

SAR (Summary, Analysis, Response) Guidelines, 2015 / Ramsey

--SARs should be exactly three paragraphs long and no longer than two typed, double-spaced pages.

--Include a title: SAR #1: "Title of Essay" (or SAR #2: "Title of Essay," etc.)

--SARs should be free of errors in conventions, written in present tense in an academic tone (often more formal than the tone of the essay you're writing about), and MLA formatted.

Paragraph 1 (of 3): SUMMARIZE. See page 4.

Summarize the ideas, mainly with your own words, including BRIEF (2-5 word) cited direct quotations when necessary. Include the author's first and last names—correctly spelled—as well as the essay title in quotation marks. This should be the shortest of the three paragraphs.

Paragraph 2 (of 3): ANALYZE. See pages 5 – 7.

Identify parts of the reading, including . . .

- a. The **context** in which the essay was written (a contribution to discussion or debate about what?)
- b. The **audience** for whom the essay was intended.
- c. The **purpose** of the essay. (Remember, most essays have at least *some* element of **persuasion**.)
- d. The **organizational form(s)** of the essay. Don't describe it—identify which TYPE it is.
- e. The **tone(s)** of the essay. Include a "blend" quotation proving the strongest of the essay's tones. See pages 8 - 9 for information about blending quotations.
- f. The **tools** used to accomplish the essay's purpose. Identify at least THREE tools, and include a "blend" quotation that illustrates at least one of these tools.
- g. The **thesis** of essay. The thesis could be explicitly stated in the essay or more obliquely implied.

Include discussion of **all seven things** above (a-g, *plus* direct quotations for tone and tools), in the order outlined above.

Paragraph 3 (of 3): RESPOND / REACT.

Give a personal response to the reading. Some things you can talk about include . . . What ideas do you find interesting? Why? (Even if you don't like the essay, you should still be able to find something *interesting* about it.) Do you agree with the author's "message"? You can also evaluate and/or challenge the essay in this paragraph. Is the author's purpose achieved? How well does the author prove her/his argument? What could someone on the other side of this argument say, and how valid would that criticism be? What flaws in logic do you see in the author's argument?

This is the only paragraph where you should use the first-person "I."

A Student

Lastname 1

Instructor Ramsey

Writing 122

23 September 2015

SAR #1: "The Culture of American Film"

In "The Culture of American Film," Julia Newman argues that analyzing movies for "cultural significance" (294) can lead to greater understanding of changes in our society.

This essay was written in the context of a growing movement in academia toward viewing popular films as literature and analyzing movies as cultural text. Newman's intended audience is probably university-level scholars, but her ideas are accessible to anyone interested in examining film as it suggests underlying societal structures. One purpose of this essay is to explain how to view films as indications of what's going on in our society, but Newman also wants to persuade the reader that there's more to movies than just entertainment. The organizational form of the essay is classification, as Newman places movies into categories of those that do reflect changes in our society and those that do not, then she compares and contrasts these categories. In addition, the essay employs a chronological organizational form in which Newman describes the plots of various movies from 50 years ago to the present. The tone of the essay is consistently encouraging and knowledgeable. There's a sort of majestic tone to the introduction, too, as Newman pronounces that the "significance of storytelling has diminished over the decades, and cinema has risen to take its place" (291). Tools Newman uses to accomplish her purpose include specific examples of film analyses, an impressive balance between academic and accessible word choices, and concessions to the opposition, like when she writes, "However, it is easy to overstate these connections" (292). The thesis of the essay appears on page 298: "But as cinematic forms of storytelling overtake written forms of expression, the study of movies as complex text bearing cultural messages and values is becoming more and more important." In other words, we can learn a lot about structural shifts within our culture through studying popular film as literary text.

I found the ideas in this essay quite compelling. The essay makes me want to examine the movies of ten or twenty years ago to consider what they suggested about our society then. The essay also makes me think about films that have been nominated for Academy Awards this year, like *The Artist*, and what the popularity of this silent movie says about changes taking place in our culture right now. I do wish Newman had used more current examples; most of her examples are so old that I've never seen them. I also wonder how much knowledge of history is necessary to really apply her thesis. . . . I don't think I'll ever have a strong enough understanding of American history to apply Newman's ideas to movies that have been popular in the past, and I can't imagine trying to examine currently popular movies for what they suggest about cultural shifts that are happening right now. It seems like the type of analysis she encourages is only possible in retrospect and with a strong understanding of movements in American history.

Paragraph 1 (of 3): SUMMARIZE.

Summarize the author's argument, mainly with your own words. Include the author's first and last names—correctly spelled—as well as the essay title in quotation marks. This should be the shortest of the paragraphs. Keep your summary in the *present* tense.

Note: The verbs you use in summarizing an essay suggest an author's purpose and can imply a judgment of that purpose.

If you say, "The author . . ."

