

Lesson 2 Part 1: Introduction

Summarizing Informational Texts

CCLS

RI.8.2: . . . provide an objective summary of the text.

Theme: *Our Living Language*

You've read a great article. How do you tell someone what it's about? You give a **summary**—a brief restatement, in your own words, of the most important ideas. The summary itself is **objective**, meaning you do not include your opinions, beliefs, or judgments.

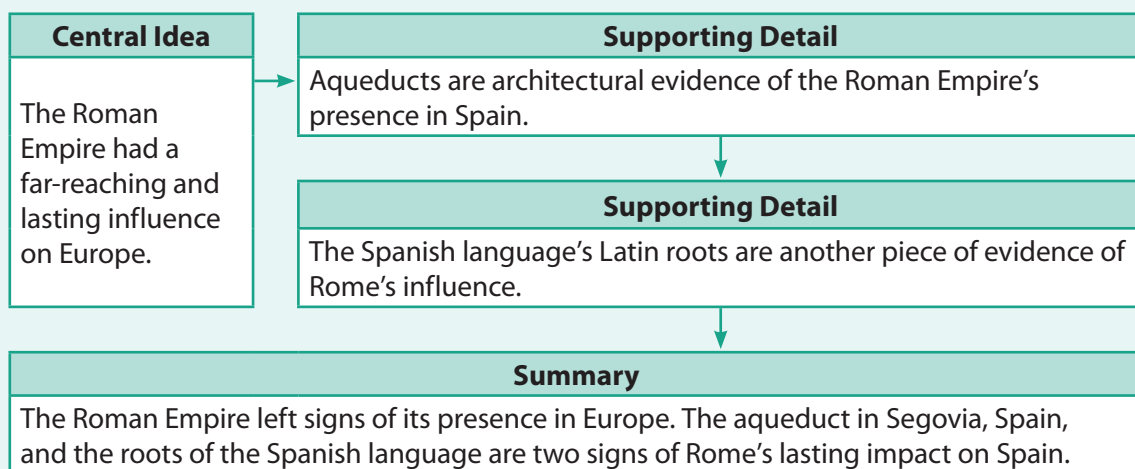
Read the passage below. As you do, think about what you would include in a summary of it.

The influence of the Roman Empire was the single most important force in early Europe. Without the unifying effect of the Empire, regional or tribal differences would have prevailed, and Europe would have remained a land of separate states, each avoiding contact with the others.

Instead, Rome and its culture pulled the different areas together. Spain, for example, was a stable and secure part of the Roman Empire, and Roman culture had a strong influence there. Aqueducts, such as this one in Segovia, Spain, are examples of the Empire's expansive reach. A less visible sign of Roman influence is Spain's language, which is firmly rooted in Latin, the language of the Romans.



Read the passage again, this time underlining the central idea and supporting details. Then read the chart below to see how to summarize informational text.



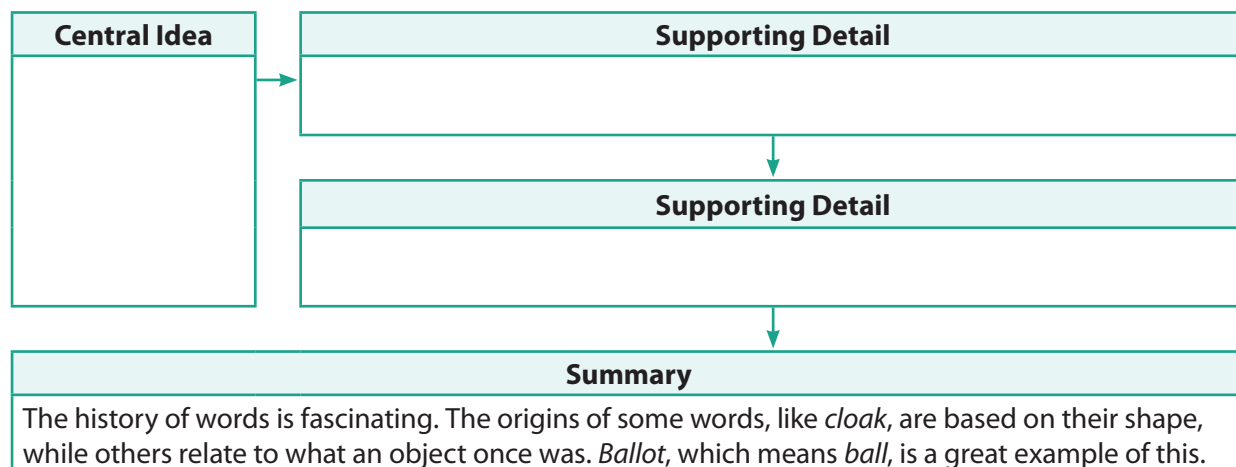
By summarizing a text's central ideas and supporting details, you can check your understanding of and remember the most important points.



