

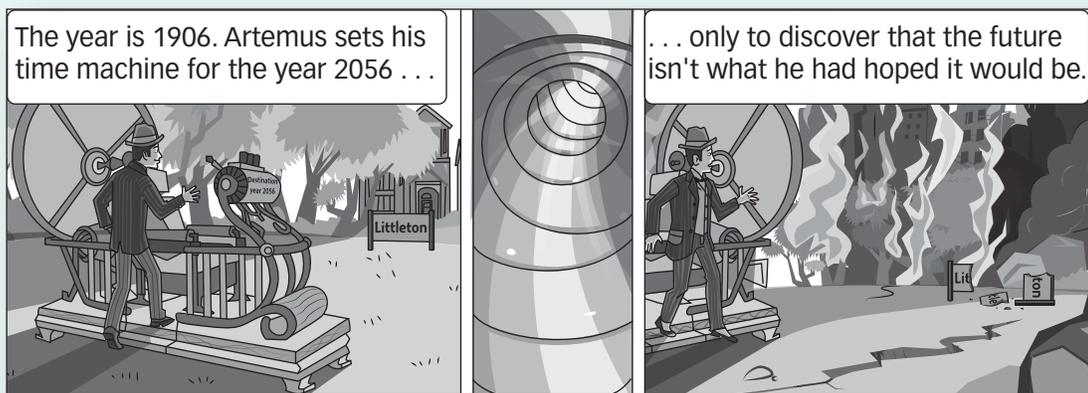
Lesson 9 Part 1: Introduction

Summarizing Literary Texts

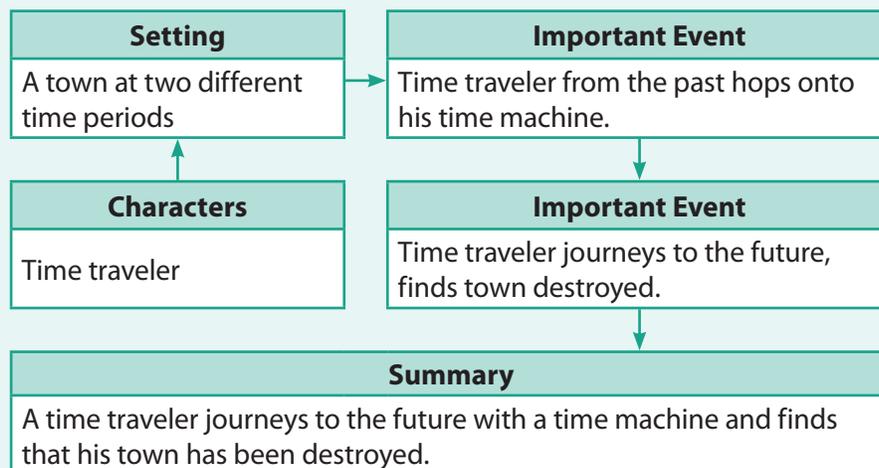
Theme: *Views of Other Worlds*

Your best friend missed her favorite show. She knows you watch it, too, and calls asking you to **summarize** what happened. When you summarize, you briefly retell the main characters, setting, conflict, and important events. To paint as clear a picture as possible, you make sure your summary is **objective**, or free of your own opinions.

Study these images about a time traveler. Look for details about character, setting, and events.



Now review the graphic organizer below. Notice that it includes only essential details, tells events in the order they happened, and is free of personal opinions.



Summarizing isn't just a way for you to describe a story to others. It can also be a tool to help you understand what you're reading. Stop occasionally to summarize what has happened. Be sure you include only the most important details. This process will help you check your understanding of a text and remember important details.



Read the first three paragraphs of this science fiction story.

Genre: Science Fiction

Touchdown on Spectra Omicron 8 *by William Nicols*

This just in! The UFP Ulysses vessel has touched down on the planet Spectra 8. This signifies the first stage in its terraforming expedition. The complex multi-stage terraforming process will make Spectra's atmosphere more like that of Earth and livable for humans.

Captain Jane Young and her crew of 21 blasted off in May of 2218 for the 6-year journey through deep space to reach the lifeless planet. They encountered a number of problems along the way. First, they were stuck in the gravitational pull of an anti-matter black hole. They also had to deal with a salmonella outbreak in the ship's food storage.

In October of this year, the Ulysses established orbit. Lieutenant Bobby Sullivan piloted the vessel toward the planet's surface. He set the angle-of-entry so the ship would not burn up when passing through the atmosphere. After securing visual confirmation of the landing site, Sullivan deployed the landing gear, applied the thrusters, and brought the ship in for a soft three-point landing.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: *"How can you best summarize this part of the story?"*

Remember that a summary is a brief retelling that includes the main characters, setting, and important events. Underline each of these things in the story above.