- **Tells"** (suggests the author's purpose is to explain or narrate)
- **Explains"** (suggests author's purpose is to explain or inform)
- **Argues"** (suggests author is trying to persuade)
- **Claims"** (suggests author is trying to persuade; further suggests you don't buy what the author is saying)
- **Informs"** (suggests dryly expository writing)
- **Persuades"** (suggests persuasive writing, duh)
- **Exposes"** (suggests author's purpose is to investigate something hidden)
- **Teaches"** (suggests author is explaining or informing)
- **Narrates"** (suggests author is telling a personal story)
- **Relates"** (suggests author's purpose is to explain through comparison)
- **Distinguishes"** (suggests author's purpose is to explain by contrasting topics)
- **Compares"** (suggests author's purpose is to draw similarities between topics)
- **Contrasts"** (suggests author's purpose is to find differences between topics)
- **Warns"** (suggests author's purpose is to persuade through caution)
- **Suggests"** (suggests gently persuasive writing)
- **Implies"** (suggests persuasive writing; further suggests you're skeptical about the author's motivations and/or implications)

Note: Summaries are NOT like movie trailers, designed to entice the viewer into thinking there's something interesting coming. Instead, summaries should explain clearly and briefly what those interesting ideas ARE and what the author's argument is.

Sample summaries

In "The Culture of American Film," Julia Newman claims that analyzing movies for "cultural significance" (294) can lead to greater understanding of our society and of changes in our society.

In "Nothing But Net," Mark McFadden argues that instead of protecting "work rules and the rules of common decency" (paragraph 1), internet spying technology is ultimately ineffectual and creates an atmosphere of mistrust.

Step 2 (of 3): ANALYZE.

Context: This essay is a contribution to a larger discussion or debate about what? What events or ideas prompted the author to write this essay?

Audience: Who is likely to read this essay? Where was it originally published, and what type of publication is/was it? Who can access this language?

Purpose*: To entertain? To **persuade***? To congratulate?
To instruct? To warn? To scold?
To inform or explain? Some **combination** of these?

Organizational Form: Chronological? (in order of time)
Cause and effect? (something causes something)
Comparison and contrast? (similarities and differences)
Classification? (putting things into categories)
Some **combination** of these?

Tone:** Resigned? Antagonistic? Humorous? Smug?
Assured? Happy? Confident? Amused?
Sympathetic? Urgent? Encouraging? Clinical?
Frustrated? Energetic? Pleading? Angry?
Detached? Ambivalent? Apathetic? Reassuring?
Some **other** tone or a **combination** of these?

Tools: Facts and figures? Illustrations?
Direct quotations? Brevity? (shortness)
Imagery? Analogies?
Expert testimony? Humor or sarcasm?
Personal experience? Similes?
Questions directed at reader? Fallacies? (flaws in logic—don't
Headings / subheadings? identify these as tools unless you
Concessions to the opposition? plan to criticize the essay in your
Allusions to other works? personal-reaction paragraph)

Thesis: The one or two sentences that best summarize THE ARGUMENT or the POINT of the essay. You can quote this exactly or put it in your own words.

Note: Professional writing does NOT usually look like the traditional five-paragraph form.

***All essays have an element of persuasion.**

****Tone usually changes as the essay proceeds.**

Name _____

Essay Analysis:

_____ *Fill in the name of the essay (in quotation marks) and the author's full name*

Use your “How to Analyze an essay” handout and the essay itself to help you fill out the blanks below.

I. Summarize the essay with one to three sentences. The summary should include the author's full name (correctly spelled), the title of essay (correctly punctuated), and the author's main argument. The summary should be written in the present tense and with an academic tone.

Example: In “The Culture of American Film,” Julia Newman claims that analyzing movies for “cultural significance” (294) can lead to greater understanding of our society and of changes in our society.

II. Analyze the essay by filling in the blanks below.

A. **Context**: This essay is a contribution to a larger discussion or debate about . . .

B. **Audience**: People most likely to read the essay and agree with the author are _____

C. **Purpose**: The author wrote this essay in order to . . . (circle one **or more**)

entertain explain/inform **persuade*** warn congratulate

instruct scold other _____

**Every essay has an element of persuasion. I hope you circled “persuade” above.*

D. The **organizational form** of the essay is . . . (check and explain at least **two** forms)

_____ **chronological** (from _____ to _____)

_____ **compare and contrast**: author examines similarities and differences between

_____ and _____
_____ **classification:** author puts types of _____
into these *categories*: _____

_____ **cause and effect:** author claims _____
_____ cause/contribute to

_____ **some other form best described as** _____

E. The author's **tone** (attitude toward the subject of the essay) at the beginning of the essay
can best be described as _____ and _____,
then in page/paragraph number _____, it changes to _____
and _____. The concluding tone is _____.

F. **Tools** the author uses to accomplish his/her purpose(s) include _____,
_____, and _____.

G. The author's **thesis** appears in paragraph/page number ____ and is (copy or put in your own words):

(If you copied the thesis, did you put the borrowed words in quotation marks? Did you include the paragraph number or page number in parentheses?)