PRÉCIS WRITING

FOR AMERICAN SCHOOLS

METHODS OF ABRIDGING, SUMMARIZING
CONDENSING

WITH COPIOUS EXERCISES

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FOREWORD

DURING a recent visit to England, where I had the opportunity of seeing the work in English in many of the best-known schools of Great Britain, I was greatly interested in the superior quality of their instruction in composition. As I studied the various methods by which this superiority is secured, I became convinced that no small part of it is due to their fundamental conception in English teaching of making thought and content basic. In most schools far more attention is paid to this than to the type of drill which emphasizes mechanics and perfection of form. And one of the classroom practices which secures this emphasis upon thought and content is technically known as *précis writing*. Practice in précis writing is there commenced at a comparatively early age and continued through the upper grades and on through the universities.

I of course realize that in some of our American schools we have done work which carries out the same general intent as that which directs the making of the précis: we have exercises in abridging, summarizing, abstract-making, and condensation. Indeed, recent questions of the College Entrance Examination Board, especially the English Comprehensive Examinations, have taken the value of this work into strict account. Yet in practically none of our schools have we pursued this method systematically; it has all been sporadic, and limited pretty exclusively to the closing year of the secondary school, when many of our teachers have centred their attention upon the drill which prepares their pupils for the college entrance examinations. And certainly in all these efforts we have evolved no accepted technique for the making of a satisfactory précis.

In England, on the other hand, the composition courses are for the most part formulated with the idea that précis writing is sure to be one of its integral parts. With that conception dominant, many good British textbooks on précis writing have been published and are in current use in English classes throughout Great Britain.

Believing that there is a distinct advantage in such publications, I wished to see an American book on précis writing, with exercises suitable to our American schools. As the General Editor of the Atlantic Texts, I accordingly invited Mr. Samuel Thurber, an experienced writer and teacher, to prepare such a volume. The results of his labors are apparent in *Précis Writing for American Schools*. It is offered to teachers and students in the belief that Mr. Thurber's detailed explanation of précis writing and the numerous exercises which he has prepared, will provide an efficient means of making readily available the best methods of précis writing — methods that not only will increase the student's power in mastering thought but will perfect his skill in making that thought clearly articulate.

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PREFACE

No questions that face us who teach English in secondary schools are more important than these: Why is it that our students think so little when they read? What can we do to develop in them the habit of reading sentences through to the end, of weighing and considering the subject in hand, so that they really understand the thought of a paragraph? What methods can we employ to discourage that hasty, thought-less skimming of words which leaves in the minds of youth neither clear-cut image nor abstract idea?

During my teaching experience with pupils of commercial, technical, and college-preparatory courses I have found the making of short, well-constructed summaries one of the most effective means of training in careful reading and close thinking. It is now more than twenty years since I began the regular practice of requiring my students to write out frequently the gist of paragraphs of prose from Irving, Scott, and Hawthorne in the lower classes, from Burke, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Ruskin in the senior year. These summaries were always short — generally only a sentence or two each; they took but a few minutes to write and still fewer to read; boys and girls, I soon found, rather enjoyed writing them; best of all, they developed, as time went on, a habit of more thorough reading, and an ability, in some cases, to dig out the central thought of a passage of fairly stiff prose. Indeed, so valuable did this practice in the making of summaries seem to me as a young teacher that I have made it ever since a fundamental part of

the work with all my classes, in the teaching of both literature and composition.

In this volume I have brought together one hundred and sixty selections suitable for summarizing — or précis writing — in American secondary schools. More than half of them I have used in my own classes, either as we came upon them in the books we were studying, or as I gave them out in mimeographed form. They are arranged according to type — narrative, expository, descriptive; and within each section I have tried to place the passages in the order of their difficulty, the easier selections in each part coming first. Some of the shorter paragraphs will be found suitable for ninth-grade pupils, though the book as a whole is planned for older students, especially for the upper classes of the senior high school.

I have included in my introduction on précis writing, and also among the selections that follow, a number of brief summaries written in class by high-school pupils. These, I realize, are in no way extraordinary. They simply show what boys and girls of sixteen and seventeen can do, with a little practice, in the making of short abstracts of simple prose and poetry. With the exception of some corrections in punctuation and spelling they are printed here just as they were written.

Several of my colleagues in the English Department of the Newton High School have generously assisted me in the preparation of this little volume. To Miss Louise Richardson and to Mr. Maynard Maxim in particular I wish to express my gratitude.

I wish also to thank the following publishers for their kindness in granting me permission to use copyrighted material.

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NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER, 1924

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PRÉCIS WRITING

PRÉCIS WRITING

Its Purpose, Value, and Method, with Examples from Work of High-School Students

What Précis Writing Is

Précis Writing in English Schools. — Of late years a type of composition work called "précis writing" has taken a prominent place in the teaching of English in England. The long report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the President of the Board of Education[1] refers constantly to "the practice of précis," and often quotes the testimony of teachers as to the educational value of this kind of writing. In all textbooks on English composition published recently in England, one chapter at least is devoted to the précis. Moreover, a considerable number of manuals on the subject have been issued, bearing titles all the way from *Précis Writing for Beginners* and *Précis Writing for Schools*, to *A Handbook of Précis* and *A Progressive Course in Précis Writing*. Every boy of seventeen in an English school knows, therefore, both in theory and by classroom practice, what a précis is.

The French term "précis" (pronounced *pray-see*) literally means "a pruned or cut-down statement." In other words, it is an abstract or summary. In no sense is it equivalent to a paraphrase, or a translation, or a restatement. A précis, on the contrary, is merely the essence — the pith — of a paragraph, or of several paragraphs, or even of a whole essay. "You take your material," to quote one English writer, "and boil it down so as to get rid of all the parts that do not really

[1] Published in 1921 under the title, *The Teaching of English in England.*

matter; you then collect what is left and put these points together in a short, concise summary. But the result must not be merely a list of important points, or a series of jottings. It must be the same story, told clearly and readably in a very much condensed form." [1]

The tendency in English schools of late has been to use the term "précis writing" more narrowly, applying it chiefly to summaries of business letters and official documents. Yet in its broadest sense, as the term is interpreted in this volume, a précis may be any type of composition — story, essay, verse, letter, or speech.

Value of Précis Writing. — The first and perhaps the greatest value of précis writing is the demand it makes upon us to read comprehendingly and thoughtfully. Newspapers, magazines, books surround us and thrust themselves into our busy lives. So overwhelmed are we by this avalanche of reading matter that before we know it we become "mere skimmers of the printed page." We glance from headline to headline, from sporting column to cartoon. If a paragraph is long or dull, we skip it; if a sentence is a bit involved, we lose the thought — and let it go; if a word is unfamiliar, we dash on. Time is precious. A hundred other things wait to be done. Books — more books — offer their honey for us to sip.

Now this glancing into many pages, this flitting butterfly-fashion over print, is a debilitating process. It develops a habit of seeing and thinking superficially. Our thoughts remain continually fluttering on the surface of things. Worse still, our minds are trained to wander, to start and jump, to snatch a bit here and a bit there, to look at books as they look at pictures that glide by on a shimmering screen and make no lasting impression. But to write a précis we must look steadfastly at words, and carry sentences through to the end. We cannot skim. We must "read to digest," to distinguish be-

[1] G. N. Pocock, *Précis Writing for Beginners.*

tween unimportant details and the central thought, to understand perfectly the very heart of the whole matter. In a word, we must think. Such reading, even if it be of only a few pages, is of profound educational value. The words of Ruskin are just as true to-day as they were seventy years ago when he wrote them: "If you read ten pages of a good book, letter by letter, — that is to say, with real accuracy, — you are forever-more in some measure an educated person."

Précis writing not only demands care and thought when we read; it requires discrimination when we write. We must express ourselves clearly, briefly, precisely. Into a few well-ordered sentences we must pack the essence of a paragraph, or even a whole page. To do this effectively we must explore our stock of words, arrange and rearrange them, hunting for the most concise, and, at the same time, the most exact terms. Prolixity, verbosity, repetition, looseness of style — these we must conquer, for they are the bitter foes of précis writing. Our words must "fit our thoughts like a glove and be neither too wide nor too tight." Thus the making of an abstract is an exercise of the highest value in vocabulary building, in sentence construction, and in clear, concise expression.

"Besides being an intellectual exercise of the highest order, the précis is also of great practical use. There are many occasions in the lives of ordinary citizens when they are required to grasp quickly the sense of a speech or document, to turn it round in their own minds, and either to give judgment on it themselves or to pass it on for the consideration of others."[1] If it is not a speech or a document, it may be a story, the plot of a play, a lecture, or a sermon which we wish to summarize. Hardly a day passes that we do not make an oral abstract of news. The person who cannot judiciously condense the story of what he has seen or heard is almost sure to be a bore; whereas he who speaks briefly, but straight to the heart of the matter,

[1] C. L. Thomson, *Précis Writing for Schools.*

commands steadfast attention. Précis writing, more than any form of composition, as it encourages thrift and care in the use of words, offers a practical training in the most useful art of being clear, and brief, and therefore interesting.

The value of précis writing as an "intellectual exercise of the highest order" has been appreciated by the College Entrance Examination Board. Nearly every Comprehensive Examination in English since 1917 has contained a short poem, or a passage of prose, or both, to be condensed into one or two well-constructed sentences. Thus on the June paper of 1918, fourteen lines of poetry are printed, with these two problems attached: (1) "Paraphrase the following lines from Lowell's *Commemoration Ode*, restating each idea in simple prose." (2) "Condense the thought of these lines into one sentence." Here in one question is an exercise in paraphrasing and also in précis writing.

On later papers such directions as these frequently occur: —

"Express the general thought of the following passage in one good sentence." (1919)

"Condense the material of the following paragraph into a brief statement that is also clear and orderly." (1920)

"Put the gist of this paragraph into two sentences." (1921)

"State as briefly as possible, in your own words, the substance of the following paragraph." (1922)

Teachers who correct Comprehensive papers have often testified to the great value of these précis questions. "They are," to quote one reader, "the surest indication of fundamental weakness or of real power. A student who can pick out quickly the central thoughts of a passage, and then pack them into a few good sentences of his own, is almost sure to do well on the rest of the paper." This is not hard to understand. It simply means that the candidate has mastered the art of reading carefully, thinking precisely, and writing accurately.

Most of the selections which have appeared since 1917 on

worked out exercises in summarizing has surely sensed the force of brevity and point. Both his reading and his own writing must necessarily benefit from the clearer grasp of organization of material. Mussy thinking will have received a tremendous blow, so that the pupil through his précis writing may conceivably be a better citizen." [1]

How to Make a Précis

The Four Steps. — No hard and fast rules can be laid down for writing précis. The length and character of the selection to be summarized, together with the experience of the writer, naturally influence the method of procedure. Here are four suggestions, however, which may well be followed by high-school pupils who have had but little training in précis writing. They apply especially to the type of work demanded by the selections in this book and by the précis passages that appear on the Comprehensive English papers of the College Entrance Examination Board.

1. Read slowly the selection which you are going to summarize. Do not skim. See exactly what every word is, and read every sentence through to the end. Forget everything else. Concentrate all your attention to find what the author is driving at — what the passage really means. No notes should be taken at this first perusal.

2. Read the selection again. Now that you know in general what it is about, your task is to separate the essential points, which you are to use, from the details, which you must throw away. If the passage is short and fairly simple, you will not need to take notes. If you find yourself wandering or getting confused, jot down on paper the phrases which you are sure

[1] L. Frances Tucker, Head of the English Department, Classical High School, Lynn, Mass., in *The English Leaflet*, May 1924.

contain the central idea of the paragraph. At first this may be too difficult a task for you to undertake alone. The class as a whole should therefore work out orally problems in selecting the essential from the nonessential, under the guidance of your instructor. A few such lessons will teach you how to find the real pith of a paragraph, and also show you how much of the original to retain and how much to discard.

3. With these notes before you, or with their equivalent clearly in your mind, construct a few sentences — three or four are usually enough — that will give the substance of the selection. After a little practice, it is better to lay aside both the original passage and your notes before you begin to write.

4. Read again the selection on which you are working. Then examine your précis to make sure that you have omitted nothing important. Strike out unnecessary words, revise and copy your composition, and your task is done.

NOTES AND WARNINGS

This, in general, is the best way to go about the work of making an abstract. Before considering various examples of précis writing, you will gain further insight into the problem from the notes and warnings that follow.

1. Topic Sentences. — To quote a sentence verbatim from a paragraph — for instance, the topic sentence at the beginning — is not to write a précis. An abstract is the condensed form of an entire selection. A topic sentence often makes a good starting-point, but only in rare cases can it take the place of a summary.

2. Your Own Words. — Three or four sentences quoted from a selection seldom make a satisfactory précis. Do not keep too close to the words before you. "The language of the original may sometimes be suitable for your purpose, but it is more likely unsuitable." [1] The clearest proof that you

[1] F. E. Robeson, *A Progressive Course of Précis Writing.*

have understood a passage is the ability to reproduce the sense in words of your own choosing. Moreover, this demand will inevitably increase your mastery of English.

3. Right Proportion. — Beginners in précis writing are apt to spend too much of their energy on the first part of a passage. The result is virtually a paraphrase of the opening sentences, with little or nothing taken from the conclusion. To overcome this fault, read the selection over and over until you understand it as a whole. Then lay it aside, and write out briefly the thought which the author has left in your mind — not the substance of any particular part, but the total impression.

4. Order. — As a rule, the logical order of the original passage should be preserved. A précis is not a rearrangement of thoughts or facts. It is a clear, concise, orderly abstract.

5. Coherence. — Under no circumstances does a précis consist of disconnected notes or phrases. On the contrary, it should be a model of complete, coherent sentences. Abbreviations, lists, sentence-fragments, are not to be tolerated. Such connective words as *however*, *moreover*, *therefore*, *again*, *also*, *finally*, may well be introduced to bind the various parts more closely together.

