Summarize

**Teacher Instructions:**

1. Model this technique for students with a short piece of text, explaining the process as you go (e.g. what questions did you ask to help you create the summary?)
2. Instruct students to ask these questions when summarizing a text:
   1. Who did what?
   2. Where and how did the event(s) take place?
   3. What caused the action?
   4. What was the consequence of the action?
   5. What changes occurred between the beginning and the end of the passage you read?
   6. What are the crucial moments? (Why are they crucial?)
   7. Does this text operate on multiple levels? If so, how can you succinctly describe these levels in your summary?
   8. What was the sequence of the events?
   9. Is this event/action different from what happened in the past?
3. Inform students that words to consider when writing a summary are: ***describe, classify, explain, discuss, state, outline, illustrate, define, compare, contrast.***
4. Have them write a five-minute paper about the subject based on their reading. Have them write this paper in the Cornell note-taking format ***(Tools for Thought)***  so they can return later to make additional notes and connections in the available space.
5. Use the index card summary. At a transitional moment (e.g. between chapters or acts), pass out 3x5 index cards and ask students to explain what they just read to another in their own words.
6. Check for accuracy. Whether using the 3x5 cards or another technique, you need to check their summaries for accuracy. The summary or paraphrase offers useful information about their comprehension: e.g., if their summary is too general, simple, or plain wrong, you know that you should not proceed to the next chapter or act.
7. Use previous student examples to show them what a successful and unsuccessful performance looks like.
8. Make sure students include in the summary crucial events, people, actions, features, characteristics, themes, developments, qualities, authorial information (e.g., perspective, biases, intentions). Students can also include comparisons, connections, opinions, and speculations about what might have happened or what will happen depending on the assignment guidelines.

**Student Directions for Summarizing:**

1. Pre-read the text, getting a quick sense of it and its main idea.
2. Annotate the text (using underlines or highlighters if possible; otherwise with Post-Its, notes, or outlines), keeping in mind what information will you useful to you when you are summarizing it.
3. Distinguish between information and details – detail are generally left out to make room for crucial information. Keep the following questions in mind when finding the information:
   1. Who did what?
   2. Where and how did the event(s) take place?
   3. What caused the action?
   4. What was the consequence of the action?
   5. What changes occurred between the beginning and the end of the passage you read?
   6. What are the crucial moments? (Why are they crucial?)
   7. Does this text operate on multiple levels? If so, how can you succinctly describe these levels in your summary?
   8. What was the sequence of the events?
   9. Is this event/action different from what happened in the past?
4. Write a paragraph-long summary organized around the key information.
5. Skip a few lines after your paragraph summary. Write the same summary in one sentence.
6. Trade summaries and, imagining they had never read the text that was summarized, explain why they would or would not be able to understand what it was about based on this summary.
7. Add information or write down questions on your partner’s summary that will help them improve it.
8. Return the summary to your partner and have them use the new information – questions, suggestions, details, expanded knowledge from your partner reading your summary – to revise your original summary.

* **Use signal words, at least while learning how to write summaries, for example: first, then, finally, until you get the hang of it and your writing develops and becomes more sophisticated.**