Summaries should be objective, or free of opinions and judgments. Read the following summary of the story. Cross out any opinions and personal feelings in the summary.

In the year 2218, the Ulysses sets off on a really dangerous mission to begin the terraforming of planet Spectra 8. They have to deal with some scary problems along the way, but they finally reach the planet. The most interesting part is how pilot Bobby Sullivan brings the ship in for a safe landing.

- "Really dangerous" in the first sentence is an opinion and not a detail from the text. Cross it out.
- The word "scary" in the second sentence is another opinion. Cross it out, too.
- Remove "The most interesting part," which is a judgment.

Find a partner and work together to improve this part of the summary. Include additional information about the characters, setting, and important events. Also be sure to keep the summary objective by avoiding opinions and judgments, such as "My favorite part was . . ." or "It was great how . . ."



Close Reading

Before you start summarizing, **underline** the names of important characters as well as clues about the setting. **Circle** important events.

Hint

Avoid answer choices that include an opinion or unimportant details.

Continue reading the science fiction story. Then answer the question that follows.

(continued from page 78)

Now that the Ulysses has landed, it is time for Young and her team to begin exploring the planet’s surface. Spectra Omicron 8 is little more than loose rocks of red clay. One of Captain Young’s top priorities is establishing the Ulysses base camp with its many domed sections. With so much carbon monoxide in the atmosphere, oxygen corridors must be built to connect the domes, which will be used for farming, geological research, and communications. A molten-carbon drill will then be constructed in the camp’s center to burrow through to the planet’s core, carrying the terraforming unit that will aid in surface reconstruction.

Circle the correct answer.

Which is the best summary for this portion of the text?

- A** Captain Young explores the planet’s surface and begins building the base camp.
- B** Captain Young shows she is a strong leader by quickly establishing the base camp.
- C** The domes in the base camp will be used for farming, geological research, and communications.
- D** The drill at the center of the camp is made from molten-carbon.



Show Your Thinking

Explain why the other answer choices are not good summaries of the second part of the text.



Take turns briefly summarizing the entire story with a partner, using details about character, setting, and important events. Make sure your summaries are free of opinions and judgments.



Read the science fiction story. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.



As I read, I will pause to summarize who the characters are, where the story is set, and what some of the important events are.

Close Reading

In addition to the narrator, who are the main characters in the story? **Circle** the first mention of each one.

Underline important details that provide clues about where Allya was and the alien they have encountered.

Genre: Science Fiction

Prime Contact *by Justin Greenfield*

Imperator's log, the 36th of Quelnar, 4278

- 1 Today I had a fascinating meeting with a promising new captain by the name of Allya. The first thing I noticed about her was the remarkable hue of her purple eyes, much more vibrant than the rest of ours.
- 2 At any rate, she relayed to me how her crew had recently returned from a mission to the third planet from the central star, where they had an encounter with one of the dominant life forms. I inquired as to the extent of the creatures' technology, and Allya replied that they had advanced machines but preferred to let their servants operate them. These servants live with them—in fact, there are often several servants in each home. They walk about on two legs, prepare food, and feed their four-legged masters.
- 3 Allya then told me that a member of this alien race had returned with them on their ship. Of course, I asked to see the creature straight away, and when it was brought into my throne room, I was taken with how friendly it appeared, inviting but cautious. Its wide, green eyes were alert and confident, but—dare I say—bored?
- 4 Since it was a very short and very furry sort of alien, I lay down on the floor to establish better verbal communication with it. I welcomed it to Harlapan, home of the Galactic Confederacy. The creature stretched out its front legs and appeared to bow. I distinctly heard an odd purring sound coming from it. A form of telepathic language it shares with its species, perhaps?
- 5 “Meow,” it said with great dignity before turning to the task of licking its paws. Fascinating.



Hints

Which of the four answer choices is an important statement about the story that does not contain an opinion?

Omit the choices that are not connected to the ending, or that are unimportant or not objective.

The story tells the events in a certain order. That is not, however, the order in which the events actually happened in time.

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which of the following would you include in a summary of "Prime Contact"?
 - A It's very funny that the Emperor doesn't realize that the alien is a house cat.
 - B The Emperor of Harlapan asks to meet the alien that has returned with Allya.
 - C The alien loses interest in the Emperor and starts licking its paws.
 - D The Emperor is fascinated by Allya's remarkable purple eyes.

