Lesson 2 Part 1: Introduction

Summarizing Informational Texts

Theme: *Invasive Species*

What do you do when a friend sees you reading and asks, "What is that article about?" You don't recite the article word for word or read it aloud. The best response is to give a **summary**, or a brief restatement of the article's important details and central ideas in your own words. A summary should be **objective**, or free of any opinions or personal beliefs.

Read the news report below. Think about what its most important points might be.

Now read the report again. Underline the most important details in the report.

Read the chart below to see how to summarize information.

Central Idea
A non-native species of fish, silver carp, can injure people.

Important Detail	Important Detail	Important Detail
Silver carp "fly" over the water.	Silver carp are a non-native species.	A silver carp injured a water skier.

Summary
A non-native fish species known as silver carp is dangerous because it can cause injuries to people.

Good readers recognize central ideas, whether stated or implied, and identify important details in a text. They use those ideas and details when they summarize the text, and they do not include any nonessential information or opinions.

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Read the first two paragraphs of a government bulletin about invasive species.

Genre: **Public Document**

The Invaders *by Mark Sanchez*

During the early 1900s, two kinds of invasive organisms turned up in waterways in the United States. One was the Asiatic clam, a fast-growing shellfish that crowds out other aquatic animals. The other was milfoil, a fast-growing aquatic plant that overcomes and displaces native water plants.

Wildlife officials are seeing once-smooth freshwater beaches littered with sharp, tiny shells. Though Asiatic clams are rarely larger than 1.5 inches across, the sheer number of the shells is cause for concern. The highest populations occur near power and wastewater plants. The clams cause problems by biofouling, or clogging intake valves. Biofouling also occurs in irrigation canals and pipes and drinking water facilities. Repairing damage caused by Asiatic clams is expensive. Experts estimate that the price tag has reached one billion dollars per year in the United States.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: *"How can I best summarize this bulletin?"*

The author presents a central idea in each paragraph but does not state it directly. The important text details support the central idea, so identifying them will help you determine the central idea. This in turn will help you summarize the text.

Reread the bulletin. Underline the important details. Then fill in the missing information below.

Central idea of paragraph 2: Biofouling by Asiatic clams, one type of invasive species in U.S. waterways, causes costly repairs to industrial and agricultural water facilities.

Important detail from the text: _____

_____.

Important detail from the text: _____

_____.

Summary: _____

_____

_____

_____.

With a partner, take turns summarizing this part of the bulletin objectively. Remember, summarizing means restating the central idea and important details *in your own words*.

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Continue reading the government bulletin about invasive species. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

Close Reading

On page 12, the author does not directly state the central idea. Jot your ideas in the margin about the implied central idea of this part of the bulletin.

(continued from page 12)

The fern-like and harmless-looking milfoil has also become a threat. It too can clog valves at water facilities. In addition, milfoil poses problems for recreational water users. Dense growths of the Eurasian native create unfavorable conditions for swimmers, boaters, and fishers. Milfoil grows aggressively and crowds out other vegetation. The resulting ecosystem lacks food sources and habitats for native fish, amphibians, and waterfowl. Milfoil spreads naturally when fragments travel by water currents. It spreads with human help when fragments are carried from one waterway to another on boats and boat trailers.

Hint

Which answer choice restates important details and does not include opinions?

Circle the correct answer.

Which of the following statements best summarizes the text above?

A The annoying milfoil plant does extensive harm to human facilities as well as to fragile ecosystems. It spreads ruthlessly by water current and should be a major concern to outdoor enthusiasts.

B Fern-like and harmless-looking, milfoil is a secret threat. Dense growths of the Eurasian native crowd the waterways, creating unfavorable conditions for swimmers, boaters, and fishers.

C Milfoil, a non-native species of water plant, ruins recreational water activities and heartlessly wipes out food sources and habitats for animals.

D Eurasian milfoil is an invasive species that spreads both naturally and with human help. Milfoil is an "invader" because it can harm water facilities, destroy animal habitats, and crowd out native plants.

