worth noting that using ‘their’ words is often highlighted as not being ‘academic’ enough, which can lead to feelings of exclusion, inferiority and deficiency. The following process goes some way in helping with this, but it can’t fully be addressed in this session, although just openly acknowledging that they may feeling insecure about ‘their words’ recognises the diversity in the room and is a chance to reassure them that ‘their words’ aren’t wrong per se, but they will learn to develop an academic style of writing.

1. 5 minutes to explain the process. Emphasise that this is only ONE method but think about the principle of it as the foundation of summarising, you can explain how this helps encourages them to focus on reading and thinking, rather than passively copying chunks of text. If they’re writing a summary based around a couple of key words, they have to use their own but have some subject specific and/or formal and academic vocabulary to start with as a basis to develop their own academic style and tone.
2. 10 minutes including some brief feedback. They could work individually or in small groups for this. Groups could enable a little more discussion of the content but if they do it individually, the feedback/discussion would ideally still include some explicit consideration of that content because they need to be questioned on what they felt was the most important point for their summaries and why, and what it’s saying about race, class, their intersectionality, and inequality to respond to the ‘essay question’. This may enable some students to discuss their own experiences and for others to become more aware of the nuances of social injustice. As summarising is all about what the text means, this doesn’t feel shoehorned in.

A Jamboard or Padlet etc is a good way to gather their summaries but volunteers can also read them out, or you could select some.

1. 2 minutes – just to exemplify how it could be done by focusing on the absolute main meaning (as though this is what you would tell someone about what Robinson says), referring back to good examples from their own too to highlight any who have got to this point.
2. 5 minutes. Do this as whole group Q and A, looking for comments such as it being a bit of a list and lacking any connection between the points, which also makes it a bit repetitive. Just so you realise, the gender-neutral pronoun (and name) is intentional as inclusive practice, as are two of the (fake) references being non-Western names. If anyone asks why it is ‘they’ not ‘her’ explain (I have had that in a class when a student thought that I’d just made a mistake).
3. 2-3 minutes. Hopefully, they’ll have recognised the lack of synthesis even if they haven’t used the word. Just to highlight key features of synthesis here – a summary of reading doesn’t stand on its own just as a piece of reading doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It would be worth highlighting the use of language in bold too.

If you have more than an hour, some extra work around synthesis and the use of connectives and transitioning language would be a good addition to make it a fuller summarising **and** synthesising class.

1. 3 minutes. Try to offer an example for each to help explain, emphasising that this all happens at the reading stage, that synthesis is built upon effective summarising and why synthesis is important in showing their understanding and active reading further.
2. A minute or so just to show them that using something like this really help build the synthesis as they read.

If you have a longer session, they could be given another piece of reading on the same theme of social injustice/inequality in terms of race and class and then, in small groups, complete one of these grids for both readings. This would be an opportunity to develop their application of summarising techniques by moving into synthesis, as well as encouraging further engagement with the key themes, discussion of which could be opened up by pulling together their synthesis ideas.

1. 3-5 minutes as a whole group plenary by bringing it back to the main aim of the session. Ask them to put their hands up for A or B, pushing for explanations for their choice. Using an extract from the same article gives coherence but also offers another opportunity to engage in the reading’s key themes.
2. Just to reinforce and validate their responses. Highlight A has got to the main point but is still also focused on the question they used about social inequality. B is too close in words and has possibly lost the focus on the question to remind them of how easy it is to lose focus on purpose if they’re not reading actively.