Understand English Word Origins *by Pilar Rivera*

Some word origins, or etymologies, are fascinating because they tell us what an object used to be. Think about what a ballot is—the list of candidates that we use when we vote to choose elected officials. Ballots are mostly electronic now, but for several centuries they were paper documents. How did people vote before paper was readily available? They dropped pebbles or small balls in one of two boxes or piles to choose leaders or to make community decisions. *Ballot* comes from the Italian word *pallotte*, which itself is a diminutive form of *palla*, meaning “ball.”

Reread the text and fill in the chart below with information that is used in the summary.



With a partner, discuss how you'd change the summary to improve the statement of the central idea and remove opinions.



Close Reading

The author does not directly state the central idea in the text on page 12 or on this page. In the margin, **jot your ideas** about the implied central idea of this part of the text.

Hint

Which choice restates the central idea and important details and does not include opinions or judgments?

Continue reading the essay about etymology. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 12)

Next, consider the varied origins of some English words related to money. The word *money* itself comes from *Moneta*, another name for the Roman goddess Juno, near whose temple in ancient Rome coins were made. The name of our paper money, *dollar*, originates from a place name. A widely-circulated German coin in the 1500s was called a Joachimstaler (yo-AHK-imz-tall-er). It was named after the town of Joachimstal, near the silver mine from which came the metal to make the coin. The coin's name shortened to "taler," which later become *dollar*, and the meaning broadened to refer to money in general.

Circle the correct answer.

Which of the following is the best summary of the text on this page?

- A** The English word *dollar* originates from ancient Rome, and the English word *money* originates from a German coin.
- B** Remarkably, ancient Rome was one of several sources of English money words. Another source was sixteenth-century Germany.
- C** The origins of English money words are varied. Some words, like *money*, are from Rome, while others, like *dollar*, have German roots.
- D** The origins of money-related words are interesting. For example, *money* comes from the name of the Roman goddess Juno.



Show Your Thinking

Why is the answer you chose the best summary of this part of the text?

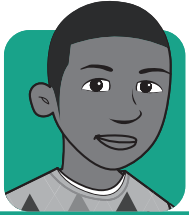


With a partner, take turns objectively summarizing the entire essay about word origins. Use your own words and avoid making judgments or giving your personal opinions about the text.



Read the report. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

Genre: Report



The first sentence of this report seems very important. I'll underline it because I think it might be helpful in understanding the text's central idea. I'll read carefully to find other big ideas as well.

Close Reading

What are the most important ideas in paragraph 2? **Underline** facts and other details that help you understand those ideas.

Each paragraph has an implied central idea that helps develop the central idea of the entire text. **Circle** text in each paragraph that helps you understand its central idea.

The Signs of Language by Simón Darío

- 1 In Nicaragua, deaf children made up a brand-new language—their very own sign language. Their story began the early 1980s, when 500 deaf children enrolled in Nicaragua's first school for the deaf. The children came from hearing families scattered throughout Managua, Nicaragua's capital, and they had no language at all—they spoke neither Spanish nor used sign language.
- 2 People usually learn their first language when they are approximately two years old. Deaf children in the United States often learn American Sign Language (ASL) because they learn ASL from their parents. In Nicaragua, however, no one “spoke” sign language until recently. Instead, these children communicated by using mimicas, or gestures. Deaf people use mimicas the same way hearing people might use pantomimes to mimic getting a drink or picking up the telephone.
- 3 Soon after the school opened, the children began to adopt very specific gestures to get across particular ideas. The new mimicas meant “Line up,” “Time for lunch,” and “Do you want to play?,” for example. Before long, the teachers noticed that the children were communicating among themselves in an unusual way. These deaf schoolchildren were creating a new language, and the number and complexity of the signs were expanding with every passing day.
- 4 Over several years, the children developed rules on how to combine the signs. With new signs and rules for putting together sentences, the children made their mimicas into a new language. Today, Nicaraguan Sign Language is still developing and changing, as do all languages. Other Nicaraguan schools for deaf children are teaching it, and it is even becoming a written language. Soon, Nicaragua's deaf children will be able to explain to the world how they created a new language!



Hints

Which choice restates an important idea and does not express an opinion or judgment?

Look back at the important facts you underlined. Which choice includes this information?

What is the central idea of the whole report? What important details help develop this idea?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which sentence would be best to include in a summary of this report?
 - A These students' amazing achievement has made life easier for deaf children all over the world.
 - B Nicaraguan Sign Language has rules for how it is used.
 - C Someone should have thought of a way to help these children communicate before the 1980s.
 - D Deaf children in Nicaragua have transformed a simple system of gestures into a complex new language.
- 2 Which of the following choices best summarizes paragraph 2?
 - A People usually learn their first language when they are children. For example, American deaf children learn to speak sign language. In Nicaragua, there was no language for children to learn.
 - B By the time their children are about two years old, parents in the U.S. have usually taught them how to speak or sign. Nicaraguan parents did not teach their deaf children any language at all.
 - C Children usually learn their first language from their parents around age two. Because no sign language existed in Nicaragua, deaf children communicated using gestures, or mimicas.
 - D It was a challenge for Nicaraguan children to communicate because their parents didn't teach them. They struggled and had to use simple gestures instead of a real language.

- 3 Summarize the report. Include its central idea and three supporting details.



