

Worksheet: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting

Read the original passage (shown below in italics) and the attempted paraphrase or summary, determine whether or not each is adequate, and explain why. If you find that the author has paraphrased or summarized poorly, try to do a better job of it yourself.

Original passage #1: taken from James Oliver Horton, "Patriot Acts: Public History in Public Service," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 (2005): 801-810. (p. 801)

In an era when patriotism and national security are topics of considerable debate, I heartily agree with those who believe that a broad understanding of our national history among the general public is critical to contemporary conversation. Our national union has always been fragile, held together in large part by a belief in the national ideals outlined in the Declaration of Independence: individual freedom and the opportunity for a bright and expanding future. The promise of America, rather than its historical reality, has given hope to the vast majority of Americans. Historically, the poor, the oppressed, the newly arrived, the people of color have focused their eyes on this prize. It is America's promise and the precarious state of that promise that underlies much current political debate and concern. Historians, with their particular knowledge and ways of thinking, can provide a critical context for contemporary conversation grounded in a firm understanding of our national past.

Paraphrase attempt:

At a time when everyone is talking about feeling patriotic and the safety of our country, it is really important that the general public has solid knowledge of American history. The existence of the United States as one country could be broken. It is based on the values of the Declaration of Independence, such as personal freedoms and the opportunity for good things in the future. The hopes of most people come from these ideas about future opportunity, and not from America's history. This has been the concern of minority groups, disadvantaged people, and recent immigrants. The political debate and concern we are seeing right now is shaped by challenges to these promises. Historians are important to these debates because they can offer a critical context based on their knowledge of our national past.¹

Is this an adequate paraphrase or summary? _____ Why or why not? If your answer was "no," please correct the problems.

¹ James Oliver Horton, "Patriot Acts: Public History in Public Service," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 (2005): 801.

Original passage #2: taken from Sulayman S. Nyang, "US-Africa Relations over the Last Century: An African Perspective," *Social Research* 72, no. 4 (2005): 913-934. (p. 914).

The purpose of this brief essay is threefold. First, I intend to demonstrate that African opinions on and attitudes toward the United States are affected by the question of slavery, America's support for colonialism, America's attitudes toward the apartheid regime in South Africa, and America's positions during the Cold War. The second objective of this paper is to identify the concept and movement of Pan-Africanism as a source of value for African opinions on and attitudes toward the United States. Here I will show how this idea and the movement that grew out of it have combined to define the view of America and the West held by black intellectuals who embraced such a position. The third objective is to offer a set of conclusions summarizing and emphasizing the points of convergence and divergence between the United States and the countries of Africa.

Paraphrase/summary attempt:

In this article, Sulayman Nyang explores the nature of the relationship between the United States and Africa. To do this, he adopts, as his title reveals, "an African perspective." He finds that African views of the United States have been shaped by history—by the actions the United States has taken (or failed to take) on issues of importance to the continent—and by Pan-Africanist thought. He points out that sometimes, the United States and Africa have agreed, while other times, they have parted ways.²

Is this an adequate paraphrase or summary? _____ Why or why not? If your answer was "no," please correct the problems.

² Sulayman S. Nyang, "US-Africa Relations over the Last Century: An African Perspective," *Social Research* 72, no. 4 (2005): 914.

Original passage #3: taken from Michael Balter, "Zebrafish Researchers Hook Gene for Human Skin Color," *Science* 310, no. 5755 (2005): 1754-1755. (p. 1754)

People come in many different hues, from black to brown to white and shades in between. The chief determinant of skin color is the pigment melanin, which protects against ultraviolet rays and is found in cellular organelles called melanosomes. But the genetics behind this spectrum of skin colors have remained enigmatic. Now, on page 1782 of this week's issue of Science, an international team reports the identification of a zebrafish pigmentation gene and its human counterpart, which apparently accounts for a significant part of the difference between African and European skin tones. One variant of the gene seems to have undergone strong natural selection for lighter skin in Europeans.

Paraphrase/summary attempt:

There is a lot of variation in the color of people's skin. Skin color is mostly determined by melanin, a pigment that helps shield the skin from ultraviolet rays and that is "found in cellular organelles called melanosomes."³ Until recently, scientists have known little about the genetics of skin pigmentation. In a new study that appears in *Science*, however, scientists reveal how research done on zebrafish sheds light on this issue in humans and helps to explain the genetic basis for variation in skin color.⁴

Is this an adequate paraphrase or summary? _____ Why or why not? If your answer was "no," please correct the problems.

³ Michael Balter, "Zebrafish Researchers Hook Gene for Human Skin Color," *Science* 310, no. 5755 (2005): 1754.

⁴ Ibid.

Original passage #4: taken from Karen Hegtvedt, "Doing Justice to the Group: Examining the Roles of the Group in Justice Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 25-45. (p. 40-1).

By avoiding the investigation of conflict situations, justice researchers readily confine their focus to the individual. After all, the individual is the processor of information, the evaluator of a situation as just or unjust, and ultimately an actor (although, perhaps, in conjunction with other actors). With conflict situations, however, it is necessary to analyze the perceptions, evaluations, and actions of at least two actors. Such a dyad is an embryonic group. Certainly one direct way to bring the group back into justice analysis is to theorize about and empirically examine conflict situations. Yet because of the inherent importance of the group to justice per se, future research must go beyond the bounds of current paradigms.

Paraphrase/summary attempt:

Hegtvedt demonstrates that in not examining "conflict situations, justice researchers readily confine their focus to the individual." The "individual," she says, "is the processor of information, the evaluator of a situation as just or unjust, and ultimately an actor." But when scholars look at "conflict situations," she thinks they should "analyze the perceptions, evaluations, and actions of at least two actors." Two or more such actors constitute a group, so serious consideration of "conflict situations" would force scholars to look at the role of groups. Since groups play a central role in issues of justice, "future research must go beyond the bounds of current paradigms."⁵

Is this an adequate paraphrase or summary? _____ Why or why not? If your answer was "no," please correct the problems.

⁵ Karen Hegtvedt, "Doing Justice to the Group: Examining the Roles of the Group in Justice Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 40-41.