- 2 Which is the best summary for the last events of the story?
 - A Allya travels to the third planet and brings back an alien.
 - B The people of Harlapan are clearly very advanced.
 - C The servants the Emperor describes must be humans.
 - D The alien meows and licks its paws, revealing that it's a cat.

- 3 The notes for a summary need to be arranged correctly into the order in which the events occur in the passage.

Indicate the correct chronological order of the events below by writing the numbers 1 to 8 on the blank before each sentence.

- _____ An alien creature boards Allya's ship.
- _____ Captain Allya tells how the servants care for their masters.
- _____ The Emperor lies down on the floor.
- _____ The Emperor meets with Captain Allya.
- _____ Allya and her crew visit another planet.
- _____ The Emperor notices the alien's confidence.
- _____ The alien makes a strange purring sound.
- _____ The Emperor asks to meet the alien.



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

from *The War of the Worlds*

by H. G. Wells

Earth was not prepared for the Martian invasion that began in a field outside of London. Disbelief turned to horror as the Martian forces spread throughout the country, destroying everything in their path. No human weapons were able to stop their deadly attacks and superior technology. Then a sudden and surprising set of events occurred that changed everything.

1 I came upon the wrecked handling-machine halfway to St. John's Wood station. At first I thought a house had fallen across the road. It was only as I clambered among the ruins that I saw, with a start, this mechanical Samson lying, with its tentacles bent and smashed and twisted, among the ruins it had made. The forepart was shattered. It seemed as if it had driven blindly straight at the house, and had been overwhelmed in its overthrow. It seemed to me then that this might have happened by a handling-machine escaping from the guidance of its Martian. I could not clamber among the ruins to see it, and the twilight was now . . . far advanced. . . .

2 Wondering still more at all that I had seen, I pushed on towards Primrose Hill. Far away, through a gap in the trees, I saw a second Martian, as motionless as the first, standing in the park towards the Zoological Gardens, and silent. A little beyond the ruins about the smashed handling-machine I came upon the red weed¹ again, and found the Regent's Canal, a spongy mass of dark-red vegetation. . . .

3 Great mounds had been heaped about the crest of the hill, making a huge redoubt² of it—it was the final and largest place the Martians had made—and from behind these heaps there rose a thin smoke against the sky. Against the sky line an eager dog ran and disappeared. The thought that had flashed into my mind grew real, grew credible. I felt no fear, only a wild trembling exultation, as I ran up the hill towards the motionless monster. Out of the hood hung lank shreds of brown, at which the hungry birds pecked and tore.

4 In another moment I had scrambled up the earthen rampart and stood upon its crest, and the interior of the redoubt was below me. A mighty space it was, with gigantic machines here and there within it, huge mounds of material and strange shelter places. And scattered about it, some in their overturned war-machines, some in the now rigid handling-machines, and a dozen of them stark and silent and laid in a row, were the Martians—dead—slain by the putrefactive³ and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; slain as late the red weed was being slain; slain, all after man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put forth upon this earth.

¹ **red weed:** a fictional plant native to Mars

² **redoubt:** temporary fortification, or wall built as a defense

³ **putrefactive:** rotting, having a foul odor



5 For so it had come about, as indeed I and many men might have foreseen had not terror and disaster blinded our minds. These germs of disease have taken toll of humanity since life began here. . . . But there are no bacteria on Mars, and directly these invaders arrived, directly they drank and fed, our microscopic allies began to work their overthrow.

1

Which detail from paragraph 1 would be **least** important to include in a summary of the paragraph?

- A On the way to St. John’s Wood station, the narrator finds a demolished handling-machine.
- B The machine seems to have collapsed in the middle of destroying a house.
- C The narrator believes that the wreckage might be the result of a Martian losing control of the machine.
- D Due to the lack of light, the narrator cannot see inside the wreck.

Answer Form

- 1 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 3 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 4 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number Correct / 4

2

Which of the following is **not** an objective statement of events?

- A The narrator notices a second smashed and motionless handling-machine as he continues on his way towards Primrose Hill.
- B The aliens probably felt they had nothing to fear from the weak creatures of Earth.
- C After seeing smoke behind the Martian redoubt, the narrator has a thought that causes him to run eagerly toward another immobile machine.
- D The remains of a Martian’s body are hanging out of the hood of one of the machines.

3

Which statement is the **best** summary of paragraph 2?

- A As the narrator approaches Primrose Hill, he finds more signs of the dying Martians.
- B The narrator explores the area around the Zoological Gardens and the Regent’s Canal.
- C Curious about the crashed machine, the narrator makes his way toward Primrose Hill.
- D Two Martian machines have mysteriously broken down, and the narrator investigates.

