A summary is a short form of a text. How short? It depends on how long the text is. Remember reading a long novel and trying to summarize the story. How long was it? Or, have you ever tried to summarize the story of a film immediately after coming out of the cinema hall? Probably, you have. How long was it? Obviously, not as long as the film was. You have heard a newsreader giving a summary of the speech of the President or the Prime Minister or the Finance Minister during a prime-time newscast. In all the above cases, what one does is: 'give a short account of a long text without missing the main points!' This is the basic point to note about practicing a summary.

The nature of a text also determines the convenience of practicing a summary. A personal/autobiographical text may contain the writer's minute reflections and therefore may have very little to draw into a summary. But, a current affairs newspaper article may have highly condensed thoughts. This would pose a challenge upon the reader in deciding as to what is 'not important'. And, a long technical document (like a report, proposal, or dissertation) has specific sections easily anticipated and identified by a reader. Summary of such text is guided by formal rules on the structure (components and length).

A 'classroom' summary practice includes the one-third/one-fourth standard.

**Is summary literal comprehension? Interpretation? Critical thinking?**

None of these, in fact. A critical/literary summary would come closer to them. We are not venturing into a discussion on this aspect here. Our goal is to carefully "shorten a text without missing the main points."

There may still remain some confusion about summary (S) and Literal comprehension (LC), though. Let me contrast them, for your use:

S is a short version: LC is not necessarily short.
S is what is there: LC is what you 'comprehended' from there.
S limits the length: LC does not.
S keeps most of the original text's language: LC is retelling of the text in your own language.

**What do we retain from the original text?**

- the focus statement/thesis/claim
- 'discipline' words
- 'theme' words
- technical terms (field-specific jargons)

**What do we remove?**

The following, but CAREFULLY!
- examples (facts and opinions)
- references (graphs/charts/tables)
- citations/quotations
- proverbs
- anecdotes

We either remove or replace the following
- idioms
- phrases

Replacing phrases and idioms we save ourselves from over-using words. Think: Which one is better -- "taking into consideration" or "considering"? "because of the fact that" or "because"? "pass away" or "die"?

What are other fundamentals?

Do not destroy the genre of the original text. A story must remain a story even after becoming short. Keep the tone of the original text. What will happen if 'tragedy' ends up becoming 'hilarious'?

This is all for it, this is quite short. Hope to hear from you in the class if you have any queries. This blog only complements a classroom discussion, but does not replace it.

You can also write your confusions as comments.