

Summarizing a Source

Lesson Objective

During this lesson, students will learn how to summarize an article and will then identify the best summary during a brief exercise.

Handouts

1. “Summarizing a Source”

Length of lesson

20-30 minutes

Variations for different disciplines

1. General version using an article on identification for illegal immigrants
2. Speech

Source

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Approved

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File Name

ML_Summary_Gen_A.doc

Lesson Description

1. Have students read the article below. (5 min.)
2. Discuss summaries with the students. It might be helpful to mention that summaries must be Accurate, Brief, and Comprehensive. The summary should represent what the original text says (you can give your opinion later). To cue the reader that you are summarizing another person's views, you will likely use signal words such as: according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, argues... (5 min.)
3. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing a list of what they would include in a summary of the article. (5-10 min.)
4. Ask students to read the five sample summaries below and determine which is best. The first summary is not accurate, the second is too long, the third too short, and hence not comprehensive. The last two are OK, though the fifth is probably best. (5-10 min.)

When summarizing an article it is important to be:

Accurate

Brief

Comprehensive

Your summary should isolate the most important points and should represent what the actual text says. Often signal words such as according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, and argues are important clues to the reader that you are summarizing someone else's work.

Part 1. Summarizing an Article

Read the article below and then write your own summary. It may be helpful to list the most important points before writing a summary.

"California Should Not Ease Rules for Illegals"

Herb Klein

San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial December 10, 2004

At least some of the Sept. 11 terrorists, all Arabs, obtained illegal driver's licenses and used them to board airliners on that horrific day. Which is why the issue of granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants is a matter of pressing national security concern. The truth is, a driver's license is America's national identity card, proof that the holder is who he says he is, which is why airline agents ask to see your driver's license before you board a plane. Under new federal legislation, the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Department of Transportation, is directed to develop uniform national criteria for issuing driver's licenses. The measure calls for the implementation of "standards for the verifiability of documents used to obtain a driver's license."

Governor Schwarzenegger, sensibly citing the new intelligence bill, has declared that the question of driver's licenses for undocumented Californians should be put off until the new federal guidelines are developed. That is expected to take up to 18 months.

Apart from national security concerns, there are other reasons why illegal immigrants should not be given driver's licenses. One is a simple matter of fairness. Extending the privilege to undocumented residents would reward them for their illegal conduct. What's more, it would severely undermine enforcement of America's immigration laws. Gov. Schwarzenegger should stand firm against this ill-advised attempt to legitimize illegal immigration.

Part 2. Choosing the Best Summary

Now that you have written your own summary read the summaries below and identify the best one. What are some of the problems with the other summaries? Now that you have seen some example summaries, return to your own work and revise it.

1. Herb Klein says that illegal immigrants should not get driver's licenses because it would pose a security risk for the country. For example, everyone needs a driver's license to board a plane. He says that giving licenses to illegal immigrants would be unfair to people without licenses and that the federal government should wait before making a decision on this important issue.
2. Since terrorists are likely to use driver's licenses to board planes or perpetrate other terrorist acts, it is important that they not be issued to someone unless that person's identity can be positively ascertained. Therefore it is dangerous to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. The federal government is making plans to increase the security and usefulness of driver's licenses across the country, but until this legislation is passed, probably more than a year from now, California should not allow illegal immigrants to get licenses. Furthermore, there are other reasons why granting licenses to illegal immigrants is a bad idea: one is that it would be unfair because it rewards illegal behavior, and the other is that illegal immigration is legitimized by giving illegal immigrants the privileges of citizens.
3. In his editorial Herb Klein claims that giving driver's licenses to illegal immigrants would be a threat to national security because a driver's license is often used as a form of identification. For this reason he urges Governor Schwarzenegger not to allow licenses for illegal immigrants in California.
4. According to Herb Klein, a driver's license is an important form of ID that currently is not secure; therefore he argues that driver's licenses should not be granted to undocumented immigrants because it would endanger national security. Furthermore, he worries that it would legitimize illegal immigration.
5. In his December 10, 2004 editorial, Herb Klein argues against granting driver's licenses to people he terms "illegal immigrants" because he worries this would pose a national security threat. He suggests that California should wait until the federal government has made driver's licenses into a more secure, verifiable form of identification. He also thinks that the issue is a "simple matter of fairness" and that granting licenses to undocumented immigrants would legitimize illegal behavior.