6. Brevity. — Omit all matter that has no important bearing on the leading topic of your selection. Thus particular details must be either omitted altogether or replaced by general terms. Similes, metaphors, illustrations, and quotations must be discarded. Adjectives and adjective phrases, as a rule, must be thrown aside. Be concise, simple, direct; above all, do not repeat yourself.

7. Length of Précis. — In England the practice is to require a précis to be about one third as long as the original. A satisfactory abstract, however, can often be shorter, especially if the passage to be condensed is a single paragraph of approximately two hundred words. Many of the selections in this volume can be reduced to about one fourth of their present

length. A few may be abridged into a single sentence. (Notice examples on pages 15, 16, 20, 22, 141.)

8. Time Required. — As with all composition work, speed and accuracy in précis writing grow with practice. A beginner may need half an hour or more to condense even the shorter paragraphs in this collection. With a little experience, and especially with a foundation of class coöperative précis writing under skillful guidance, it is possible for a high-school senior to make an abstract of nearly any passage in fifteen minutes. Many have actually been done in less time.

9. Longer Selections and Poetry. — The précis of a long passage differs in no essential respects from the summary of half a page. If there are several paragraphs, each one should stand as a separate paragraph in the final form of the abstract. The précis of a poem, being in your own words and greatly simplified, must abandon poetic form, such as rhyme and metre, and much of the poetic diction. But though it cease to be poetry, your précis may still contain the imagination, the thought, and even the feeling of the original lines.

10. Final Form. — "It is important that the completed précis should read smoothly; for though the higher graces of style must be sacrificed, the sentences should be pointed and well balanced, as well as absolutely clear in construction."[1] In other words, précis writing is not a destructive form of composition, such as the taking of notes. On the contrary, it is highly constructive. It means close thinking, clear judgment, orderly arrangement. A précis may not be a thing of beauty, but it should always be neat, lucid, and integral.

[1] C. L. Thomson, *Précis Writing for Schools*, p. 18.

Examples of Précis Writing

by high-school students

Let us now turn from the theory and practice of précis writing to a study of several concrete illustrations. The passages which follow are chosen neither because of their difficulty, nor because they offer any special problem, but rather because they are well suited to the abilities of high-school students. Moreover, they are fairly typical of the paragraphs in this collection. Summaries written by pupils in the classroom have been selected as models to show what can actually be done in précis work by American boys and girls of high-school age.

A

Here is a paragraph of 190 words from Miss Hersey's *Talks to Girls*. Read it carefully.

It is easy to say, "Enlarge your vocabulary: first, that you may enter upon the privileges of a cultivated woman; and second, that you may be able to tell the truth easily and accurately." But it is another and more difficult matter to prescribe the means by which this is to be done. Every girl must, to a large degree, work out her own method. The reading of the best books and conversation with cultivated folk are both helps to the free use of words. The dictionary is the best friend for your task. Never allow a strange word to pass unchallenged. Usually, it is wise to look it up at the moment. If that is impossible, it must be written firmly on the memory and traced at the first opportunity. It is good to encourage in yourself the habit of dawdling a little over the dictionary. It is the only place where dawdling reaps a harvest. To learn two new words a day — thoroughly to learn them, so that their use will not have a foreign accent — is to insure a large vocabulary before you reach middle age.

Now what is the central thought of this passage? Does it lie in the question of the introduction, in the middle, or in the conclusion? The paragraph begins by suggesting that every

cultivated woman needs a large vocabulary; mentions the fact that every girl must work out her own means of increasing her stock of words; suggests that reading and conversation are two of the best means; dwells upon the dictionary and its uses; and concludes with some statistics upon vocabulary growth. Which of these, as the main theme of the passage, shall we take as the starting point of our summary?

To get at the heart of the matter, let us examine the paragraph printed in this fashion: —

1. It is easy to say, "Enlarge your vocabulary: first, that you may enter upon the privileges of a cultivated woman; and, second, that you may be able to tell the truth easily and accurately." **2.** But it is another and more difficult matter to prescribe the means by which this may be done. **3.** Every girl must, to a large degree, work out her own method. **4.** The reading of the best books and conversation with cultivated folk are both helps to the free use of words. **5.** The dictionary is the best friend for your task. **6.** Never allow a strange word to pass unchallenged. **7.** Usually it is wise to look it up at the moment. **8.** If that is impossible, it must be written firmly on the memory and traced at the first opportunity. **9.** It is good to encourage in yourself the habit of dawdling a little over the dictionary. **10.** It is the only place where dawdling reaps a harvest. **11.** To learn two new words a day, — thoroughly to learn them, so that their use will not have a foreign accent, — is to insure a large vocabulary before you reach middle age.	**1.** INTRODUCTION. — General remark about importance of large vocabulary. **2–3.** INTRODUCTION CONTINUED. — Every girl must work out her own way of increasing her vocabulary. **4.** INTRODUCTION CONCLUDED. — Reading and conversation both help. **5.** STATEMENT OF THEME. — The dictionary is the best means of enlarging your vocabulary. **6–10.** THEME EXPANDED. — Look up every new word on the spot, or hold it in the memory and consult the dictionary later. Get the habit of glancing over the dictionary. It is a "dawdling" habit that pays. **11.** CONCLUSION. — Thoroughly mastering two new words a day means a large vocabulary by middle age.

As you read over the notes in the right-hand column, you surely see that the heart of the paragraph lies in that sentence (5) in which Miss Hersey says that the dictionary is a girl's best friend in the task of enlarging her vocabulary. The first four sentences of the passage plainly lead up to this statement. Sentences 6–10 unfold and amplify it. The last sentence, in conclusion, sums up the suggestions offered concerning the dictionary.

In the light of this examination, which of these five titles will best fit the selection?

1. Enlarging One's Vocabulary
2. Advantages of a Large Vocabulary
3. The Influence of Books and Conversation upon the Vocabulary
4. Everyone Makes His Own Vocabulary
5. The Dictionary as a Means of Enlarging the Vocabulary

Unquestionably the last of these titles (all of which were offered by various members of a senior high-school class) comes nearest to the central thought of the paragraph; for it is about the dictionary, and specific ways of using it, that Miss Hersey is writing.

Thus by looking into the structure of any passage, by exploring its sentences to find what is introductory matter, what is conclusion, and what the central thought, and then by finding for it a suitable title, we gather and arrange our material for an abstract.

Here is a précis of the selection we have been analyzing. It was written by a girl in her last year in high school. Twelve minutes were given the class to read the passage and write a summary.

Title — Dictionary Chief Aid to Girl's Vocabulary

Précis — *Every girl must work out her own way of enlarging her vocabulary. Two good ways are to read the best books and listen*

that the writer uses several connectives, and correctly handles both a colon and a semicolon.

IT has been the lot of the unfortunate aborigines of America, in the early periods of colonization, to be doubly wronged by the white men: they have been dispossessed of their hereditary possessions by mercenary and frequently wanton warfare, and their characters have been traduced by bigoted and interested writers. The colonist often treated them like beasts of the forest, and the author has endeavored to justify him in his outrages. The former found it easier to exterminate than to civilize, the latter to vilify than to discriminate. The appellations of savage and pagan were deemed sufficient to sanction the hostilities of both; and thus the poor wanderers of the forest were persecuted and defamed, not because they were guilty, but because they were ignorant.

Title — INDIANS DOUBLY WRONGED

Précis — *In early days, the Indians were wronged by the white men in two ways: in the first place, the settlers stole their lands, and in general treated them like beasts; then again, the writers of the age maligned their character and defended those who persecuted them.*
(46 words)

English instructors who teach précis writing almost invariably find that their poorer students write the longest abstracts, and that as skill comes with practice, the tendency among their ablest pupils is to condense more and more, even to the writing of single sentences. To a certain point, this straight cut toward extreme conciseness should be encouraged; a great virtue of précis writing is that it compels the pupil to avoid repetition and wordiness. Nevertheless, the single-sentence ideal should not be too strongly urged. In the first place, a good précis can seldom be condensed within so brief a space; in the second place, few high-school students can successfully manage a sentence of over forty words, particularly when pressed for time. Much more satisfactory is the abstract of sixty or seventy-five words, made up of three or four sentences closely knit together by a skillful use of connectives.

C

The passage that follows is the second paragraph of Macaulay's *Life of Johnson*.

WHILE he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university, but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance; and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory, but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments. (173 words)

Here are the notes jotted down by two different boys in preparation for writing a précis of the above selection:

1. Old J. poor bus. man — sinks in pov. — could not send son to coll. — neighbor offers assist. — Sam. goes to Ox. — manners amaze profs. — also reading and quotes.

2. S. J. goes to Pembroke at Oxford — helped by friend — father too poor — makes great impression by quoting Macrobius.

Compare these skeletons of the paragraph and then decide, if you can, which student wrote the following précis: —

Title — JOHNSON GOES TO COLLEGE

Précis — *While Johnson was educating himself as best he could, his father's business was steadily declining. Through the generosity of a neighbor, however, the boy was sent to Pembroke College. At Oxford the professors were astonished by his manners, his reading, and his ability to quote obscure Latin authors.* (48 words)

This abstract, which was written in twelve minutes, reduces the original from 173 words to 48, or rather more than a third.

D

Passing on to longer selections, let us consider this paragraph of 350 words from Macaulay. Examine the right-hand column to see the exact relation between the précis and the original. Notice, too, the way in which details, illustrations, and direct quotations are discarded in the summary.

Seventeen minutes were allowed for this exercise.

Original	Précis
Never, since literature became a calling in England, had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a Member of Parliament, a Lord of the Treasury, an Ambassador, a Secretary of State. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of quality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and	*Authors were never so poorly paid as when Johnson came to live in London.* *The period when writers flourished under the patronage of statesmen had passed.* *But the time had not yet arrived when they received large profits from the sale of their books to the public.* *With the exception of Pope, who made a large fortune by writing, literary men remained miserably poor.*

whose works were popular, such an author as Thomson, whose *Seasons* were in every library, such an author as Fielding, whose *Pasquin* had had a greater run than any drama since *The Beggar's Opera*, was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad, for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed and as comfortably lodged as a poet.

(351 words)

This was true even of such popular authors as Thomson and Fielding.

So dreary, indeed, was the condition of literature that Johnson would probably have earned a better living as a porter than as a professional writer.

(100 words)

Précis of Oral Reading

Précis work may be profitably varied by having the class write abstracts of selections which they hear read, but do not see before them. Such assignments at first must be extremely simple, and for a while the passages should be read twice. It is astonishing how rapidly power to do this sort of work increases. With a little experience, and if not hurried, boys and girls of the sophomore year can write in a few sentences abstracts of stories or editorials that take three or four minutes to read aloud. By the senior year, from a single reading by the instructor, it is perfectly possible to secure an excellent précis of a fairly difficult paragraph of about two

hundred words. Such an exercise requires the closest attention: indeed, the great virtue of the task is the intense concentration which it engenders.

During the reading — and the passage must be read slowly and distinctly — pupils should be allowed to take notes, if they so desire.

E

The following paragraph from George Eliot was read just once to a class of high-school seniors. Below it are printed four of the summaries that were written in the eight minutes allotted. Compare them with the original, and decide for yourself which is the most successful précis. Are they as complete as you would expect under the circumstances? How, in general, might they be improved?

ALL honor and reverence to the divine beauty of form! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children — in our gardens and in our houses. But let us love that other beauty, too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy. Paint us an angel, if you can, with a floating violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory; but do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands — those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pothouse — those rounded backs and stupid, weatherbeaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world — those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their onions.

(164 words)

Précis 1. — *Divine beauty should be reverenced and cultivated; but that sympathetic beauty seen in the toil and drudgery of everyday life should never be forgotten.* (24 words)

Précis 2. — *Women scraping carrots, men digging ditches, children slaving in factories — all these should be included in art, for their beauty brings forth human sympathy, as that of angels does not.* (30 words)

Précis 3. — *Beauty should be cultivated everywhere, but it must not take the place of human sympathy. Madonnas and angels, of course, have their place in art. Yet they ought not to replace pictures of plain humanity which suggest the beauty of sympathy.* (41 words)

Précis 4. — *Let us cultivate divine beauty of form in humanity, in our gardens, and in our houses. Let us love also that other beauty which lies in deep human sympathy. Paint us angels and Madonnas, but do not impose on us any rules which shall banish from art old careworn women and the men who do the heavy work of the world.* (61 words)

F

Here is a proof of the statement that with practice young people can often do remarkably good work in précis writing. The following selection from Cardinal Newman contains 325 words. It was read once slowly to a section of boys in the winter term of their freshman year at college. They were allowed to take notes, and were given ten minutes to write an abstract.

Below the original selection are printed three of the best summaries: the shortest, which is constructed in one sentence; the longest, which is an excellent piece of work; and one of medium length — a good type of those written by the majority of the class. It will be a valuable exercise to study these three summaries closely. Compare their merits; point out their defects; decide for yourself which is the best.

IT is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a university professes, even for the sake of the students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their

respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he pursues only a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a university, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a university in its treatment of its students.