Read the social studies article. Then answer the questions that follow.

from “Language Change”

by Nicole Mahoney, National Science Foundation online

1 In some ways, it is surprising that languages change. After all, they are passed down through the generations reliably enough for parents and children to communicate with each other. Yet linguists find that all languages change over time—albeit at different rates. For example, Japanese has changed relatively little over 1,000 years. English, on the other hand, evolved rapidly in just a few centuries. Many present-day speakers find Shakespeare’s sixteenth century texts difficult and Chaucer’s fourteenth century *The Canterbury Tales* nearly impossible to read.

FROM <i>THE CANTERBURY TALES</i>	TRANSLATION
WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote, And bathed every veyne in swich licour, Of which vertu engendred is the flour. . . .	When April with its showers sweet Has pierced the drought of March to the root And bathed every vein with that liquid By whose power is produced the flower. . . .

Why They Change

2 Languages change for a variety of reasons. Large-scale shifts often occur in response to social, economic and political pressures. History records many examples of language change fueled by invasions, colonization and migration. Even without these kinds of influences, a language can change dramatically if enough users alter the way they speak it.

3 Frequently, the needs of speakers drive language change. New technologies, industries, products and experiences simply require new words. Plastic, cell phones and the Internet didn’t exist in Shakespeare’s time, for example. By using new and emerging terms, we all drive language change. But the unique way that individuals speak also fuels language change. That’s because no two individuals use a language in exactly the same way. The vocabulary and phrases people use depend on where they live, their age, education level, social status and other factors. Through our interactions, we pick up new words and sayings and integrate them into our speech. Teens and young adults for example, often use different words and phrases from their parents. Some of them spread through the population and slowly change the language.

4 No two individuals use a language in exactly the same way. The vocabulary and phrases people use are linked to where they live, their age, education level, social status and sometimes to their membership in a particular group or community.

Types of Change

5 Three main aspects of language change over time: vocabulary, sentence structure and pronunciations. Vocabulary can change quickly as new words are borrowed from other languages, or as words get combined or shortened. Some words are even created by mistake. As noted in the Linguistic Society of America’s publication *Is English Changing?*, *pea* is one such example. Up until about 400 years ago, *pease* referred to either a single



pea or many peas. At some point, people mistakenly assumed that the word *pease* was the plural form of pea, and a new word was born. While vocabulary can change quickly, sentence structure—the order of words in a sentence—changes more slowly. Yet it’s clear that today’s English speakers construct sentences very differently from Chaucer and Shakespeare’s contemporaries (see [table] above). Changes in sound are somewhat harder to document, but at least as interesting. For example, during the so-called “Great Vowel Shift”¹ 500 years ago, English speakers modified their vowel pronunciation dramatically. This shift represents the biggest difference between the pronunciations of so called Middle and Modern English.

Agents of Change

6 Before a language can change, speakers must adopt new words, sentence structures and sounds, spread them through the community and transmit them to the next generation. According to many linguists—including David Lightfoot, NSF² assistant director for social, behavioral and economic sciences—children serve as agents for language change when, in the process of learning the language of previous generations, they internalize it differently and propagate a different variation of that language.

7 Linguists study language change by addressing questions such as these: Can we trace the evolutionary path of a language? How do language changes spread through communities? How do historical circumstances influence language change? What is the relationship between language learning and change?

Paths of Change

8 NSF researcher Anthony Kroch of the University of Pennsylvania is trying to understand how language change spreads through populations. With collaborator Beatrice Santorini, he is compiling an electronic collection of Modern English texts covering the time period from 1700 to 1914 (the beginning of World War I). The completed “corpus,” as it is known, will complement three others created independently over the past decade by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of York, England. The existing works—which span 900 years of English history—contain more than 4.5 million words of text carefully tagged and annotated for linguistic features. The publicly available collection gives researchers a standardized, searchable document to track changes in the English language over time. It helps them explore language shifts in a historical context and examine the link between language learning and change.

¹ During the Great Vowel Shift of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, English speakers gradually changed the way they pronounced vowels.

² National Science Foundation

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Which sentence could be used in a summary of paragraph 5?

- A** Studying how the sounds in a language change is just as interesting as studying how vocabulary changes.
- B** Vocabulary changes when people borrow words from other languages, combine or shorten words, or make mistakes.
- C** No two people actually use language in the exact same way.
- D** Changes in sentence structure are difficult to document.

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number
Correct****3**



- 2 Which sentence should **not** be used in a summary of paragraphs 6 and 7?
- A Linguists study language by asking how language changes spread.
 - B Language changes must be adopted by a community and passed on to other generations.
 - C Children change language by using it differently from previous generations.
 - D Children are the best and most effective agents of language change.

- 3 Look at paragraph 8. What central idea do the sentences in this paragraph support?
- A Researchers study language changes in different communities.
 - B Researchers are compiling vast collections of texts that will help them explore shifts in language.
 - C Researchers use language to understand English history.
 - D Researchers have discovered a link between language learning and change.

- 4 Summarize the relationship between individual speakers and language change. Use at least **two** details from the text in your response.



Self Check

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 1.