

- RI.8.2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCR.R.2** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.



Understand the Standards

Whether you are in school or on the job, each day you are presented with a wide range of printed information. Sources of information include:

- newspapers
- magazines
- Web site articles
- nonfiction books
- workplace documents

Sometimes you may need to prepare a summary of informational text. A **summary** is a brief review of the main points. A school course may require a summary of an article or a book chapter. An employer may ask for a summary of an important work document.

When you create a summary of informational text, you use your own words to sum up, or **summarize**, the most important ideas and details. In an **objective summary**, you briefly state the key ideas set forth in the text without expressing your opinions. An objective summary is meant to present textual information, not personal thoughts and feelings.

An objective summary of informational text should:

- clearly identify the source.
- include the most important ideas and details.

It should not:

- include unimportant or unnecessary details or vague statements.
- present opinions or judgments.

Words to Know

summary
summarize
objective summary

The following strategies will help you summarize informational text.

Identify key ideas. Pay attention to article and chapter titles and subheads. Look for topic sentences, which state the main ideas of paragraphs. “Add up” key ideas to determine the central idea of the text as a whole.

Identify important supporting details. Look for facts, examples, statistics, and quotations that support and develop key ideas.

Ask the “5 W’s + H” questions. News writers generally try to answer six basic questions when covering an event. You can use these same questions to help you zero in on important ideas and details in informational text:

<i>Who?</i>	Who was involved?
<i>What?</i>	What happened?
<i>Where?</i>	Where did it happen?
<i>When?</i>	When did it happen?
<i>Why?</i>	Why did it happen?
<i>How?</i>	How did it happen?



Typhoon Kompasu struck central South Korea on Thursday morning, killing three people. The fierce storm knocked down trees, caused electric power outages, and disrupted subway service over a wide area. Kompasu also brought heavy rain to North Korea, along with winds of over 50 miles per hour.

<i>Who?</i>	three people killed
<i>What?</i>	storm toppled trees, knocked out power and subway service
<i>Where?</i>	South and North Korea
<i>When?</i>	Thursday morning
<i>Why?</i>	Typhoon Kompasu struck
<i>How?</i>	damage caused by strong winds and heavy rain

Keep in mind that the “5 W’s + H” won’t apply equally to all informational text. For example, while these six questions would work well to help you summarize a textbook chapter about the American Civil War, they would probably be less useful in summarizing a science article about electricity.



Guided Instruction

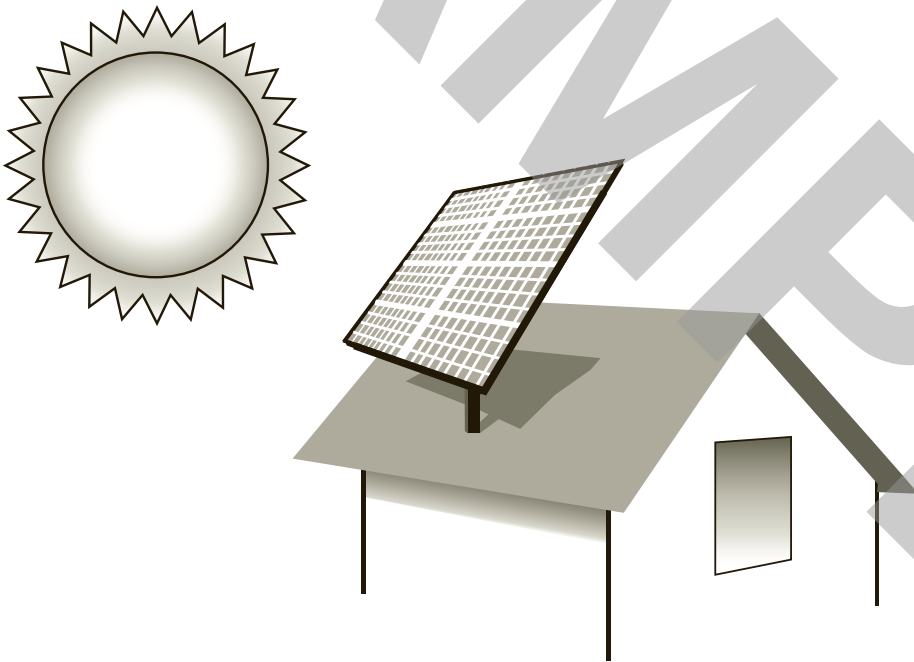
Below are two summaries of a chapter from a science textbook. As you read the two summaries, keep in mind the strategies for summarizing text. Compare and contrast the way the two summaries follow—or fail to follow—the rules for summarizing.



A Summary of Chapter 4: “Resources of the World”

In Chapter 4, “Resources of the World,” the author explains that people use natural resources from their environment to survive. There are *renewable* resources and *nonrenewable* resources. Renewable resources either can be replaced, such as water and trees, or are unlikely to run out, such as sun and wind. Nonrenewable resources cannot be replaced. These include oil, coal, natural gas, and metals such as iron and copper.

Some parts of the world have more renewable and nonrenewable resources than other parts. This inequality can cause political problems, because civilizations depend on sources of energy to heat and cool homes and businesses and to power automobiles and machines.



Scientists are working to increase the use of renewable resources. For example, they are exploring ways to use the sun’s energy—*solar energy*—to power vehicles, without creating cars and trucks that are too expensive for most people to afford. They are also investigating the use of *geothermal energy*, energy that comes from the heat within the earth.