(325 words)

— CARDINAL NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*

Précis 1. — *It is well for a university to enlarge its range of studies, so that even if a student does not pursue many sciences, he will at least be influenced by the association and atmosphere of men representing all branches of learning, and will contract the philosophical habit which is the basis of a liberal education.* (55 words)

Précis 2. — *It is a great point to enlarge the range of studies which a university professes, if only for the sake of the students. In a university learned men are assembled, who are rivals in their various fields of learning, and who, by working together in these different fields, come to respect, consult, and aid each other. Thus, surrounded by broad intellectual traditions, a student in a university lives in a clear atmosphere of thought. Because of the wide range of scholarly interests about him, he apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, although studying but a few subjects. For these reasons, a student's education in a large university is called liberal. He gets mental freedom and equitableness, which lead to a serene life. He gains, too, what is called the philosophical habit. To spread before its students many branches of learning, and create the atmosphere of a liberal education, is the main aim of a university, as well as the main duty.* (161 words)

descriptive sentences, conversation — all must go. The précis of a story is therefore much shorter, in relation to its original, than the abstract of a description, or of a passage packed full of thoughts and ideas. This is particularly true of longer narratives, and of the detailed stories of accident and crime such as newspapers print. Often these may be reduced in a précis to a tenth or even a twentieth of their original form.

Pages 34–43 contain a number of anecdotes suitable for summarizing in ten or twelve minutes.

G

You all know the famous story of "Jack and the Bean-stalk." In Mr. P. W. Coussens's collection of folk-stories this legend is told in fourteen pages, or about five thousand words. Here is a précis of the story in 150 words.

Précis — *Once upon a time a boy named Jack was sent by his mother to sell a cow. He soon met a butcher to whom he sold the animal for a few colored beans. His mother was very angry, and threw them away. Now one of the beans fell in the garden, took root, and grew so rapidly in one night that in the morning the top reached into the heavens. Jack climbed up the vine, and came to an extensive country. After various adventures a fairy met him and directed him to the house of a giant, from whom he acquired great wealth. Several times he returned, and the last time he was pursued by the giant. Jack scrambled down the vine, and as the monster attempted to follow, he seized his hatchet and cut away the bean-stalk, whereupon the giant fell and was killed. Jack and his mother lived afterward in comfort.*

— Webster's *New International Dictionary*

Précis of a Poem

An abstract of a poem is in no essential respects different from an abstract of a passage of prose. As a rule, the process is more difficult. Poetic diction, figures of speech, and inverted

sentences sometimes obscure the thought. Teachers of précis writing have usually found it a good practice to let pupils translate the poem, as it were, into simple prose, before they begin to write a summary. Otherwise most students, until they have become experienced précis writers, will hold too closely to the language of the poet, and develop a stilted reproduction rather than a concise, simple statement in words of their own. Here, as elsewhere in précis study, coöperative class work, done orally with the instructor, is the best foundation for the successful making of abstracts.

Poems and poetical selections for summarizing may be found on pages 119–148.

H

At the beginning of an English period one morning in January a senior class was asked to open *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* at this poem:—

DEATH THE LEVELER

The glories of our blood and state
    Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
    Death lays his icy hand on kings:
        Sceptre and Crown
        Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
    And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
    They tame but one another still:
        Early or late
        They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds:
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

— JAMES SHIRLEY

Here are two of the best summaries, which were written in ten minutes. Which do you think is the more satisfactory? In what ways could they both be improved?

Précis 1 — *Death triumphs over all men — the strong, the weak, the noble, and the humble. Even glorious deeds of war count for nought. Virtue, and virtue alone, lasts through eternity.*
(29 words)

Précis 2 — *Death comes to everyone, humble peasants and kings alike. Even heroes of the battlefield must yield at last, captives to Fate. So, too, the fame of mighty deeds fades away in time. Only actions that are noble and just live on through the ages and never die.* (48 words)

PRÉCIS OF THE SONNET

No form of poetry offers more interesting problems in précis writing than the sonnet. In itself it is compact and closely knit together. It is a unit in thought and expression — a single emotion or a single clear-cut picture. In arrangement it is orderly, and bound within certain conventional rules. If it is a sonnet of the Shakespearean type, built up of three stanzas of four lines each, with a couplet at the end, the précis will naturally fall into three or four sentences, following the plan of the original. If it is divided into octave and sestet, the sonnet may often be condensed into two sentences, one for each division. More often still, a single well-constructed sen-

tence may suffice for the whole poem. Because of their peculiar adaptability to précis writing, a number of famous sonnets are printed together on pages 137–148 of this volume.

I

The sonnet which follows is by John Keats. Read it carefully, and then examine the two summaries which were written by high-school seniors in twelve minutes. Do you agree with the class that the shorter is the superior précis? Point out some of the excellent points in each.

THE HUMAN SEASONS

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of man:
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span:
He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honeyed cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminate, and by such dreaming high
Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves
His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close; contented so to look
On mists in idleness — to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

Précis 1 — *The mind of man has four seasons, even as the year has. In youth he has his happy Spring, with its fancies and thoughts of beauty. Then comes his Summer of daydreaming, when he is happiest of all. Autumn follows, his season of repose and quiet. Then his Winter comes, reminding him that he is mortal and that the end is near.* (63 words)

Précis 2 — *Man's life, too, has four seasons: his Spring of beautiful fancies; his Summer of thoughtful dreaming; his Autumn of idle contentment; his Winter of cold oblivion.* (27 words)

Paragraph-Study

It is in the last two years of high-school English that teachers find their pupils ready for a somewhat intensive study of paragraph construction. Such a study fits in admirably with practice in précis writing. Each supplements and helps the other. Especially does the close examination of a passage, to separate its central thought from unimportant details, assist young students to appreciate paragraph development from topic sentences. The writing of a clear, concise, well-arranged précis is also excellent training in paragraph composition.

Many of the selections in this book may therefore serve a twofold purpose: (1) they may be used as material for précis work; (2) they may be studied as model paragraphs of various forms of prose.

Following are some of the more common types of paragraphs, with references to selections in this volume that may be used as models for study and imitation.

1. Narrative paragraphs (Selections 1–13)
2. Climax in narration; holding point of story until end of paragraph (3, 5, 6, 7, 12)
3. Paragraphs of conversation (5, 7, 8, 9)
4. Descriptive paragraphs (73–85)
5. Descriptions of persons (76, 77, 78, 81)
6. Description by enumeration of specific detail; accumulation of descriptive terms (73, 74, 81, 83, 84, 85, 89)
7. Description by effect upon others; description by suggestion (13, 33, 79)
8. Paragraphs of exposition, or explanation (14–72 and 86–103)
9. Orderly arrangement in exposition; clearness in explanatory paragraphs (16, 20, 58, 66)
10. Topic sentence at opening of paragraphs (16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 35, 40, 44, 49, 53, 56, 57, 62, 65, 69, 70, 75, 88, 91, 92, 95)
11. Topic sentence within paragraphs (33, 34, 36, 38, 41, 61, 67, 96)
12. Topic sentence at end of paragraphs (28, 45, 71, 93, 99)

13. Paragraphs that pass from general statements to specific details (13, 19, 21, 25, 29, 42, 45, 51, 59, 92, 97)
14. Paragraphs of illustration and detail to prove opening statement (25, 27, 40, 46, 47, 53, 57, 64)
15. Repetition and restatement for clearness (32, 55, 63)
16. Short sentences for force or effect of rapid action (8, 13, 20, 24, 73, 87, 94, 95)
17. Coherence in paragraphs; connective words between sentences (7, 16, 20, 44, 57, 66, 67, 68, 87, 100, 101, 104)
18. Development of thought in paragraphs by question and answer (27, 37, 43, 52, 61, 64, 87)
19. Climax at end of paragraphs; climactic or ascending construction (21, 36, 40, 44, 47, 49, 63, 71, 84, 85, 88)
20. Summarizing sentences at end of paragraphs (12, 13, 16, 21, 29, 31, 44, 49, 56, 68, 73, 76, 85, 89, 97)
21. Transitions between paragraphs (5, 9, 11, 13, 86, 90, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108, 109)
22. Summarizing paragraphs (86, 95, 103, 107)

Review Questions on Précis Writing

The following questions are designed to serve both as a review of the previous pages and as topics for class discussion.

1. What are the origin and meaning of the term "précis"?
2. What is the difference between a précis and a paraphrase?
3. Which is the more difficult to write? Why?
4. How is précis writing chiefly practised in English schools to-day?
5. Why are so many young people unable to get the exact thought from a printed page?
6. What are the penalties of the skimming-habit of reading?
7. What is the difference between a well-trained rapid reader and a person who cannot focus his attention through a long paragraph?
8. How may précis writing improve reading-habits?
9. In what ways is the writing of précis an excellent training in composition?
10. What is meant by prolixity and verbosity? Why do they not flourish in précis work?
11. What is meant by "closely knit" sentences? What by an "epigrammatic" style?
12. How does précis writing tend to develop such sentences and such a style?
13. How may précis writing be "an intellectual exercise of the highest order"?
14. Where in the daily press do we find good illustrations of précis writing?
15. How may it be used in the handling of business correspondence?
16. Name other ways in which précis writing is of everyday, practical value.
17. How and where has the writing of précis been used on college entrance examinations?

36. Here is an attempt to summarize selection No. 29 on page 51. Point out six different ways in which it is a poor précis.

A Great Improvement

Précis — *The world has been learning how to catch criminals better than it used to. In the 18 cent. men were condemned to death for:* —

1. *forgery*
2. *stealing*
3. *injuring trees*
4. *cutting hop-bands*
5. *various other things.*

Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Virginia used to have a great many crimes punishable by death. *I agree with the author that this was very unjust, and that times have improved since then a great* deal.

Books on Précis Writing [1]

Evans, L. E., *A Handbook of Précis Writing.*
Cambridge (England): University Press. 1913

Gay, R. M., *Writing Through Reading.* Ch. iv.
Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press. 1920

Meiklejohn, J. M. D., *The Art of Writing English.* Ch. xiii.
New York: Appleton & Co. 1919

Murison, J. T., *Précis Writing.*
Cambridge (England): University Press. 1914

Pocock, G. N., *Précis Writing for Beginners.*
London: Blackie & Son. 1917

Robeson, F. E., *A Progressive Course in Précis Writing.*
Oxford (England): University Press. 1913

Thomson, C. L., *Précis Writing for Schools.*
London: Horace Marshall & Son. 1920

Ready, A. W., *Present-Day Précis.*
London: George Bell & Sons. 1922

Winbolt, S. E., *Matriculation Précis.*
London: George Bell & Sons. 1921

Teaching of English in England. (See Index)
London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1921

[1] The books and articles here listed do not constitute a complete bibliography of précis writing. Little has been written on the subject in America. Most of the books here named can be obtained only by importing them from England.

SELECTIONS FOR PRACTICE IN PRÉCIS WRITING

I

Narrative Passages

The short anecdotes of Part I are adapted to elementary work in précis writing. They may also be used as practice material in making oral abstracts. (See Introduction, page 23.)

Similar anecdotes may be found in magazines such as *The Youth's Companion*, *The American Boy*, and *The Open Road*. Certain types of news items, especially the so-called "human interest stories," make excellent narrative material for précis work with boys and girls. (See No. 4, page 36.)

1

There was a salt marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I assembled a number of my playfellows, and working with them diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, we brought them all away and built our little wharf. The next morning the workmen were surprised at missing the stones, which were found in our wharf. Inquiry was made after the removers; we were discovered and complained of; several of us were corrected by our fathers; and, though I pleaded the usefulness of the work, mine convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest.

(177 words)

— Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

Examine carefully these three summaries of Franklin's anecdote of his boyhood (No. 1). They were written in eight minutes by high-school pupils. What details of the original do they all omit? Why do you think they all include the thought of the last two lines? Is this necessary? Which of the three makes the most satisfactory précis? Give reasons for your decision.

Précis 1 — *Once, with the aid of my playmates, I made a wharf at the edge of a marsh by the mill-pond. To build this we secretly obtained some large stones from a house which was being constructed near by. But we were discovered, and though I pleaded the usefulness of our work, my father convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest.* (62 words)

Précis 2 — *With my playmates I once constructed a wharf on the edge of the mill-pond, carrying stones at night from a house which was going up near by. When we were caught, my father showed me the folly of being dishonest for any reason whatever.* (43 words)

Précis 3 — *As a small boy I learned that nothing was ever useful which was dishonest. My father taught me this important lesson when he was told that I had been stealing stones from a new house to build a wharf by the shore of the mill-pond.* (44 words)

2

I heard a true story, not long ago, of a lady, fond of dogs and accustomed to them, who went to visit a friend, the owner of a splendid but most formidable animal — a mastiff, if I remember rightly. The visitor did not happen to meet with the dog till she suddenly came upon him in a doorway she was about to pass through. It chanced somehow that she did not see him, and, stepping hastily, she unfortunately trod upon his foot or his tail. The huge fellow instantly laid hold of her; but before the dog's master, a short distance off, could hasten to the rescue, the lady had looked down, exclaiming quick as thought, "Oh, I beg your pardon!" whereupon the mastiff as quickly let go his grasp. It is plain that this lady had a proper respect for the feelings of dogs in general, prompting to an habitual kindly treatment of them, and instinct led her to apologize at once for the inadvertent injury, as she would have done to a person.

— *Atlantic Monthly:* "Dogs"

3

THE good ship had crashed at sunset against a sunken rock; the boats were too few, the sea was rushing in; sharks were thrusting their horrible black fins through the white breakers of the boiling surf; and amid the shrieks of women and children someone clamored that all should save themselves who could. Then, clear and loud, rang out the voice of the good colonel, bidding the men to their ranks. That order meant nothing less than death — death in those raging waters — death among those savage sharks — but it was instantly obeyed. In perfect order the boats were pushed from the shattered vessel, rowing the women and children to the shore, while, inch by inch, the ship sank down and down, but still under steadfast men, till the last great wave rolled over her, and, "obedient even unto death," brave men — loyal to their chief, loyal to England, loyal to God — sank to their noble burial under the bloody surf.

— FREDERICK W. FARRAR, *The Wreck of the Birkenhead*

4

[Special Dispatch to The Herald]

HINSDALE, July 5 — There was great excitement in the village to-night when word was passed that Constable Fassel's cow was walking on the railroad track in the direction of Pittsfield and that train No. 40 was due.

