

Summarizing/Paraphrasing



When students finish reading a text selection, they are often asked to summarize what they have read. To many students, this means copying what they read in the textbook. However, to **summarize** actually means that students should rewrite what they have read in their own words, including only a general overview of the reading. Summarizing involves breaking down content into small pieces.

Sometimes students confuse summarizing and paraphrasing. The main difference between the two is that summarizing leaves out most supporting details or examples. **Paraphrasing**, on the other hand, includes most details, but it uses different words to describe them. Both summaries and paraphrases, however, are written in the student's own words.

To summarize a reading, students should

- focus on the main idea;
- avoid the inclusion of details, examples, and descriptive details; and
- use concise language.

Summarizing/Paraphrasing

To Teach students to summarize, use Graphic Organizer 25 and Selection 21. You may want to make a transparency of the graphic organizer to use as you lead a discussion of the steps in the left column.

1. Make a copy of Graphic Organizer 25 and Selection 21 for each student.
2. Have students read Selection 21. Tell them to write down any important words or ideas in the second box on the graphic organizer as they read the article.
3. When they finish, ask them to look at the words and ideas they wrote down and identify the main idea of the reading. Record their idea(s) in the first box on the graphic organizer.
4. Lead a general class discussion and come to consensus on the critical words and ideas that must be included in a summary of the article.
5. Make a class list of those words or ideas on a transparency of Graphic Organizer 25.
6. Classify the main words or essential ideas. (Note: You may want to use Graphic Organizer 3.)
7. Tell students to use the key words and ideas and write a summary statement of the material in the third box on the graphic organizer.
8. Compare the summary with the original reading.

Summarizing

1. What is the main idea of the reading?

To describe the form of government found in the United States

2. What are the key words or essential ideas in the reading?

representative democracy

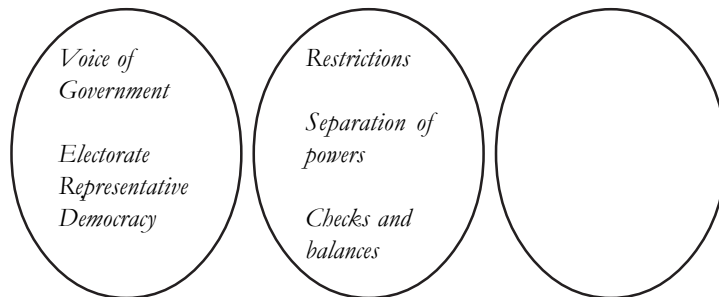
electorate

constitutionalism

checks and balances

separation of powers

3. Classify the key words or essential ideas.



4. Write a summary of the reading.

The United States government is a representative democracy where citizens choose representatives to make laws for them. The representatives must follow guidelines that tell them what they can and cannot do. The U.S. Constitution limits the power of any one group by providing a system of checks and balances to ensure a separation of powers among the three branches of government.

To apply the strategy, have students read other (and longer) passages of text and use Graphic Organizer 25 to develop a summary of the reading.

To extend the strategy, have students outline a passage in the textbook. Develop a summary from the outline.

Summarizing/Paraphrasing

Selection 15 - The United States Government

If the United States were a direct democracy, then each individual in the country would be directly involved in making decisions about what the government should or should not do. That seemed a bit impractical to our founding fathers, so they made our government a **representative democracy**. The citizens elect or appoint others to represent them in making decisions about what the government should do. The **electorate** (voters) choose the individuals who will be a part of government and represent the people.

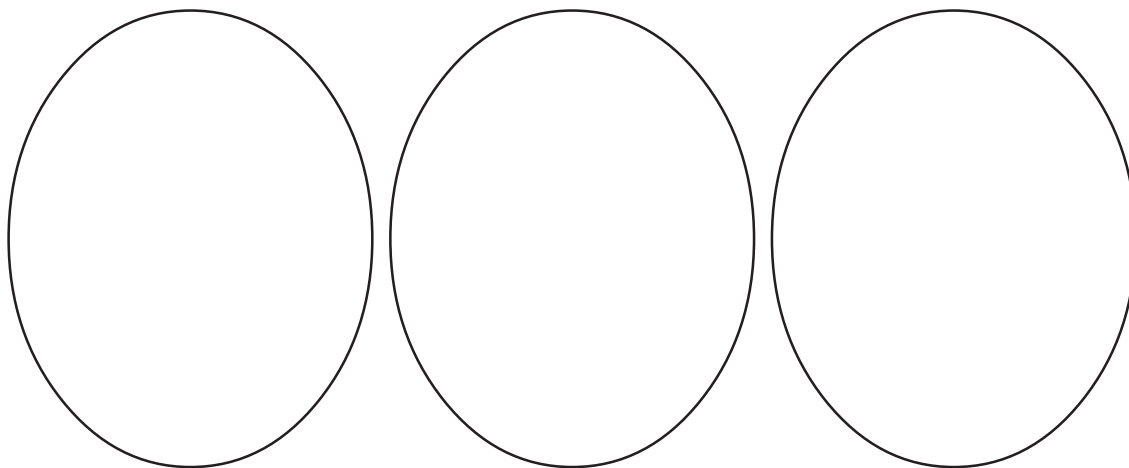
The second basic principle of American government is **constitutionalism**. The representatives selected by the voters cannot just make up laws or rules as they see fit. They are bound by the federal and state constitutions. These written documents — the U.S. Constitution and the constitutions of the states — describe the rights of the people and the framework of the government.

When the U.S. Constitution was ratified by the states, it established a national government that was made up of three branches—the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. Responsibilities for government were divided among the three branches in what is known as a **separation of powers**. Separating government powers creates a “limited government.” In addition, each branch of government was given some power to control or prevent some actions of the other two branches. This process is known as a system of **checks and balances**. The checks and balances ensure that no one branch becomes too powerful.

Graphic Organizer 25

Summarizing/Paraphrasing

1. What is the main idea of the reading?
2. What are the key words or essential ideas in the reading?
3. Classify the key words or essential ideas.



4. Write a summary of the reading.