Guided Questions

What is being summarized? In other words, what is the source?

What are the two categories of natural resources?

What details support the idea that natural resources are important?



My Summary

The chapter I read tells a lot about natural resources, which are important in people’s lives. There are two kinds of resources—renewable and nonrenewable. Trees are an excellent example of a renewable resource, because if you cut one down you can plant another one. Sunshine is another good example, because we know that the sun is not going anywhere soon!

Nonrenewable resources are a different story, because they cannot be replaced. For instance, if the planet runs out of oil, that’s it. In some ways, I guess that would be a good thing, because the country would not have to depend on oil from the Middle East anymore. But good luck at the gas station, because there won’t be anything to pump into your tank!

There are more renewable and nonrenewable resources in some parts of the world than in others. This is not a promising situation because everybody needs energy to live comfortably, and when one group of people has something that another doesn’t, pretty soon you might have a war going on.

Scientists are doing their best to help matters. They are looking into ways to use energy from the sun and energy from Earth. Hopefully, they will succeed before we run out of the resources we need to survive.

Guided Questions

The second summary is not as good as the first, but it’s not all bad. What are its good points?

Answer the following questions.

- 1. How do the two summaries compare in their identification of the textbook chapter’s main ideas?

- 2. What are two major flaws in the second summary?

- 3. Overall, why is the first summary better than the second? Be specific.



On Your Own

Read the article. As you read, identify the main ideas and their supporting details.



Mount Vesuvius

In southern Italy, about seven miles from the city of Naples, stands Mount Vesuvius. This active volcano, which rises more than 4,000 feet above the Bay of Naples, has erupted many times over the centuries. However, the most famous eruption was the disaster that took place in the summer of 79 CE.

The Deadly Eruption

Pompeii, Herculaneum, and a number of other towns were located near Vesuvius. The people living in these communities were not prepared for the sudden and extremely violent eruption that occurred on August 24, 79 CE. It has been estimated that the explosive force of the eruption was thousands of times more powerful than that of the nuclear bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, Japan. The burst of ash that exploded from the erupting Vesuvius shot more than 12 miles into the air.

A combination of volcanic mud and fiery lava flowed into Herculaneum, hot enough to instantly kill anyone in its path. Hot ashes, cinders, and stones poured down on Pompeii. Poisonous gases filled the air, and thick clouds of ash darkened the sky. People were forced to choose between attempting to escape or trying to find shelter.

It was an impossible situation. Those hoping to flee were killed by fiery lava flows, falling rocks, and deadly fumes. Those who sought shelter inside buildings did not fare any better. As rocks and ash piled up, the roofs of buildings collapsed, crushing the people inside. Some 2,000 people lost their lives in Pompeii alone—about 10 percent of the city's population.

When the eruption was over, the cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae all lay buried under layers of lava, ash, stones, and mud.

Rediscovery of Pompeii

For over 1,500 years, Pompeii was all but forgotten beneath some 20 feet of stone and ash. Then, in the 1700s, the city was rediscovered. Since then, archaeologists have worked to uncover many of the ruined city's buildings and homes. Workers digging through the ruins have found jewelry, coins, statues, artwork, utensils, and other objects. Archaeologists have even found the preserved shapes of the volcano's victims in the hardened ash.

Scientific studies of the buildings and objects unearthed have revealed many details about the daily lives and customs of the ancient Romans as well as information about their art, architecture, and religion. Today, visitors to the area can explore the exposed ruins and come away with a sense of what life was like in the ancient city almost 2,000 years ago.



Past, Present, and Future

During the centuries after 79 CE, Vesuvius erupted perhaps 50 times with varying degrees of force. A major eruption occurred in 1631, again destroying nearby communities and taking thousands of lives. The next severe eruptions happened in 1906 and 1944.

Despite the possibility of future eruptions, millions of people continue to live nearby today. Helped by the fertile soil, vineyards and orchards cover the slopes of Vesuvius, along with oak and chestnut trees. Many experts, however, are concerned, believing that the volcano is due to erupt again. Indeed, it's been estimated that the next major eruption could affect as many as 3 million people in the region. For this reason, officials have emergency plans in place to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people should the need arise.

Complete the following activities based on the passage.

- 1 Fill in the chart with the main idea for each section of "Mount Vesuvius." Then fill in the most important details that support each main idea.

Section of Article	Main Idea	Important Supporting Details
The Deadly Eruption		
Rediscovery of Pompeii		
Past, Present, and Future		

- 2 Which detail is not important enough to include in a brief summary of the passage?
- A Many experts fear that Vesuvius may soon erupt again.
 - B The most famous eruption of Vesuvius occurred in 79 CE.
 - C Ash from the erupting Vesuvius shot more than 12 miles into the air.
 - D Archaeologists have uncovered many of Pompeii's buildings and homes.
- 3 What is the most important conclusion to be drawn from a summary of the passage?
- A Vesuvius has caused disasters in the past and may do so again.
 - B The work that archaeologists do is fascinating.
 - C Vesuvius is located in southern Italy, near the city of Naples.
 - D The fertile soil on the slopes of Vesuvius supports the growth of vineyards and orchards.

- 4 What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?

- 5 What detail helps to explain why Pompeii was “all but forgotten” until the 1700s?

Elevate

- 6 On a separate sheet of paper, discuss to what extent it would be helpful to ask the “5 W’s + H” questions when summarizing “Mount Vesuvius.” Be specific.