Business for the time was forgotten. Store clerks and nearly every one on the streets at the time rushed to the crossing, where Bess could be seen at a distance walking slowly up the track.

John Clarky, towerman, was summoned with his flag to signal the train. Clarky weighs 200 pounds. He ran along the track and reached the cow just as the express could be heard rounding the curve.

In desperation, Clarky waved the flag at the cow, but she failed to budge. The train came closer.

Suddenly Clarky dropped the flag, seized the cow by the tail, and with all the force of his 200 pounds, gave a mighty heave, and old Bess and Clarky landed in a pile in the gully as the train whizzed by.

When the crowd arrived, old Bess was sitting on Clarky's chest. The villagers unscrambled the mess and nobody was hurt.

— *The Boston Herald*

5

AMONG a party of Bostonians who spent some time in a hunting-camp in Maine were two college professors. No sooner had the learned gentlemen arrived than their attention was attracted by the unusual position of the stove, which was set on posts about four feet high.

This circumstance afforded one of the professors immediate opportunity to comment upon the knowledge that woodsmen gain by observation.

"Now," said he, "this man has discovered that heat emanating from a stove strikes the roof, and that the circulation is so quickened that the camp is warmed in much less time than would be required were the stove in its regular place on the floor."

But the other professor ventured the opinion that the stove was elevated to be above the window in order that cool and pure air might be had at night.

The host, being of a practical turn, thought that the stove was set high in order that a good supply of green wood might be placed under it.

After much argument, they called the guide and asked why the stove was in such a position.

The man grinned. "Well, gents," he explained, "when I brought the stove up the river I lost most of the stovepipe overboard; so we had to set the stove up that way so as to have the pipe reach through the roof."

— EDMUND AND WILLIAMS, *Toaster's Handbook*

6

OWING to his unusual bringing-up, Bruno had never become acquainted with the ordinary animals of the woods and fields, and so I was curious to see what he would do when he met any of them. Down in the garden one day I found a large fat toad, and when the bear was at lunch I placed the warty creature on the ground beside the saucer from which the cub was taking his food. Being quite hungry, at first he paid no attention to the intruder; but presently, as the saucer became empty, he caught sight of his curious visitor. With a jerk he raised his head, and for a moment, without moving a muscle, gazed in astonishment and with some misgiving at the strange monstrosity in front of him. His natural curiosity, however, soon overcame his doubtful frame of mind; he was a born

investigator and this thing must be looked into. Very cautiously he reached forward his paw and ever so gently he touched the curious thing on the back.

The toad did as toads usually do when tickled from behind. It hopped, and with such force that it went quite over the saucer. Simultaneously the bear stood erect. He had a puzzled look of amazement and dismay on his hairy visage; he appeared to be utterly overcome with astonishment. It didn't seem reasonable that an insignificant misshapen creature like that could, with no apparent effort, cover so much ground in one leap. Bruno's paws hung inertly in front of him and his tongue lolled stupidly from his mouth. His breath came in short explosive gasps.

Suddenly the toad hopped again, and with a *Whoof, whoof, whoof,* away ran the bear round the corner and out of sight. No more toads for him; one was enough for a lifetime!

— WILLIAM L. UNDERWOOD, *Wild Brother*

7

ONE day Lincoln and a certain judge who was an intimate friend of his were bantering each other about horses, a favorite topic. Finally Lincoln said:

"Well, look here, Judge! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make a horse-trade with you, only it must be upon these stipulations: Neither party shall see the other's horse until it is produced here in the courtyard of the hotel and both parties must trade horses. If either party backs out of the agreement, he does so under a forfeiture of twenty-five dollars."

"Agreed," cried the judge, and both he and Lincoln went in quest of their respective animals.

A crowd gathered, anticipating some fun, and when the judge returned first, the laugh was uproarious. He led, or rather dragged, at the end of a halter the meanest, boniest, rib-staring quadruped — blind in both eyes — that ever pressed turf. But presently Lincoln came along carrying over his shoulder a carpenter's sawhorse. Then the mirth of the crowd was furious. Lincoln solemnly set his horse down, and silently surveyed the judge's animal with a comical look of infinite disgust.

"Well, Judge," he finally said, "this is the first time I ever got the worst of it in a horse-trade."

— ANTHONY GROSS, *Lincoln's Own Stories*

man for three years. He would not keep up the line fence and I had to go to law and make him do it."

I looked out of the window once more and saw another light to the north of us, dimly visible in the darkness. "Well, then let us go to this other neighbor. I saw several men there as I came by."

"That man! I would n't trust him with fifty cents, and he would be sure to elect himself treasurer."

"Well, far across the pasture I see still another light. Shall we go there?"

"No, that man does n't know enough to go into the house when it rains."

Yet here was a man who planned to bring all the farmers of the country together! — H. W. COLLINGWOOD, *Hope Farm Notes*

10

"As I was once sailing," said he, "in a fine stout ship across the banks of Newfoundland, one of those heavy fogs which prevail in those parts rendered it impossible for us to see far ahead even in the daytime; but at night the weather was so thick that we could not distinguish any object at twice the length of the ship. I kept lights at the masthead, and a constant watch forward to look out for fishing smacks, which are accustomed to lie at anchor on the banks. The wind was blowing a smacking breeze, and we were going at a great rate through the water. Suddenly the watch gave the alarm of 'a sail ahead!' It was scarcely uttered before we were upon her. She was a small schooner, at anchor, with her broadside towards us. The crew were all asleep, and had neglected to hoist a light. We struck her just amidships. The force, the size, the weight of our vessel bore her down below the waves; we passed over her and were hurried on our course. As the crashing wreck was sinking beneath us, I had a glimpse of two or three half-naked wretches rushing from her cabin; they just started from their beds to be swallowed, shrieking, by the waves. I heard their drowning cry mingling with the wind. The blast that bore it to our ears swept us out of all farther hearing. I shall never forget that cry! It was some time before we could put the ship about, she was under such headway. We returned, as nearly as we could guess, to the place where the smack had anchored. We cruised about for several hours in the dense fog. We fired signal guns, and listened if we might hear the halloo of any survivors; but all was silent — we never saw or heard anything of them more."

— WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Sketch-Book*

11

Not long ago I learned of the tactics of a certain owl in defending itself that were both amusing and interesting. Whether the method is common among owls, I do not know; the bird practised it on more than one occasion.

The owl was a great big-headed creature captured in the woods and tied with a rope to a stake in the yard. Its enemy was the dog, which seemed to think that it was a common fowl. Of course the thing to do was to bark and to frighten it into flight. But barking had no effect whatever except to make the dreadful eyes glow more brightly and to produce a sort of sharp snapping that seemed to come from the bill, which was almost hidden among the feathers. After some time the dog made a fierce run.

Not a move did the owl make. Not a feather twitched; but the eyes glowed like fire, and *snap*, *snap* went the bill. Suddenly just as the dog came close the bird went over on its back in a heap. It was an undignified position surely, but there was a purpose in it.

The dog, assuming that the strange bird had fallen upon the ground in fright, dashed up and thrust his nose among the feathers. Instantly steel-like claws, sharp as knives, fastened upon him and with a yell of terror and pain he tore loose and ran for his life. From a safe distance he turned to look back. Solemn and apparently harmless stood the owl as before.

It was too much for the dog. Another rush brought him again within reaching distance of the strange enemy. Once more the bird fell on its back, and once more the dog thrust his nose into the feathers only to feel the cruel talons sink into his tender nose; with a yelp he fled. From the shelter of the porch he viewed the strange bird — no longer a dignified barn-fowl, but a dreadful monster to be let absolutely alone. — *The Youth's Companion*, April 19, 1923

12

ONE day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking further, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum*, but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently

two red ones to one black. The legions of these myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battlefield I ever trod while the battle was raging: internecine war, the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was manifest that their battle-cry was: Conquer or die. (325 words)

— HENRY D. THOREAU, *Walden*

Here is a précis of the above selection from *Walden* (No. 12). It was written in ten minutes by a high-school boy. What is the matter with it? After discussing its failings, and comparing it in detail with the original, write a summary of the selection which will be an improvement in every respect.

Précis — *One day I watched a battle between some black ants and some red ants. They fought with the pertinacity of bulldogs, and it was manifest that their battle cry was "Conquer or die."* (33 words)

13

THIRTEEN years have passed since, but it is all to me as if it had happened yesterday — the clanging of the fire-bells, the hoarse shouts of the firemen, the wild rush and terror of the streets; then the great hush that fell upon the crowd; the sea of upturned faces with the fire glow upon it; and up there, against the background of black smoke that poured from roof and attic, the boy clinging to the

narrow ledge, so far up that it seemed humanly impossible that help could ever come.

But even then it was coming. Up from the street, while the crew of the truck company were laboring with the heavy extension-ladder that at its longest stretch was many feet too short, crept four men upon long slender poles with crossbars, iron-hooked at the end. Standing in one window, they reached up and thrust the hook through the next one above, then mounted a story higher. Again the crash of glass, and again the dizzy ascent. Straight up the wall they crept, looking like human flies on the ceiling, and clinging as close, never resting, reaching one recess only to set out for the next; nearer and nearer in the race for life, until but a single span separated the foremost from the boy. And now the iron hook fell at his feet, and the fireman stood upon the step with the rescued lad in his arms, just as the pent-up flame burst lurid from the attic window, reaching with impotent fury for its prey. The next moment they were safe upon the great ladder waiting to receive them below.

Then such a shout went up! Men fell on each other's necks, and cried and laughed at once. Strangers slapped one another on the back with glistening faces, shook hands, and behaved generally like men gone suddenly mad. Women wept in the street. The driver of a car stalled in the crowd, who had stood through it all speechless, clutching the reins, whipped his horses into a gallop and drove away, yelling like a Comanche, to relieve his feelings. The boy and the rescuer were carried across the street without anyone knowing how. Policemen forgot their dignity and shouted with the rest. Fire, peril, terror, and loss were alike forgotten in the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.

Fireman John Binns was made captain of his crew, and the Bennett medal was pinned on his coat on the next parade-day.

— JACOB RIIS, *Heroes Who Fight Fire*

II

PARAGRAPHS OF EXPOSITION AND DISCUSSION

THESE selections in Part II, which average rather less than two hundred words, are intended for beginners in précis work. Many of them have been used successfully with pupils of the eleventh grade, or high-school juniors. The paragraphs are

arranged approximately in order of their difficulty. Beginning with No. 30, they are suitable for précis writing in the senior year. Summaries written by students are printed on pages 44, 52, 57.

14

WE cannot know whom we would; and those whom we know, we cannot have at our side when we most need them. Yet there is a society continually open to us, of people who will talk to us as long as we like — talk to us in the best words they can choose, and of the things nearest their hearts. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle, and can be kept waiting round us all day long, — kings and statesmen lingering patiently, not to grant audience, but to gain it! — in those plainly furnished and narrow anterooms, our bookcase shelves — we make no account of that company, perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long! (124 words)

— JOHN RUSKIN, *Sesame and Lilies*

Here is a précis of Ruskin's paragraph (No. 14). It was written in class by a high-school junior in eight minutes. Compare it with the original. Has the writer caught the central thought of the paragraph? Has he omitted any necessary details? What improvements would you suggest?

Précis — *Friends whom we can always have with us — kind and talkative friends — are books. But because they are so numerous, and so very well behaved, we sometimes forget them, and do not go to them for advice.* (37 words)

15

A MAN'S mind is not exactly like a Paris omnibus, on which the driver puts up the sign "Full" when it will hold no more passengers. We should laugh at any one who went about with such a sign on his forehead: "Full — no more ideas can get in here." A school, to be sure, is something like a railway train, which all the passengers have to leave when the journey's end is reached: "All out for Boston — for New York — for Chicago! All out for the Grammar School, for the High School, for College! Make room for a new set of passengers and a new set of scholars." But however far the mind is carried along in education by teachers, it cannot be said to have reached its

journey's end. It has still something to learn, and, if there are no teachers to be had, it can teach itself.

— WENDELL P. GARRISON, *Parables for School and Home*

16

A FEW years ago an English manufacturer, seeking the explanation of America's ability to produce an excellent car so cheaply, made an interesting experiment. He obtained three American automobiles, all of the same "standardized" make, and gave them a long and racking tour over English highways. Workmen then took apart the three cars and threw the disjointed remains into a promiscuous heap. Every bolt, bar, gas-tank, motor, wheel, and tire was taken from its accustomed place and piled up, a hideous mass of rubbish. Workmen then painstakingly put together three cars from these disordered elements. Three chauffeurs jumped on these cars, and they immediately started down the road and made a long journey just as acceptably as before. The Englishman had learned the secret of American success with automobiles. The one word "standardization" explained the mystery.

— BURTON J. HENDRICK, *The Age of Big Business*

17

No growing boy can afford to stop eating for a week, or a day; and no youth, ambitious to grow intellectually, can afford to let a day go by without a little solid reading. The task need not be long: twenty minutes' physical exercise will keep up the muscles, once they have been developed, and a half hour's keen intellectual work will keep up one's culture, providing the youth is alert and awake all day long, looking out upon life with hungry eyes, and harvesting truth on every side. A notebook and lead pencil will make a record of a score of great facts, picked up by the youth who has open vision and an observing mind.

— NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS, *The Contagion of Character*

18

I WAS always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. Even when a mere child I began my travels, and made many tours of discovery into foreign parts and unknown regions of my native city, to the frequent alarm of my parents and the emolument of the town-crier. As I grew into

boyhood, I extended the range of observations. My holiday afternoons were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I made myself familiar with all its places famous in history or fable. I knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen. I visited the neighboring villages, and added greatly to my stock of knowledge by noting their habits and customs and conversing with their sages and great men. I even journeyed one long summer's day to the summit of the most distant hill, whence I stretched my eye over many a mile of *terra incognita*, and was astonished to find how vast a globe I inhabited.

— WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Sketch Book*

19

THOUSANDS of young women have to go to work in ways that seem to them purely mechanical, with no future beyond a dollar or two more a week. There are more than eighty-six thousand stenographers in the United States, and by far the most of them spend their little leisure curling their hair and elaborating their blouses, seeing in their work no possible gain but a husband. Now and then comes one who realizes that here is the chance of a lifetime to learn the ways of business; she uses her intelligence as well as her hands, and presently she is promoted from the routine work, the forms and circulars, to the more intimate business — for an employer is quick to profit by any sign of ability or education in his stenographer. She uses her spare hours to improve her English and keep up with the times, and in a few years she graduates into a business of her own; or sometimes she becomes her employer's confidential secretary, answering letters with only a word or two of suggestion, and receiving twenty-five or thirty dollars a week instead of the six dollars at which she started.

— JULIET W. TOMPKINS, *Women Who Work*

20

WHEN you shake hands, always look your friend in the eye. Practise that with the family to-night; have a little secret practice after supper in the important art of shaking hands. Hold out your hand in a hearty, hospitable fashion, take the other's palm in a firm grasp and look the other kindly in the eye. That is the first position. Only one more rule need be noted. Let your grasp be firm, but not too muscular. Avoid both the flabby and the fighting handshake.

recesses. When spring and summer come, they let their tails grow, and delight in whisking them about in the wind, or letting them be whisked about by it; for these tails are poor passive things, with very little will of their own, and bend in whatever direction the wind chooses to make them. The leaves make a deal of noisy whispering. I have sometimes thought I could understand them, as they talk with each other, and that they seemed to think they made the wind as they wagged forward and back. Remember what I say. The next time you see a tree waving in the wind, recollect that it is the tail of a great underground, many-armed, polypus-like creature, which is as proud of its caudal appendage, especially in summer-time, as a peacock of his gorgeous expanse of plumage.

— OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, *Over the Teacups*

23

SUCCESS grows out of struggles to overcome difficulties. If there were no difficulties, there would be no success. If there were nothing to struggle or compete for, there would be nothing achieved. It is well, therefore, that men should be under the necessity of exerting themselves. In this necessity for exertion we find the chief source of human advancement — the advancement of individuals as of nations. It has led to most of the splendid mechanical inventions and improvements of the age. It has stimulated the shipbuilder, the merchant, the manufacturer, the machinist, the tradesman, the skilled workman. In all departments of productive industry, it has been the moving power. It has developed the resources of this and of other countries — the resources of the soil, and the character and qualities of the men who dwell upon it. It seems to be absolutely necessary for the purpose of stimulating the growth and culture of every individual. It is deeply rooted in man, leading him ever to seek after, and endeavor to realize, something better and higher than he has yet attained. — SAMUEL SMILES, *Thrift*

24

WE can forgive the absence of any quality except kindliness of heart. And when a man lacks that, we blame him; we will not forgive him. This is, of course, scandalous. A man is born as he is born. And he can as easily add a cubit to his stature as add kindliness to his heart. The feat never has been done. And yet we blame those who have not kindliness. We have the incredible, insuffer-

able, and odious audacity to blame them. We think of them as though they had nothing to do but go into a shop and buy kindliness. I hear you say that kindliness of heart can be "cultivated." Well, I hate to have even the appearance of contradicting you, but it can be cultivated only in the botanical sense. You can't cultivate violets on a nettle. A philosopher has enjoined us to suffer fools gladly. He had more usefully enjoined us to suffer ill-natured persons gladly. — ARNOLD BENNETT, *Mental Efficiency*

25

EVERY feat of heroism makes us forever indebted to the man who performed it. The whole nation is better, the whole nation is braver, because Farragut, lashed in the rigging of the Hartford, forged past the forts and over the unseen death below, to try his wooden stem against the ironclad hull of the Confederate ram; because Cushing pushed his little torpedo-boat through the darkness to sink beside the sinking Albemarle. All daring and courage, all iron endurance of misfortune, all devotion to the ideal of honor and the glory of the flag make for a finer and nobler type of manhood. All of us lift our heads higher, because those of our countrymen whose trade it is to meet danger have met it well and bravely. All of us are poorer for every base or ignoble deed done by an American, for every instance of selfishness or weakness or folly on the part of the people as a whole. If ever we had to meet defeat at the hands of a foreign foe, or had to submit tamely to wrong or insult, every man among us worthy of the name of American would feel dishonored and debased. On the other hand, the memory of every triumph won by Americans, by just so much helps to make each American nobler and better. Every man among us is more fit to meet the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, because of the perils over which, in the past, the nation has triumphed; because of the blood and sweat and tears, the labor and the anguish, through which, in the days that have gone, our forefathers moved on to triumph. — THEODORE ROOSEVELT, *American Ideals*

26

WITH his only means of earning a living destroyed, necessity compelled the elder Carnegie to seek occupation somewhere beyond the limits of the quiet Scotch town. Across the Atlantic a great new republic was just reaching its young manhood. Its fast-sailing

clippers had made the Stars and Stripes of its flag known on every sea, and tales of the daring Yankee skippers had brought to complacent England a rude awakening from her peaceful sense of maritime supremacy. Within its boundaries even greater developments were taking form under the firm hands of the Americans. A rich inland empire was disclosing wealth beyond dreams of men: mines of iron and coal and various metals, forests unexplored and seemingly limitless, millions of rich acres unturned by the ploughshare and destined in time to come to feed the world. Already minds of vision were organizing railroads to bring together these riches and to make them accessible to the nation as a whole. All over the world people were turning from war-scarred and time-worn nations oppressed by the rule of kings to this free land of promise. Men and women and little children crossed the broad Atlantic, to live happily in a country where men ruled themselves by self-imposed laws, and where education gave to all an equal opportunity. And with these went also the Carnegie family, to add their sturdy strength to the great Republic.

— JOSEPH HUSBAND, *Americans by Adoption*

27

THE Minuteman of the Revolution! Who was he? He was the husband, the father, who left the plow in the furrow, the hammer on the bench, and, kissing wife and children, marched to die or be free. The Minuteman of the Revolution! He was the old, the middle-aged, the young. He was Captain Miles, of Acton, who reproved his men for jesting on the march. He was Deacon Josiah Haines, of Sudbury, eighty years old, who marched with his company to South Bridge, at Concord, then joined in that hot pursuit to Lexington, and fell as gloriously as Warren at Bunker Hill. He was James Hayward, of Acton, twenty-two years old, foremost in that deadly race from Charlestown to Concord, who raised his piece at the same moment with a British soldier, each exclaiming, "You are a dead man." The Briton dropped, shot through the heart. Young Hayward fell, mortally wounded. "Father," said he, "I started with forty balls; I have three left. I never did such a day's work before." This was the Minuteman of the Revolution! The rural citizen trained in a common school, the town meeting, who carried a bayonet that thought, and whose gun, loaded with a principle, brought down — not a man, but a system.

— GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, Oration delivered April 19, 1876

28

TALKING with a young man about success and a career, Doctor Samuel Johnson advised the youth to "know something about everything, and everything about something." The advice was good — in Doctor Johnson's day, when London was an isolated village, and it took a week to get the news from Paris, Rome, and Berlin. To-day, if a man were to take all knowledge for his province and try to know something about everything, the allotment of time would give one minute to each subject, and soon the youth would flit from topic to topic as a butterfly from flower to flower, and life would be about as evanescent as the butterfly, that lives for the present honey and moment. To-day commercial, literary, or inventive success means concentration.

— NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS, *The Contagion of Character*

29

THE world has been learning to discriminate more carefully between the degrees of crime. In the eighteenth century men were condemned to death for forgery; for stealing from a shop to the value of five shillings or from a house to the value of forty shillings; for malicious injury to trees, cattle, or fish-ponds; for the cutting of hop-bands from the poles in a plantation. Within eighty years capital punishment has been inflicted in England for sheep-stealing and for robbery from a house. The laws of Pennsylvania at the time of the Revolution enumerated twenty crimes punishable with death; in Virginia and Kentucky there were twenty-seven. Modern legislation recognizes the futility as well as the fundamental injustice of such crass and indiscriminate retribution, and reserves the final penalty for the supreme crime against the life of the individual or the State. — HENRY VAN DYKE, *Essays in Application*

30

THE truth about conversation is that, to make anything of it, people must realize it as a definite mental occupation, and not merely a dribbling into words of casual thoughts. To do it well implies a certain deliberate intention, a certain unselfishness, a certain zest. The difficulty is that it demands a catholicity of interests, a full mind. Yet it does not do to have a subject on the brain, and to introduce it into all companies. The pity is that conversation is not

more recognized as a definite accomplishment. People who care about the success of social gatherings are apt to invite an instrumentalist or a singer, or a man with what may be called parlor tricks; but few people are equally careful to plant out two or three conversationalists among their parties, or to take care that their conversationalists are provided with a sympathetic background.

— ARTHUR C. BENSON, *From a College Window*

31

CONCERNING stairs: I perhaps have more feeling for them than most; but I am quite sure that I speak at least for a large minority. It is the flatness of the flat, its very condensed and restricted coziness, its very lack of upstairs and downstairs, which prevents it from ever attaining completely the atmosphere of a home. The feet which cross the floor above my head are those of another family; the sounds which reach me from below are the noises of strangers; the life horizontal of the flat serves its convenient use, but only emphasizes the independence and self-respect of the life vertical, master of the floor above, master likewise of the basement. I feel more human, less like some ingeniously constructed doll, when I can take my candle in hand and go upstairs to sleep. I want no bungalow. There is something fine in going to sleep even one flight nearer the stars — and away from the dining-room. (160 words)

— RALPH BERGENGREN, *The Servantless Cottage*

Here is a short, but rather effective précis of Mr. Bergengren's paragraph (No. 31). Notice that the author begins and closes his abstract with a quotation from the original. Is this a good plan? Has he omitted any necessary details? Why may the précis of this type of paragraph be very short?

Précis — *It is the "flatness of the flat" — the sounds of other families than my own above me and below me — that takes from an apartment the feeling of home. Then when I go to bed, I want to go upstairs to sleep just a little "nearer the stars."* (48 words)

32

THE immensely large capital now required for the conduct of a daily newspaper in a great city has had important consequences. It has made the newspaper more of an institution, less of a personal

organ. Men no longer designate journals by the owner's or editor's name. It used to be Bryant's paper, or Greeley's paper, or Raymond's, or Bennett's. Now it is simply *Times*, *Herald*, *Tribune*, and so on. No single personality can stamp itself upon the whole organism. It is too vast. It is a great piece of property, to be administered with skill; it is a carefully planned organization which best produces the effect when the personalities of those who work for it are swallowed up. The individual withers, but the newspaper is more and more. Journalism becomes impersonal. There are no more great editors, but there is a finer esprit de corps, better "team play," an institution more and more firmly established and able to justify itself.

— ROLLO OGDEN, *The Profession of Journalism*

33

IT was the hottest night of the summer at Coney Island. All day a steaming curtain of mist hid the sun from the eyes of men and women and children; yet proved no shield against the blasting heat. Humidity and not the sun-rays had been the enemy. And when a claret-colored disk showed dully through the nacreous vapors just before setting, we knew that the night would bring little respite from the horror of the waking hours. It was a time to try men's nerves. The average obligations of life had faded into the abyss of general indifference, one that had absorbed the exactions of daily behavior — politeness, order, sobriety, and decency. Add a few notches upward on the thermometer, and mankind soon reverts to the habits and conditions of his primitive ancestors. The ape, the tiger, and the jackal in all of us come to the surface with shocking rapidity. We are, in a reasonable analysis, the victims of our environment, the slaves of temperature. Heat and cold have produced the African and the Laplander. At Coney Island during a torrid spell we are very near the soil; we cast to the winds modesty, prudence, and dignity. Then, life is worth living only when stripped to the skin. — JAMES HUNEKER, *New Cosmopolis*

34

YOU may have wondered why you fail to carry over into your writing the vigor and ease of your ordinary conversation. The probability is that when your work is criticized as stiff and formal, on the one hand, or as tame and colorless, on the other, you are in your

writing simply not being fair to yourself. You have associated with the term "composition" ideas of unreal dignity or owlishness. One often detects this tone in the letters of practical men who do not write much. Or you may have been so disturbed by the notion that you must be clear, correct, and concise, and must diligently herd the "sacred cows of composition," — unity, coherence, and emphasis, — that your writing has lost all the native hue of resolution; all the joy has gone out of it; and it has become flaccid, pale, tame. All writing done without joy — or love, or hate, or pride, or other quality of earnestness — is like that. In your conversation you were not thinking of rules; you were enjoying yourself. In your writing you were miserable; and the misery shows just as plainly in the one as the joy in the other.

— ROBERT M. GAY, *Fact, Fancy, and Opinion*

35

WHAT an incubus we males carry with us in the dull and solemn monotony of our clothes! They are serious as the school history of England used in *Alice in Wonderland*, to dry the wet company about the pool of tears. "It 's the dryest thing I know," said the Dodo. Our garments, we boast, are quiet, staid, and unobtrusive — yes, like the mien of the drooping horse in the treadmill! But not because any one really likes them. It is simply because we are too stupefied by custom, too much cowed by the threat of fashion, to do otherwise than as our neighbors do. Who can blame us? To put a feather in our cap might lose us our job, and there are many better causes for self-sacrifice than dress reform. But let us never again insult children or childlike races by inviting them to step up to our level and become as dull and ugly as we are in our gait, our dress, and our behavior. Let us clearly recognize that we have stepped down to a lower level when we gave up playfulness and adopted the merely serious carriage and the "quiet" clothes of the modern civilized adult. — RICHARD C. CABOT, *What Men Live By*

36

THE game is a great feature in morale, and, to a certain extent, in ethics. But the tendency to surrender too much to group-loyalty, and to idolize victory and aggressiveness generally, is always present and often overshadowing. The defects of the strong Rooseveltian type become sufficiently apparent, along with its virtues. People

fundamental than the demand for pleasure. It shows itself in early childhood, it steers the ambitions of manhood, its fulfillment is the crown of old age. The degree of the chance to achieve it is the measure of the desirability of a country as a place to live in; and it is fair to say that those who have come to America of their own accord have done so because they believed that these United States, above all countries of the world, give men this chance to make the most of themselves.

— WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON, in Introduction to *Americans by Adoption*, by Joseph Husband

39

"LEISURE and I," said Wesley, "have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me." This resolution was made in the prime of life, and never was resolution more punctually observed. "Lord, let me not live to be useless!" was the prayer which he uttered after seeing one whom he had long known as an active and useful magistrate, reduced by age to be "a picture of human nature in disgrace, feeble in body and mind, slow of speech and understanding." He was favored with a constitution vigorous beyond that of ordinary men, and with an activity of spirit which is even rarer than his singular felicity of health and strength. Ten thousand cares of various kinds, he said, were no more weight or burden to his mind than ten thousand hairs were to his head. But in truth his only cares were those of superintending the work of his ambition, which continually prospered under his hands. Real cares he had none: no anxieties, no sorrows, no grief which touched him to the quick. His manner of life was the most favorable that could have been devised for longevity. He rose early, and lay down at night with nothing to keep him waking, or trouble him in sleep. His mind was always in a pleasurable and wholesome state of activity, he was temperate in his diet, and lived in perpetual locomotion; and frequent change of air is perhaps, of all things, that which most conduces to joyous health and long life: (267 words)

— ROBERT SOUTHEY, *Life of Wesley*

Following are three summaries of the paragraph from Southey (No. 39). They were all written by boys in the winter term of their senior year. Which one is the best? Compare

the ways in which the three writers went about their task. Suggest improvements, and then try to write, in ten minutes, a still more satisfactory précis.

Précis 1 — *Wesley took a vow to be busy as long as he could preserve his health. His naturally strong constitution, his healthy manner of living, and his unusually carefree life made it possible for him to be untroubled in his sleep, and intensely active when he was awake. Thus he kept both his mind and body sound during the many years that he lived.* (63 words)

Précis 2 — *Resolving in the prime of life never to be idle or useless, Wesley carried out his resolution to the letter. Healthy and strong, active in mind, free from anxiety and sorrow, and most careful in all his habits, he lived a long life of prosperity and happiness.* (47 words)

Précis 3 — *Wesley, a man of vigorous constitution and great activity of mind, lived a long and useful life, free from sorrow, by holding firmly to his resolution to be forever busy and never idle.* (33 words)

40

YOUR mind, like your body, is a thing whereof the powers are developed by effort. That is a principal use, as I see it, of hard work in studies. Unless you train your body you can't be an athlete, and unless you train your mind you can't be much of a scholar. The four miles an oarsman covers at top speed is in itself nothing to the good, but the physical capacity to hold out over the course is thought to be of some worth. So a good part of what you learn by hard study may not be permanently retained, and may not seem to be of much final value, but your mind is a better and more powerful instrument because you have learned it. "Knowledge is power," but still more, the faculty of acquiring and using knowledge is power. If you have a trained and powerful mind, you are bound to have stored it with something, but its value is more in what it can do, what it can grasp and use, than in what it contains; and if it were possible — as it is not — to come out of college with a trained and disciplined mind and nothing useful in it, you would still be ahead, and still, in a manner, educated. Think of your mind as a muscle to be developed; think of it as a searchlight that is to reveal the truth to you; and don't cheat it or neglect it.

— EDWARD S. MARTIN, *A Father to His Freshman Son*

41

No boy can afford to neglect his work, and with a boy work, as a rule, means study. Of course there are occasionally brilliant successes in life where the man has been worthless as a student when a boy. To take these exceptions as examples would be as unsafe as it would be to advocate blindness because some blind men have won undying honor by triumphing over their physical infirmity and accomplishing great results in the world. I am no advocate of senseless and excessive cramming in studies, but a boy should work, and should work hard, at his lessons — in the first place, for the sake of what he will learn, and in the next place, for the sake of the effect upon his own character of resolutely settling down to learn it. Shiftlessness, slackness, indifference in studying, are almost certain to mean inability to get on in other walks of life. Of course, as a boy grows older it is a good thing if he can shape his studies in the direction toward which he has a natural bent; but whether he can do this or not, he must put his whole heart into them. I do not believe in mischief-doing in school hours, or in the kind of animal spirits that results in making bad scholars; and I believe that those boys who take part in rough, hard play outside of school will not find any need for horseplay in school. While they study they should study just as hard as they play football in a match game. It is wise to obey the homely old adage, "Work while you work; play while you play." — THEODORE ROOSEVELT, *The Strenuous Life*

42

STRING is one of the commonest of the pet economies. Have n't you a friend (I have) who insists, always and inevitably, upon stopping to untie the knots in order to save the string about the parcel? No matter what haste or impatience attends the opening; no matter that there is a great wad of just such strings on the nail in the pantry. Untied it must be, and the string saved. It might come handy. Now I stand here and denounce that practice as an irrational, illogical absurdity. I am emancipated from the string habit, and I know. There is nothing, except matches, so cheap in this day and age, as string. The investment of fifteen cents will stock a household with string enough, of assorted sizes, to last a year. Yes, for that amount you may revel in string — string without knots or tangles, and of interminable length. No fifteen-cent investment that I know of gives such ample and satisfactory returns in a year as the

string investment. And, on the other hand, I know of no more laborious way to save fifteen cents a year than by picking knots and cherishing twine that comes with every package. But I need not argue the case. The string economy is no more rational than my collar-button or Mr. Rockefeller's golf-ball economy. It is just one of those pet economies of which I am speaking.

— *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Pet Economies"

43

A CERTAIN amount of discipline is necessary for a dog. If left to his own devices, he is apt to become somewhat dissipated, to spend his evenings out, to scatter among many the affection which should be reserved for a few. But, on the other hand, a dog may easily receive too much discipline; he becomes like the child of a despotic father. A dog perfectly trained, from the martinet point of view, — one who never "jumps up" on you, never lays an entreating paw on your arm, never gets into a chair, or enters the drawing-room, — such a dog is a sad sight to one who really knows and loves the animal. It is against his nature to be so repressed. Over-careful housewives and persons who are burdened with costly surroundings talk of injury to carpets and other furniture if the dog has a right of entry everywhere in the house. But what is furniture for? Is it for display, is it a guaranty of the wealth of the owners, or is it for use? Blessed are they whose furniture is so inexpensive or so shabby that children and dogs are not excluded from its sacred precincts. Perhaps the happiest household to which I ever had the honor of being admitted was one where it was sometimes a little difficult to find a comfortable vacant chair: the dogs always took the arm-chairs. Alas, where are those hospitable chairs now? Where the dogs that used to sit up in them, and wink and yawn, and give their paws in humorous embarrassment?

— HENRY C. MERWIN, *Dogs and Men*

44

IT is a base untruth to say that happy is the nation that has no history. Thrice happy is the nation that has a glorious history. Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat. If in 1861 the men who loved the Union had believed that peace was

the end of all things, and war and strife the worst of all things, and had acted up to their belief, we should have saved hundreds of thousands of lives, we should have saved hundreds of millions of dollars. Moreover, besides saving all the blood and treasure we then lavished, we should have prevented the heartbreak of many women, the dissolution of many homes, and we should have spared the country those months of gloom and shame when it seemed as if our armies marched only to defeat. We could have avoided all this suffering simply by shrinking from strife. And if we had thus avoided it, we should have shown that we were weaklings, and that we were unfit to stand among the great nations of the earth. Thank God for the iron in the blood of our fathers, the men who upheld the wisdom of Lincoln, and bore sword or rifle in the armies of Grant! Let us, the children of the men who carried the great Civil War to a triumphant conclusion, praise the God of our fathers that ignoble counsels of peace were rejected; that the suffering and loss, the blackness of sorrow and despair, were unflinchingly faced, and the years of strife endured; for in the end the slave was freed, the Union restored, and the mighty American republic placed once more as a helmeted queen among nations.

— THEODORE ROOSEVELT, *The Strenuous Life*

III

LONGER PARAGRAPHS OF EXPOSITION AND DISCUSSION

SOME study and practice of précis writing will be necessary before high-school pupils can successfully summarize the paragraphs of Part **III**. They are specially suited to advanced work in the senior year. Those passages taken from the Comprehensive English papers of the College Entrance Examination Board are starred (*) and followed by the letters C. E. E. B. See Introduction, page 8.

Summaries, written in class by high-school students, are printed on pages 61, 66, 70, 71, 79.

45*

C. E. E. B., 1919

In mediæval and early modern times those articles only could be transported for any considerable distance which had great value in small bulk. Such were drugs, spices, fine cloths, rare silks and cottons, choice weapons, and armor. These were used chiefly by the small circle of the rich; trade in them did not affect the mass of the population. Where water transportation could be used there was indeed some possibility of trade and exchange in the bulkier commodities. For this reason England, with her insular position and much-indented seacoast, was able at a comparatively early stage to export such commodities as wool, copper, and tin, and to develop in some degree the geographical division of labor. With the improvement and enlargement of vessels, the greater security of the seas, and the use of the mariner's compass, trade by water gradually grew to greater and greater dimensions. A still further extension came in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when parts of the interior of the civilized countries were tapped by canals. But the most far-reaching development of the geographical division of labor came with the railway; for the railway can reach all parts of the land. The industry of almost every part of the world has been transformed by this mighty solvent.[1] (216 words)

The précis that follows was written in fifteen minutes by a high-school boy about to go up for his final examinations. Notice that it is more than a third as long as the original. Is this necessary? What minor details has the writer included? Make a précis of his summary to see how much you can cut it down.

Précis — *Until recent times the only goods that were transported any great distance were those which were small and easy to carry. Countries reached by transportation on the ocean, and later by canals, were the first to develop commercially, because merchandise of large bulk could be carried on boats. It was the railway, however, that brought the most important advance to industry; for by railroads came complete and easy distribution of man's labor into all parts of the world.* (78 words)

[1] Reprinted from *The Principles of Economics*, by **F. W. Taussig**, by permission of **The Macmillan Company**, publishers.

46

FROM Greenock to Glasgow resounded the clangor of hammers and the thunder of mechanism. Plate by plate, rivet by rivet, and beam by beam, there grew before my very eyes the shapes of half a hundred ships. I see more clearly still, now, what I meant by insisting on the conservation of intellectual energy. My friend points piteously to past periods, and says, "They can't do it now, old man." And I smile and point to those steel steamships, growing in grace and beauty as I watch, and I say, "They could n't do *that* then, old man!" Just as the physical energy in this universe is a definite totality, so is the intellectual or spiritual energy. The Da Vinci of to-day leaves his Last Supper undepicted; but he drives a Tube through the London clay. Cellini no longer casts a Perseus and alternates a murder with a *Trattato;* he builds engines and railroads and ships. Michael Angelo smites no sibyls from the living stone, but he has carved the face of the very earth to his design. And though no fair youth steps forth to paint the unearthly nimbus-light around the brows of his beloved Madonna, I count it fair exchange that from every reef and point of this our seagirt isle there shines a radiance none can watch without a catching of the breath.

— WILLIAM MCFEE, *An Ocean Tramp*

47

FROM the knowledge and the learning of the scholar there ought to be developed an abiding faith. What is the teaching of all history? That which is necessary for the welfare and progress of the human race has never been destroyed. The discoverers of truth, the teachers of science, the makers of inventions, have passed to their last reward, but their works have survived. The Phœnician galleys and the civilization which was born of their commerce have perished, but the alphabet which that people perfected remains. The shepherd kings of Israel, the temple and empire of Solomon, have gone the way of all the earth, but the Old Testament has been preserved for the inspiration of mankind. The ark of the covenant and the seven-pronged candlestick have passed from human view; the inhabitants of Judæa have been dispersed to the ends of the earth, but the New Testament has survived and increased in its influence among men. The glory of Athens and Sparta, the grandeur of the Imperial City, are a long-lost memory, but the poetry of Homer and Vergil, the

of both sides entered the army with high moral purposes, their motives may save them from the worst effects of their life as soldiers, as it did our good men in that time of trial; but there were tens of thousands who were so greatly harmed by that conflict that they were afterwards unfitted for their duties as citizens. Those who know best what civilization and the true citizenship on which it rests really is, see clearly that in all men, however well established, there is still the remnant of the ancient cruel, lawless, savage motives. It needs all the good influences of family and social life to keep down these vile tendencies of men. War inevitably turns men towards the level of the beast.

— NATHANIEL S. SHALER, *The Citizen*

50

"BUT what I say now, as I said at the beginning, is that Latin and Greek are dead languages. For us, for the future, for the competitions of the modern industrial and social era, the classics are no good. For a few ornamental persons a knowledge of them may be a pleasing accomplishment. But they are luxuries, not necessaries. They belong to a bygone age. They have nothing to tell us about the things we most need to know — chemistry and physics, engineering and intensive agriculture, the discovery of new forms and applications of power, the organization of labor and the distribution of wealth, the development of mechanical skill and the increase of production: these are the things that we must study. I say they are the only things that will count for success in the new democracy."

"That is what *you* say," replied Professor De Vries dryly. "But the wisest men of the world have said something very different. No democracy ever has survived, or ever will survive, without an aristocracy at the heart of it. Not an aristocracy of birth and privilege, but one of worth and intelligence; not a band of hereditary lords, but a company of well-chosen leaders. Their value will depend not so much upon their technical knowledge and skill as upon the breadth of their mind, the clearness of their thought, the loftiness of their motives, the balance of their judgment, and the strength of their devotion to duty. For the cultivation of these things I say — pardon the apparent contradiction of what *you* said — I say the study of the classics has been and still is of the greatest value."

