SUMMARY REVEALS COMPREHENSION

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1. Brief Description of in-class writing exercise:
How to write an article summary. See ATTACHED.

2. Context for the exercise:
We have just read two of the articles they can write paper one about. Their job is to
evaluate the argumentative techniques in the articles, but first, they must learn to
summarize.

3. Goal(s) of the exercise:
To summarize as concisely as possible.

4. Common results of the exercise:
They have a lot of difficulty recognizing the main points of the article...even when this
exercise follows a discussion.

5. Student responses to the exercise:
They think it's hard to pick just a few main points.
Summary Reveals Comprehension

Laurence Behrens and Leonard Rosen claim in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* that the "best way to demonstrate that you understand the information and the ideas in any piece of writing is to compose an accurate and clearly written summary of that piece" (3). And by "summary," they mean a "brief restatement, in your own words, of the content of a passage (a group of paragraphs, a chapter, an article, a book)." In this 'objective' restatement you should try to identify the central idea of the piece, the structure of the argument, the main points that make up that argument, and any key examples that reinforce the main points. In other words, you should be giving a skeletal version of what you just read. This is much harder than it sounds. Therefore, the authors provide (p. 6) some basic tips to get you started:

- Read the piece of writing carefully. At least be able to identify the main purpose of the article.
- Reread carefully, while at the same time marking in the margins the sections or stages of the argument and underlining any key ideas or terms.
- Write one-sentence summaries for each section of the argument.
- Write a thesis that synthesizes all the pieces of the argument you have already identified. This thesis should be a one- or two-sentence summary that expresses the central idea of the piece.
- Write the first draft of your summary by combining the thesis with the one-sentence summaries you have already written for each section of the piece and by adding any necessary specific details or examples that further elucidate the main points.
- Check your summary with the original piece of writing (and your notes) in order to make any additions or clarifications.
- Revise your summary so that transitions create a sense of "flow" and double-check your clarity.

Exercise:

Now, write the best summary you can of the article you examined for today. You can take as much as 20-25 minutes.