

Critical Reading and Summaries

Directions: Below you will find two passages. Follow the directions and write a summary paragraph for each passage. Be sure to take note of the new vocabulary for each passage. Bring in the typed paragraphs to class Monday.

KEY VOCABULARY

hamper
mimicking
take the edge off
stigma
neurotransmitters.

Summary Checklist:

1. Read the passage the first time to get the general sense of what it is saying. As you read, try to answer the following questions:
2. What is the passage about?
3. What are its central ideas and its key supporting points?
4. What conclusion, if any, does the author arrive at?
5. Write down the key words and phrases that come to mind as you answer these questions.

The Truth About Medical Marijuana

Cannabis has been used medicinally for over 4,000 years. Until recently, scientists knew little about how the drug works on the brain. It was made illegal in the United States in the 1930's, and this has hampered further research. However, recent clinical studies show that the active ingredient THC works by mimicking certain of the brain's neurotransmitters. The same properties that give users a euphoric feeling can also stop pain and treat various illnesses.

The Benefits Of Medical Marijuana

Studies have shown that medical marijuana can work well as a pain killer and anti-emetic (anti nausea). It also helps to induce appetite. These qualities are helpful for patients suffering from cancer, especially after getting chemotherapy. These qualities can also help AIDS patients. Drugs that treat AIDS have side effects, and medical marijuana is effective in taking the edge off of them.

Specifically, THC may help patients who suffer from glaucoma. Studies show that it lowers intraocular pressure, thus giving a small bit of relief to those who suffer from the disease. It may also help folks who suffer from multiple sclerosis. It relieves pain and treats plasticity, and the latest trials show that it may help in preventing the neurodegeneration associated with the disease.

Another plus is that it's relatively safe. While it's not true that the drug is completely safe with no side effects, it is safer than many prescription drugs. It carries no risk of physical addiction, no risk of death, and the only physical health effects are due to the fact that it's smoked. Many experts feel that marijuana is safer than alcohol.

Why All The Interest Now?

The idea of medical marijuana has been around for years, but only now is it finally being taken seriously. Why the sudden interest? In general, society's attitude toward the drug has softened as the war on drugs focuses on more harmful drugs like crystal meth, crack cocaine and heroin. This trend goes along with a decrease in the stigma associated with the drug. It was once thought of as a drug for hippies and degenerates, but now it's just as likely your next door neighbor may smoke it!

Clinical trials continue. There is a lot we still don't know about how the drug works. The United States has been slow to accept the idea of medical marijuana, but in the coming years it's sure to become an everyday reality all the time.

Active Reading:

First reading of the passage:

1. Read the passage the first time to get the general sense of what it is saying. As you read, try to answer the following questions:
2. What is the passage about?
3. What are its central ideas and its key supporting points?
4. What conclusion, if any, does the author arrive at?
5. Write down the key words and phrases that come to mind as you answer these questions.
6. These words and phrases should eventually find their way into your written response, but you will need to write them down first because otherwise you will forget them.

Second reading of the passage:

1. As you read the passage a second time, **underline the author's main point**, and other major points that appear most important
2. **Separate the main ideas** from the **specific evidence** {such as **dates, numbers, statistics, examples**) the author uses to support them. Details are not usually the main points.

KEY VOCABULARY

republic
host
ban
revenue
objectionable
revenue
accompany
fulfillment

Writing a summary in response to a passage

The summary is the first of the three writing tasks that make up the written response. In it, you are asked to identify in your own words the author's main ideas. You are asked to use your own words in order to demonstrate that you understand the passage: If you can explain it in your own way, then you know what it means. Don't include ideas that are not in the passage.

Your summary should focus on the main points of the passage. **Avoid mentioning dates, statistics, numbers, or names** because they are usually used as evidence to support the author's main ideas. Later on, you may want to refer to the supporting details, but the summary **should concentrate on the author's main ideas, not the details that support them.**

For example, in the lottery passage, you should avoid mentioning the financing of the Jamestown settlement in 1612 by the English government. This is evidence that supports the key point that the lottery has played an important role in American history because it generates income for government operations and projects.

The Lottery Is for Losers

by Mary Pickford

America was born and raised on the lottery. In 1612, the English government held a lottery to finance the first European settlement in the New World in Jamestown, Virginia. During the 18th and 19th centuries, as America grew from a colony into a republic, lotteries financed its wars, its places of worship and education, and a host of other public projects. Eventually, however, the lottery became associated with gambling, and in 1892 the Supreme Court banned lotteries altogether. In 1964, states revived the lottery as a way of generating revenue without raising taxes. Apparently, gambling was not so objectionable as long as it produced social benefits.

The biggest problem with the lottery is that it makes no economic sense to play it. The odds of winning are 1 in 14-17 5 million, depending on the game. And yet, millions of people spend billions of dollars a year hoping to beat these odds. Seductive advertisements tell us that, "You've got to be in it to win it," but what they do not tell us is that no one ever wins the lottery because it's just not designed for winning.

The lottery does, however, begin to make sense once we recognize its value as entertainment. Who can deny the thrill that accompanies the purchase of the magic tickets, or the drama as the numbers roll down the chute? Even the disappointment of losing somehow teases us by reminding us of the power of our desires. The lottery represents the American dream of limitless wealth with no effort and little investment. It makes the dream possible even as it makes the reality impossible. Let's not forget that the function of the lottery is, and always has been, the financing of the operations of local and state government, not the fulfillment of the dreams of those who are addicted to it.

Once upon a time, the cigarette and liquor industries were required to disclose the dangers of their products. It's about time that the government agencies that run the lottery were held accountable for the realities of their product. They need to make certain things clear: Who really benefits from the lottery? Where does all the money really go? And why doesn't anyone ever win?