— HENRY VAN DYKE, *The Valley of Vision*

51

MR. WALTER LIPPMANN has recently pointed out that men do not act in accordance with the facts and forces of the world as it is, but in accordance with the "picture" of it they have in their heads. Nowhere do the form and pressure of the real world differ more sharply from the picture in men's heads than among different social and racial groups in industry. Nor is anywhere the accuracy of the picture of more importance. An open-hearth furnace helper, working the twelve-hour day, and a Boston broker, owning fifty shares of Steel Preferred, hold, as a rule, strikingly different pictures of the same forces and conditions. But what is of greater importance is that director, manager, foreman, by reason of training, interest, or tradition, are often quite as unable to guess at the picture in the worker's head — and hence to understand his actions — as the more distant stockholder. — CHARLES R. WALKER, *Steel*

52

BUT the supreme objection to gambling in all its forms, whether in sport or in speculative business, is that it works harm and loss to society. As soon as any practice or conduct is found to be socially hurtful, it thereby becomes wrong, whatever men may have thought of it before. Does not all morality rise to consciousness through the fact of social advantage or injury? Now, the long and costly experience of mankind bears uniform testimony against gambling, till at last the verdict of civilization has become as nearly unanimous as human judgment can be, that it is an intolerable nuisance. It is a dangerous and unsocial form of excitement; it hurts character, demoralizes industry, breeds quarrels, tempts men to self-destruction; and it works special injustice to women and children. We may not know precisely why morphine preys upon the nervous system and has to be labeled "poisonous." The fact is the main consideration. So with the stimulus or excitation of gambling. Grant that I profess myself willing to pay for my fun. The fun is degrading, like the prize fight or bear-baiting.

— CHARLES F. DOLE
"The Ethics of Speculation," *The Atlantic Monthly*

53

THE literature of any age reflects current public opinion, and if we would know how women were regarded and what qualities were thought most desirable in them, all we need do is read the literature of that period. Euripides reflects Greek sentiment when he makes Iphigenia say to Achilles, "Better a thousand women should perish than one man cease to see the light." The Latin motto, *Bene vixit qui bene latuit* (She has lived well who has kept well concealed), speaks eloquently of woman's place in the days of the Roman Empire. In the metrical romances of the mediæval period, women seem to live only to grace a tournament or to furnish opportunity for a feat of chivalry on the part of some knight-errant. In Chaucer's time such stories as that of Patient Griselda force us to the conclusion that she was the most highly esteemed woman who patiently endured the grossest injustice and the most cruel wrong. The weak and sentimental women of Fielding, Richardson, and other eighteenth-century novelists call forth our pity when we realize the purposeless lives they were expected to lead. We must not overlook the fact, however, that in every age there have been marked exceptions to the general rule. From the time of Deborah, or long before, each age has had its "new women," its nonconformists, who insisted upon doing their own thinking. Most of Shakespeare's heroines are of this type. (238 words)

—LAURA A. KNOTT, *Vesper Talks to Girls*

Study the following précis of Miss Knott's paragraph. It was written by a senior high-school girl of unusual ability. In what ways does this ability appear in her abstract? Can you suggest any improvements?

Précis — *Since literature is a mirror of public opinion, if we wish to know how women were esteemed in various ages, all we need to do is to read the great literary masters of past time. From Euripides of ancient Greece to the eighteenth century, we find woman kept in the background as the plaything of man. Nevertheless, every age has had its exceptions, and there has always existed the "new woman," who thought for herself and led the advance of her sex.* (83 words)

54*

C. E. E. B., 1920

MR. HENRY JAMES once suggested, as a test of the rank of a novel, that we ask ourselves whether it aroused in us the emotions of surprise or the emotions of recognition. If it amuses us only by the ingenuity of its story and by the startling effect of its unsuspected incidents, it stands on a lower plane than if it please us by revealing unexpected recesses of the human soul, which we accept as veracious although we have never before perceived them. The same test is as valid in the theatre as in the library; and in a serious drama, as well as in high comedy, mere surprise must always be subordinate to the subtler recognition. We expect the dramatist to explain us to ourselves and to turn his lantern on the hidden corners of character, whether tragic or comic. When we see a personage in a play do this, or when we hear him say that, we ought to feel instantly that, however unforeseen the deed or the saying may be, it was precisely what that personage would have done or said at that particular moment of his life.

— BRANDER MATTHEWS, *A Study of the Drama*

55

CONSTANT experience has shown me that great purity and elegance of style, with a graceful elocution, cover a multitude of faults in either a speaker or a writer. For my own part, I confess (and I believe most people are of my mind) that if a speaker should ungracefully mutter or stammer out to me the sense of an angel, deformed by barbarisms and solecisms, or larded with vulgarisms, he should never speak to me a second time, if I could help it. Gain the heart, or you gain nothing; the eyes and the ears are the only road to the heart. Merit and knowledge will not gain hearts, though they will secure them when gained. Pray have that truth ever in your mind. (Engage the eyes by your address, air, and motions; soothe the ears by the elegance and harmony of your diction; the heart will certainly follow, and the whole man or woman will as certainly follow the heart.) I must repeat it to you over and over again, that with all the knowledge which you may have at present or hereafter acquire, and with all the merit that ever man had, if you have not a graceful address, engaging manners, a prepossessing air, and a good degree of eloquence in speaking and writing, you will be nobody. — EARL OF CHESTERFIELD, *Letters to His Son*

56

NOTHING has been more productive of injury to young literary students than those stories — or legends — about great writers having written great books in a very short time. They suggest what must be in a million cases impossible, as a common possibility. You hear of Johnson having written *Rasselas* in a few weeks, or of Beckford having done a similar thing, of various other notables never correcting their manuscript — and the youth who has much self-confidence imagines that he can do the same thing and produce literature. I do not believe those stories. I do not say exactly that they are not true; I only say that I do not believe them, and that the books, as we have them now, certainly represent much more than the work of a few weeks or even months. It is much more valuable to remember that Gray passed fourteen years in correcting and improving a single poem, and that no great poem or book, as we now have the text, represents the first form of the text. (Take, for example, the poets that we have been reading. It is commonly said that Rossetti's "Blessed Damosel" was written in his nineteenth year. This is true; but we have the text of the poem as it was written in his nineteenth year, and it is unlike the poem as we now have it; for it was changed and corrected and recorrected scores of times to bring it to its present state of perfection.) Almost everything composed by Tennyson was changed, and changed, and changed again, to such an extent that in almost every edition the text differed. Above all things, do not imagine that any good work can be done without immense pains.

— LAFCADIO HEARN, *Talks to Writers*

57

PERHAPS the most noteworthy achievement of the telephone is its transformation of country life. In Europe, rural telephones are almost unknown, while in the United States one-third of all our telephone stations are in country districts. The farmer no longer depends upon the mails; like the city man, he telephones. This instrument is thus the greatest civilizing force we have, for civilization is very largely a matter of intercommunication. Indeed, the telephone and other similar agencies, such as the parcel post, the rural free delivery, better roads, and the automobile, are rapidly transforming rural life in this country. In several regions, especially in the Mississippi Valley, a farmer who has no telephone is in a class by himself, like one who has no mowing-machine. Thus the latest returns from Iowa, taken by the census as far back as 1907,

showed that seventy-three per cent of all the farms — 160,000 out of 220,000 — had telephones, and the proportion is unquestionably greater now. Every other farmhouse from the Atlantic to the Pacific contains at least one instrument. These statistics clearly show that the telephone has removed half the terrors and isolation of rural life. Many a lonely farmer's wife or daughter, on the approach of a suspicious-looking character, has rushed to the telephone and called up the neighbors, so that now tramps notoriously avoid houses that shelter the protecting wires. In remote sections, insanity, especially among women, is frequently the result of loneliness, a calamity which the telephone is doing much to mitigate.

— BURTON J. HENDRICK, *The Age of Big Business*

58

ABOUT this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to

improve the method or the language; and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer — of which I was extreamly ambitious.

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, *Autobiography*

59

THERE is nothing so horrible as languid study: when you sit looking at the clock, wishing the time was over, or that somebody would call on you and put you out of your misery. The only way to read with any efficacy, is to read so heartily that dinner-time comes two hours before you expected it. To sit with your Livy before you, and hear the geese cackling that saved the Capitol; and to see with your own eyes the Carthaginian sutlers gathering up the rings of the Roman knights after the battle of Cannæ, and heaping them into bushels; and to be so intimately present at the actions you are reading of, that when anybody knocks at the door, it will take you two or three seconds to determine whether you are in your own study, or in the plains of Lombardy, looking at Hannibal's weather-beaten face, and admiring the splendor of his single eye — this is the only kind of study which is not tiresome, and almost the only kind which is not useless; this is the knowledge which gets into the system, and which a man carries about and uses like his limbs, without perceiving that it is extraneous, weighty, or inconvenient. (205 words)

— SYDNEY SMITH, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*

Examine carefully these five summaries of the foregoing paragraph. Compare them with the original and discuss their relative merits and faults. Then arrange them in order of excellence. With the thoughts of the paragraph clearly in mind, write a précis of your own that shall be more satisfactory still.

Précis 1 — *How much more profitable and permanent is knowledge gained from intelligent and intensive study, when you follow your characters in all they do and put yourself in their places, than is an uninterested pursuit of knowledge, when you sit waiting for the clock to go round or for the bell to ring.* (52 words)

Précis 2 — *Do not think of the time when reading or studying. Languid study is horrible. Live in your book so that you do not*

61

IN the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the clouds and storms had come, when the gay sensuous pagan life was gone, when men were not living by the senses and understanding, when they were looking for the speedy coming of Antichrist, there appeared in Italy, to the north of Rome, in the beautiful Umbrian country at the foot of the Apennines, a figure of the most magical power and charm, Saint Francis. His century is, I think, the most interesting in the history of Christianity after its primitive age: more interesting than even the century of the Reformation; and one of the chief figures, perhaps the very chief, to which this interest attaches itself, is Saint Francis. And why? Because of the profound popular instinct which enabled him, more than any man since the primitive age, to fit religion for popular use. He brought religion to the people. He founded the most popular body of ministers of religion that has ever existed in the Church. He transformed monachism by uprooting the stationary monk, delivering him from the bondage of property, and sending him, as a mendicant friar, to be a stranger and sojourner — not in the wilderness but in the most crowded haunts of men, to console them and to do them good. This popular instinct of his is at the bottom of his famous marriage with Poverty. Poverty and suffering are the condition of the people, the multitude, the immense majority of mankind; and it was toward this *people* that his soul yearned. "He listens" — it was said of him — "to those to whom God Himself will not listen."

— MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Essays in Criticism*

62

ADJUSTMENT is exactly what a man gains when he comes to himself. Some men gain it late, some early; some get it all at once, as if by one distinct act of deliberate accommodation; others get it by degrees and quite imperceptibly. No doubt to most men it comes by the slow processes of experience — at each stage of life a little. A college man feels the first shock of it at graduation, when the boy's life has been lived out and the man's life suddenly begins. He has measured himself with boys, he knows their code and feels the spur of their ideals of achievement. But what the world expects of him he has yet to find out, and it works — when he has discovered it — a veritable revolution in his ways both of thought and of action.

He finds a new sort of fitness demanded of him, executive, thoroughgoing, careful of details, full of drudgery and obedience to orders. Everybody is ahead of him. Just now he was a senior, at the top of a world he knew and reigned in, a finished product and pattern of good form. Of a sudden he is a novice again, as green as in his first school year, studying a thing that seems to have no rules — at sea amid cross-winds, and a bit seasick withal. Presently, if he be made of stuff that will shake into shape and fitness, he settles to his tasks and is comfortable. He has come to himself: understands what capacity is, and what it is meant for; sees that his training was not for ornament, or personal gratification, but to teach him how to use himself and develop faculties worth using. Henceforth there is a zest in action, and he loves to see his strokes tell.

— WOODROW WILSON, *When a Man Comes to Himself*

63

THIS then would be the most important guide for us in the choice of reading. We should read only the books that we want to read more than once, nor should we buy any others, unless we have some special reason for so investing money. The second fact demanding attention is the general character of the value that lies hidden within all such great books. They never become old: their youth is immortal. A great book is not apt to be comprehended by a young person at the first reading, except in a superficial way. Only the surface, the narrative, is absorbed and enjoyed. No young man can possibly see at first reading the qualities of a great book. Remember that it has taken humanity in many cases hundreds of years to find out all that there is in such a book. But according to a man's experience of life, the text will unfold new meanings to him. The book that delighted us at eighteen, if it be a good book, will delight us much more at twenty-five, and it will prove like a new book to us at thirty years of age. At forty we shall reread it, wondering why we never saw how beautiful it was before. At fifty or sixty years of age the same facts will repeat themselves. A great book grows exactly in proportion to the growth of the reader's mind. It was the discovery of this extraordinary fact by generations of people long dead that made the greatness of such works as those of Shakespeare, of Dante, or of Goethe.

