Steps to drafting a summary

Step One: Review your “Summary Writing” handout

Step Two: Choose one of three essays listed on your assignment guide: “On Being 17, Bright, and Unable to Read,” “How I Got Smart,” or “Becoming a Writer.” Read that essay again. If you haven’t already annotated the essay and underlined key points, do that now.

Step Three: Write the key points of the essay below. Remember: only choose key ideas, not minor details.

1. ______________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________________________
8. ______________________________________________________________________
9. ______________________________________________________________________
10. _____________________________________________________________________
11. _____________________________________________________________________
12. _____________________________________________________________________

(If you feel you have additional points, list them on a separate sheet of paper. Remember, though, that your summary should be no longer than about 11 sentences, so choose your key points carefully. That’s one of the challenges of summarizing!)

Step Four: Compose a topic sentence. Be sure to include the title, the author, and the main point. Remember: a main point isn’t merely the subject of an essay; a main point states the point the writer is trying to make about this subject. Write your topic sentence below:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

See reverse for more steps
Step Five: Compose a concluding sentence that sums up the writer’s conclusion. Write this in your own words rather than relying on a quote from the essay. Write a tentative concluding sentence here:

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Step Six: Find a quote or two from the essay that you could integrate into your summary. This could be an entire sentence or part of a sentence. Look at your list in Step Three to see if you would like to use a quote for any of those points. The quote(s) should be memorable enough that you want to use the author’s words rather than putting that idea in your own words.

Quote#1:______________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
(note page number of quote: ________)

Quote #2:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
(note page number of quote: ________)

Step Seven: Using the information from the above steps, compose a first draft of your summary. Type this draft and bring both the typed summary AND this writing exercise to class on the date listed on your calendar. Remember to save your draft on a memory device.