

TIP SHEET: Summary vs. Analysis
What's the difference?

Summary simply states the general ideas and presents them in a concise way. Summaries are written in present tense, third person, and is void of original thought. A summary asks: WHO, WHAT, WHERE?

Analysis breaks down a text such as a song, poem, or research study into its various parts to examine how those parts work together or connect to larger idea. An analysis asks: WHY, HOW?

Traits of a Summary

- Identifies the main points or elements
- Identifies what was stated or what is included
- Identifies thoughts or contributions others have had
- No argument or conclusion is presented from reader's point of view

Source: <https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/summary-vs-analysis>

Traits of an Analysis

- Examines and interprets each element
- Discusses why each element is important or significant
- Discusses how each element connects to other pieces
- Might discuss causes and effects
- Might discuss strengths and weaknesses or advantages and disadvantages
- Might discuss effectiveness or ineffectiveness
- Makes an argument or reaches a conclusion



Follow these steps to begin your analysis of a text, television show, film, art, etc.

1. Choose the elements you wish to examine more closely. Perhaps the set design, clothes, character in a television show; or types of evidence used to convince an audience in a text.
2. Take notes that answer those WHY and HOW questions. You may need to do additional research to answer those questions.
3. Draw your conclusions based on your observations, ideas, evaluation, and inferences.

When developing a thesis statement for an analysis, use those *WHY* and *HOW* questions you posed that lead you to an interpretation or a evaluation of a text.

Ineffective thesis statement that summarizes the text

Consumers who purchase coffee from farmers in the Equal Exchange network are helping farmers stay on their land.

This thesis only summarizes the ad. Where is the writer's analysis or evaluation of the ad?

Effective thesis statement that indicates writer's judgment of the text

Although the ad *works successfully on an emotional level*, it is *less successful on a logical level* because of its promise for an equal exchange between consumers and farmers.

The ad promises equal exchange, but is the exchange equal between consumers and farmers?

EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

EXAMPLE 1

Summary

Rachel Warner says global warming has negative effects and we should care about our world's future.

This statement includes an argumentative position but does not offer an evaluation of the issue.

Analysis

Rachel Smith provides multiple, scientific studies that indicate the negative effects of global warming and punctuates her sentences with exclamation marks; thus, she uses factual data and punctuation to create a sense of urgency in readers and to persuade them of the planet's critical status given recent trends in global warming.

This statement judges how effective the author argues her claim by indicating the devices she uses.

Source: <https://writingcenterofprinceton.com/whats-the-difference-between-a-summary-and-a-rhetoricalanalysis/#:~:text=Summaries%20tell%20the%20reader%20what,how%20a%20text%20was%20written>

EXAMPLE 2

Summary

Star Wars is an American movie that was released in 1977. Often described as a "space opera," the movie focuses on the Rebel Alliance, an interstellar revolutionary faction lead by a princess, and its attempts to overthrow the totalitarian regime of the Empire by blowing up its new space station, the Death Star. During the film, Luke Skywalker, a young farm boy, discovers the mysterious cult of "Jedi" that uses a mystical power called the "Force." After joining the rebellion alongside a pirate and his furry friend, Luke helps the Rebels destroy the Death Star.

This summary simply provides an overview of the plot of the movie.

Analysis

In order to truly understand Star Wars, viewers must put it in the correct context—the seemingly simple space opera is really a nearly perfect postmodern film. From the famous opening scroll of the prologue to Vader's samurai helmet to the John Ford-esque Western antihero of Han Solo, the sum total of Star Wars is much more than a summer blockbuster (though it was that too). It is a mash-up of movie references spanning nearly a hundred years that, when assembled, brings to life not only a galaxy far, far away but also an endlessly referential film that rejects a fixed genre in favor of endless contexts and interpretations.

This analysis offers the writer's opinion about the movie, "nearly perfect postmodern film" and concludes with what she thinks the movie is achieving in a broader scope.

Source: <https://www.reynolds.edu/writing-studio/SummaryAnalysisHandout.pdf>