

# Summary vs. Analysis

## What is Summary?

Summary strictly focuses on the overall plot and characters of a work. Summary can be described as a retelling of the material you have read. The summary should provide your reader with an overview of the text in the briefest manner possible.

## Summary Guidelines

- Only mention the important plot details.
- Keep your writing in the present tense.
- Make the summary as brief as possible—omit unnecessary details.
- Although you can use citations in summary, they are not necessary.
- There should be no original thoughts or interpretations in your summary.

## What is Analysis?

Analysis examines specific elements within a text. As the writer, you must dissect aspects of the text and closely examine them for purpose, effect, or meaning. Analysis will rely on the use of quotations and summary to show the writer's understanding and interpretation of the material.

## Analysis Guidelines

- Assume the reader is familiar with the plot of the text—do not spend time writing summary.
- Analysis does not have to be in chronological order.
- As the writer, you should examine, evaluate, dissect, interpret, and read between the lines to create your analysis.
- Discuss textual elements in full detail.

## What to Analyze: Elements of the Text

- **Theme** - central idea of the text.
- **Symbolism** - when an author uses an object to represent something other than the original object. For example, the color red could be used to represent anger.
- **Allegory** - the text can be interpreted on multiple levels of meaning (primary and secondary).
- **Characters** - any character within a text can be analyzed.
  - ⇒ Characters that can be classified are archetypal characters—they speak and behave in ways typical for how they are classified. For example, a character classified as a villain will behave and act in ways common for that classification.
  - ⇒ Additionally, characters can be analyzed by comparing and contrasting their behaviors and actions—even if they cannot be placed in a specific archetype!

## Example of Summary

*Hamlet* is one of William Shakespeare's famous tragedies. Many important themes are present in *Hamlet* such as revenge, deception, and loyalty. The play takes place in Denmark, specifically Elsinore Castle. The protagonist of the play is Hamlet. One night, the ghost of Hamlet's newly deceased father confronts Hamlet and explains the cause of his untimely death, murder! The ghost explains to Hamlet that Claudius—Hamlet's uncle and the new King of Denmark—poisoned him. The rest of the play chronicles Hamlet's plots and attempts to avenge his father's death. By the end of the play, Hamlet successfully kills Claudius. Like a true tragedy, however, Hamlet's revenge results in the loss of his own life.

## Example of Analysis

In one of Hamlet's final attempts in using his "madness," he once again tries to get to the bottom of Gertrude's untrustworthy actions towards his father and himself. In Shakespeare's Closet Scene, Hamlet unleashes a tirade of questions at Gertrude even after slaying Polonius. He connects his rash action of slaying Polonius with the actions of both Claudius and Gertrude as he screams, "A bloody deed—almost as bad, good-mother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother" (3.4. 27-8). **Hamlet is once again implying to Gertrude that treason consumes Claudius' reign and that she is a primary part of it! He then goes even further to show a connection between his mad deed and her actions. "Good-mother" represents the irony of Gertrude's actions as both a wife and mother in the eyes of Hamlet as he analyzes her sins. Hamlet's mad actions and words are not one of hate towards his mother. Instead, he is filled with disappointment and knows that he cannot even trust the woman who gave birth to him. He cannot comprehend how the woman who he thought loved his father so dearly could be over his untimely death so quickly. Gertrude's loyalty to Claudius and disloyalty to Hamlet only make the wounds deeper, fueling his performed madness.**

The underlined text represents the small amount of background information needed to jumpstart your analysis. The italicized text represents textual evidence while the bold text is the analysis of the textual evidence. (Note: As seen above, analysis should outweigh summary).