Show Your Thinking

Choose an answer choice that includes an opinion. Explain what clues helped you recognize that it was not objective.

_____

_____

With a partner, take turns summarizing the central ideas and important details in the government bulletin. Be sure to avoid using judgments and opinions in your summary.

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Read the scientific account. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

The passage's title is "Kudzu: From Pretty Vine to Invasive Pest." I'm going to look for text that supports the ideas of the vine being "pretty" or a "pest." I'll underline those ideas when I find them.

Close Reading

Paragraph 2 mentions two important details about problems with kudzu. **Circle** phrases that name those two details.

The author describes the rapid growth of kudzu in the last paragraph. **Star** (*) the sentences that explain the problem caused by this plant's size.

Genre: **Scientific Account**

Kudzu: From Pretty Vine to Invasive Pest

by Aaron Hartman

1 Like many plants that are in the news, kudzu originated in Asia. Unlike other invasive species, this plant was purposely brought here and, at first, everyone loved it. At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Japanese government filled its display with plants native to Japan. The attractive kudzu vine, with its large leaves and sweet-smelling blooms, was greatly admired by the Americans. People began planting the vine for decorative purposes. Some years later, kudzu was promoted as forage, or food, for cattle and goats. And during the 1930s and 1940s, the government fostered the spread of kudzu by planting it to control erosion.

2 Modern-day experts agree that kudzu is good for forage. However, it is easily overgrazed, so farmers need to have an alternate food source so that the animals can be removed from the kudzu field to allow the vines time to regrow. And no one denies that kudzu is effective at controlling erosion. However, kudzu vines have a tendency to take over. Farmers and homeowners all over the southeastern United States know that only too well.

3 Kudzu can grow about a foot a day, or approximately 60 feet in a growing season. Huge tap roots help the plant survive dry periods and make kudzu impossible to pull up. The vigorous vines completely cover abandoned fields and trees. The large leaves block out the sun and smother existing plants. As is the case with all invasives, the absence of natural checks and balances is what has turned kudzu from a pretty plant into a noxious weed.

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Hints

Which choice *restates* paragraph 2's central idea and does *not* include opinions or judgments?

To help with question 2, I'll look back at the ideas I underlined.

What is the implied central idea of the whole passage? What important details does each paragraph provide?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1 Which of the following statements best summarizes the central idea and important details of paragraph 2?

A Modern-day experts agree that kudzu is good for forage. Kudzu also is very effective at controlling erosion.

B Kudzu is only of limited value as animal forage. It is also an effective erosion controller, but it can take over in an undesirable way.

C As forage for animals, kudzu is useless because it is easily overgrazed. It is also useless at controlling erosion because it grows too much.

D Farmers and homeowners in the southeastern United States agree that kudzu grows too much to be useful, either as forage or as an erosion control.

2 Which of the following statements best restates one central idea that should be included in a summary of the passage?

A Though once considered a desirable plant, kudzu has invasive tendencies that make it a harmful weed.

B Kudzu has become the most troublesome invasive plant species, partly because it was once thought to be attractive.

C As is the case with other invasives, natural checks and balances are effective at controlling kudzu.

D Kudzu is native to Asia but was brought to the United States on purpose.

3 Write a brief summary of the passage. Use at least three specific details from the passage in your summary.

_____

_____

_____

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Read the scientific account. Then answer the questions that follow.

Python Invasion!

by Leigh Driver

1 For years, the number-one, most feared animal in Florida has been the alligator. But recently the Burmese python has been challenging the alligators' long-held position. Burmese pythons are native to Asia, but they have found a new home in Florida. Their numbers are increasing dramatically. Today they can be found in the wild and in suburbs across the state. Burmese pythons have lightly-colored skin with brown patches, and they are admired for their skin patterns and size. But they are also massive hunters—among the largest top six snakes in the world—and they pose a danger to people, other animals, and the environment.

How Did They Get There?

2 The Burmese python has become more and more popular as a house pet. This caused a surge of imports of the snake to Florida. This is not the first time Florida has become home to a species of reptile intended to be kept as a pet. The state is the adopted home of several types of reptiles. The green iguana and the speckled caiman, a type of alligator, were brought to Florida as family pets. Now, many of these creatures live in the wild. These animals may seem like exotic and fascinating alternatives to the family cat, but they are also very difficult to maintain. People often found them hard to keep at home so they released them to the wild.

3 The same thing is happening with the Burmese python, an animal that begins at a manageable 3 feet long on average but can grow up to 20 feet long and weigh up to 250 pounds. There have been several reports of deaths in homes where pythons are kept. When a python is fully grown, many owners find they can no longer handle their exotic reptile, and they simply release it outdoors.

4 Another factor has been the destructive hurricanes that Florida has suffered over the years. Sometimes storms damage pet stores and animal shelters, and the reptiles get loose. When people bring their other pets to shelters, it is sometimes easier to free the snakes because of overcrowding.

Environmental Impact

5 A python can survive very well in the Florida climate. In fact, the Florida Everglades are the perfect home for these snakes. Some experts estimate that there are up to 100,000 Burmese pythons living in the Everglades alone. But this surge of wild pythons is not without problems.

6 Releasing animals into an environment where they do not belong affects that environment and the species within it. Such animal populations are referred to as non-native species. While few creatures prey on it, the python competes with other animals in the territory. For example, alligators compete for prey with pythons. As these snakes breed and thrive, they threaten the survival of the alligators. Other animal populations may also be harmed by the presence of pythons, and Floridians who are concerned about conservation have publicized the dangers of this situation.

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Danger to People

7 Another growing concern is that the Burmese python can seriously harm people. A python can eat an animal as large as a full-grown deer, and it is extremely difficult to control the powerful creature. Some Floridians believe that keeping these snakes as pets is simply not safe.

What Can Be Done?

8 Scientists and citizens have become more and more worried about the "invasion" of the Burmese python into the Florida wild. There have been proposals to ban the importation of snakes or to make it illegal to keep these animals as pets, but so far no laws have been passed. Some have even proposed destroying the pythons living in the Everglades to get rid of the problem.

Answer Form

1 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
2 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
3 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

Number Correct /3

1 Which of these sentences would most likely **not** be included in a summary of this passage?

A Burmese pythons have light-colored skin with interesting patterns.

B Due to their weight and strength, Burmese pythons may endanger their human owners.

C Some Floridians have made house pets of this exotic species of reptiles.

D Non-native species threaten native animal populations in the Everglades.

2 Read these sentences from the passage.

> Burmese pythons are native to Asia, but they have found a new home in Florida. Their numbers are increasing dramatically. Today they can be found in the wild and in suburbs across the state.

What is the **best** summary of this section of the passage?

A Burmese pythons are now at home in many suburbs in the state of Florida.

B Though Burmese pythons are native to Asia, they now live in Florida's suburbs.

C Native to Asia, Burmese pythons now occupy wild and suburban areas of Florida in growing numbers.

D Visitors to the state of Florida can study populations of the Burmese python in many wild and suburban areas.

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3 Which of the following statements **best** restates a central idea that should be included in a summary of the passage?

A Exotic creatures such as the Burmese python or the speckled caiman are becoming very popular as house pets in Florida.

B With few natural enemies in the wild, the Burmese python has become a threat to the survival of native animal species in Florida.

C When homes or stores are damaged during a hurricane, Burmese pythons and other exotic pets may escape into the Florida wilderness.

D With hard work, Florida conservationists hope they can succeed in changing the law to make it illegal to keep Burmese pythons as pets.

4 Based on the information in the text "Python Invasion," write an essay that summarizes and explains not just the problems caused by Burmese pythons but also the proposed solutions. Use at least **three** details from the text to support your ideas.

Self Check ***Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 1.***

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