— LAFCADIO HEARN, *Talks to Writers*

64

FAITHFULNESS to the best and finest in the past and in the present, rather than horrified gaping at the present's worst, is the attitude that means continued and bettered life; for we become what we will. What are we offering, in the way of concrete examples, or of finely expressed thought about virtue, to the young, to the ignorant nations that are pouring in upon us, that will help them form their vision of the perfect? With our narrowing knowledge of the greater past, our choice of heroes becomes more and more local and national; yet our hierarchy of sacred dead is too small to afford that variety of heroic action and heroic choice that should always be kept before the minds of youth. We teach them that George Washington never told a lie; we teach them something — and there could be nothing better — of Lincoln; but those two figures are lonely upon Olympus, and the great tragic story of the way in which Lincoln faced the greatest crisis in our history will not alone suffice to help the every-day citizen shape his thought and action toward constructive idealism. The lesser heroes of our young republic have acquitted themselves nobly in this struggle and in that, but the struggles have been too closely akin in nature to give the embryo hero that breadth and depth of nurture that he requires. We need an enlarged vision of history, and the sight of great men of all ages faithful to small tasks as to great; we need the companionship of heroes of other times and of other nations, and not of military heroes alone. Saint Francis with his unceasing tenderness to man and beast, Father Damien at work among the lepers, might far better occupy the pages of our magazines, than the pictured deeds of criminals and the achievements of contemporary multimillionaires.

— MARGARET SHERWOOD, *The Other Side*

65

THE Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself entrusted with the

sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or on the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world.

— THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, *Essay on Milton*

66*

C. E. E. B., 1920

THE originality of form and treatment which Macaulay gave to the historical essay has not, perhaps, received due recognition. Without having invented it, he so greatly improved and expanded it that he deserves nearly as much credit as if he had. He did for the historical essay what Haydn did for the sonata, and Watt for the steam-engine: he found it rudimentary and unimportant, and left it complete and a thing of power. Before his time there was the ponderous history, generally in quarto, and there was the antiquarian dissertation. There was also the historical review, containing alternate pages of extract and comment, generally dull and gritty. But the historical essay, as he conceived it, and with the prompt inspiration of a real discoverer immediately put into practical shape, was as good as unknown before him. To take a bright period or personage of history, to frame it in a firm outline, to conceive it at once in article size, and then to fill in this limited canvas with sparkling anecdote, telling bits of color, and facts, all fused together by a real genius for narrative, was the sort of genre-painting which Macaulay applied to history. . . . And to this day his essays remain the best of their class, not only in England, but in Europe.

Slight or even trivial in the field of historical erudition and critical inquiry, they are masterpieces if regarded in the light of great popular cartoons on subjects taken from modern history. They are painted, indeed, with such freedom, vividness, and power that they may be said to enjoy a sort of tacit monopoly of the periods and characters to which they refer, in the estimation of the general public.

— J. COTTER MORISON, *Life of T. B. Macaulay*

67

HERE, as in Europe, the mechanically propelled wagon made its appearance in early times. This vehicle, like the bicycle, is not essentially a modern invention; the reason anyone may manufacture it is that practically all the basic ideas antedate 1840. Indeed, the automobile is really older than the railroad. In the twenties and thirties, steam stagecoaches made regular trips between certain cities in England and occasionally a much resounding power-driven carriage would come careering through New York and Philadelphia, scaring all the horses and precipitating the intervention of the authorities. The hardy spirits who devised these engines, all of whose names are recorded in the encyclopedias, deservedly rank as the "fathers" of the automobile. The responsibility as the actual "inventor" can probably be no more definitely placed. However, had it not been for two developments, neither of them immediately related to the motor car, we should never have had this efficient method of transportation. The real "fathers" of the automobile are Gottlieb Daimler, the German who made the first successful gasoline engine, and Charles Goodyear, the American who discovered the secret of vulcanized rubber. Without this engine to form the motive power and the pneumatic tire to give it four air-cushions to run on, the automobile would never have progressed beyond the steam-carriage stage. It is true that Charles Baldwin Selden, of Rochester, has been pictured as the "inventor of the modern automobile," because, as long ago as 1879, he applied for a patent on the idea of using a gasoline engine as motive power, securing this basic patent in 1895; but this, it must be admitted, forms a flimsy basis for such a pretentious claim.

— BURTON J. HENDRICK, *The Age of Big Business*

68

THE most plausible scheme for getting rid of individual wealth, and thereby enriching the whole people, is that by which the govern-

ment should own all the property, and that it should employ everyone at a like wage, guaranteeing that all should have enough to live on. The objection to this project is simple: it is that government work cannot be done in a way sufficiently economical to make money. It has never been so done, and with human nature as it is, we may be sure that it never will be thus done. The man whose pay is to be the same, whether he succeeds or fails, will not and cannot work as if success or failure depended on the toil and care which he gave to his task. Done by the government, work is often excellent in quality but it is never economically performed. If all the business of the people were carried on in the manner in which our national administrative tasks are executed, the result would be that no saving would accrue; the wealth now existing — that is, the remainder after the laborers are paid — would soon be eaten up, and general impoverishment would ensue. In other words, very soon after a check was placed on the vigilance, foresight, and labor of the business men, we should, so far as wealth is concerned, return to the essential position of savages: nothing would be laid by; there would thus be no provision for all the vast and costly work of government and education and charity.

— NATHANIEL S. SHALER, *The Citizen*

69

THE city is a good friend to the poor. It gives them day nurseries for their babies, kindergartens for their little children, schools for their boys and girls, playgrounds, swimming-pools, recreation piers, reading-rooms, libraries, churches, clubs, hospitals, cheap amusements, open-air concerts, employment agencies, the companionship of their kind, and the chance of a friend at need. In return, the poor love the city, and cling to it with reasonable but somewhat stifling affection. They know that the hardest thing in life is to be isolated — "unrelated," to use Carlyle's apt word; and they escape this fate by eschewing the much-lauded fields and farms. They know also that in the country they must stand or fall by their own unaided efforts, they must learn the hard lesson of self-reliance. Many of them propose to live, as did the astute author of *Piers Plowman*, "in the town, and on the town as well." Moreover, pleasure means as much to them as it does to the rest of us. We hardly needed Mr. Chesterton to tell us that a visit to a corner saloon may be just as exciting an event to a tenement-house dweller,

as a dinner at a gold-and-marble hotel is to the average middle-class citizen; and that the tenement-house dweller may be just as moderate in his potations: "Merrily taking twopenny rum, and cheese with a pocket knife." — AGNES REPPLIER, *Our Lady Poverty*

70

THE value of money as an element of happiness diminishes rapidly in proportion to its amount. In the case of the humbler fortunes, each accession brings with it a large increase of pleasure and comfort, and probably a very considerable addition to real happiness. In the case of rich men this is not the case, and of colossal fortunes only a very small fraction can be truly said to minister to the personal enjoyment of the owner. The disproportion in the world between pleasure and cost is indeed almost ludicrous. The two or three shillings that gave us our first Shakespeare would go but a small way toward providing one of the perhaps untasted dishes on the dessert table. The choicest masterpieces of the human mind — the works of human genius that through the long course of centuries have done most to ennoble, console, brighten, and direct the lives of men, might all be purchased — I do not say by the cost of a lady's necklace, but by that of one or two of the little stones of which it is composed. Compare the relish with which the tired pedestrian eats his bread and cheese with the appetites with which men sit down to some stately banquet; compare the level of spirits at the village dance with that of the great city ball whose lavish splendor fills the society papers with admiration; compare the charm of conversation in the college common-room with the weary faces that may be often seen around the millionaire's dinner table — and we may gain a good lesson on the vanity of riches. The transition from want to comfort brings with it keen enjoyment and much lasting happiness. The transition from mere comfort to luxury brings incomparably less, and costs incomparably more. (296 words)

— W. E. H. LECKY, *The Map of Life*

Below is a remarkably good, but very short summary of the paragraph from Lecky's *Map of Life*. It was written in twelve minutes by a girl who had studied précis writing in English schools before coming to America. Extreme conciseness was characteristic of all her précis work. In what ways did this

72*

C. E. E. B., 1922

EXTREME *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralyzed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes . . . but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuff-box empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright on a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, *Virginibus Puerisque*

IV

Descriptive Paragraphs

The précis of a descriptive selection offers a difficult problem. How much detail can be thrown away, while still preserving the picture contained in the original? At the outset, a good description is usually more condensed than an anecdote or discussion. The result is that students, when making an abstract, are tempted merely to paraphrase the original in words of their own, with but little reduction in number of words or images.

The only way to make a satisfactory précis of a description is to give in a sentence or two the total impression, or general effect of the original picture. This means that practically all details must be discarded. For instance, in the selection from Poe that follows, (No. 73), melancholy gloom is the general impression which comes to the reader. The minute detail that creates this atmosphere, such as the "trellised panes," "the fretted ceiling," "the tattered and comfortless furniture," cannot be included in a summary of the passage.

73

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all. (136 words)

— Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Here is a précis which reduces the paragraph from 136 words to 29.

Précis — *The room was large, high, and cheerless. Dimly lighted and heavy with dark draperies and clumsy old furniture, it made an impression upon me of sorrow and deep gloom.* (29 words)

74

HARD by the farmhouse was a vast barn, that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings, or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek, unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens; whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, convoying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farm-yard, and guinea fowls were fretting about it, like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings, and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart — sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered. — WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Sketch Book*

75

RAIN has color. The Quaker gray of a hard rain has a soft vanishing quality far less durable and tangible than the filmy cobweb. Sometimes almost white, often blue, most frequently rain responds with unusual sensitiveness to its environment, and shadows back the green of apple-tree leaves or the sombre brown of a dusty highway. Most beautiful is the silvery sheen of rain on warm summer days, when the descent is intermittent and one has the pleasure of speculating on the quality of the rain to be. The poets have a great deal to say about golden rain, but that falls only in the Golden Age; we see that clear crystalline rainfall only against a glowing golden sunset in April. — *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Rain"

76

PHYSICALLY, James J. Hill was a man who seemed to express in his appearance the force and character which distinguished him mentally among men. Slightly under average height, with a great head firmly set on square, powerful shoulders, he commanded attention. He was physically strong, and his powers of endurance, which served him so well in the long hard days of his early life, remained unimpaired almost to his death. His firm mouth was half hidden by a beard, whitened in his latter years. His brow was high. His eyes were alert and looked out from beneath shaggy eyebrows. He was a man of a notable appearance which demanded respect and inspired confidence. — JOSEPH HUSBAND, *Americans by Adoption*

77

MY aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. There was an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, in her gait and carriage, amply sufficient to account for the effect she had made upon a gentle creature like my mother; but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. I particularly noticed that she had a very quick, bright eye. Her hair, which was gray, was arranged in two plain divisions, under what I believe would be called a mob-cap: I mean a cap, much more common then than now, with side-pieces fastening under the chin. Her dress was of a lavender color, and perfectly neat, but scantily made, as if she desired to be as little encumbered as possible. I remember that I thought it, in form, more like a riding-habit with the superfluous skirt cut off, than anything else. She wore at her side a gentleman's gold watch, if I might judge from its size and make, with an appropriate chain and seals; she had some linen at her throat not unlike a shirt-collar, and things at her wrists like little shirt-wristbands. — CHARLES DICKENS, *David Copperfield*

78

BUT the third man remained obstinately silent under all the strokes from the knotted cord. He was very different in aspect from his two fellow-prisoners. They were young and hardy, and, in the scant clothing which the avarice of their captors had left them, looked like vulgar, sturdy mendicants. But he had passed the boundary of old age, and could hardly be less than four- or five-and-sixty. His beard, which had grown long in neglect, and the hair, which fell

thick and straight round his baldness, were nearly white. His thick-set figure was still firm and upright, though emaciated, and seemed to express energy in spite of age — an expression that was partly carried out in the dark eyes and strong, dark eyebrows, which had a strangely isolated intensity of color in the midst of his yellow, bloodless, deep-wrinkled face with its lank, gray hairs. And yet there was something fitful in the eyes, which contradicted the occasional flash of energy; after looking round with quick fierceness at windows and faces, they fell again with a lost and wandering look. But his lips were motionless, and he held his hands resolutely down.

— GEORGE ELIOT, *Romola*

79

WILLIAMS and I pause at the Subway entrances and watch the earth suck in the crowd. It lets itself be swallowed up with meek good-nature. Our amazing good-nature! Political philosophers have deplored the fact. They have urged us to be quicker-tempered, more resentful of being stepped upon, more inclined to write letters to the editor. I agree that only in that way can we be rid of political bosses, of brutal policemen, of ticket-speculators, of taxicab extortioners, of insolent waiters, of janitors, of indecent congestion in travel, of unheated cars in the winter and barred-up windows in summer. I am at heart with the social philosophers. But then I am not typical of the crowd. When my neighbor's elbow injects itself into the small of my back, I twist around and glower at him. I forget that his elbow is the innocent mechanical result of a whole series of elbows and backs extending the length of the car, to where the first cause operates in the form of a station-guard's shoulder ramming the human cattle into their stalls. In the faces about me there is no resentment. Instead of smashing windows, instead of raising barricades in the Subway and hanging the train-guards with their own lanterns about their necks, the crowd sways and bends to the lurching of the train, and young voices call out cheerfully, "Plenty of room ahead." — SIMEON STRUNSKY, *The Street*

80

AROUND, as far as one could see, there was hardly a yard of level ground; all was hill and hollow, that long ago had been reclaimed from the moor; and against the distant folds of the hills the farm-house and its thatched barns were just visible, embowered amongst beeches and some dark trees. with a soft bright crown of sunlight

over the whole. A gentle wind brought a faint rustling up from those beeches, and from a large lime tree that stood by itself; on this wind some little snowy clouds, very high and fugitive in that blue heaven, were always moving over. But what struck me most were the buttercups. Never was field so lighted up by those tiny lamps, those little bright pieces of flower-china out of the Great Pottery. They covered the whole ground, as if the sunlight had fallen bodily from the sky, in tens of millions of gold patines; and the fields below as well, down to what was evidently a stream, were just as thick with the extraordinary warmth and glory of them.

— JOHN GALSWORTHY, *Buttercup-Night*

81

THE mirth of the company was greatly promoted by the humors of an eccentric personage whom Mr. Bracebridge always addressed with the quaint appellation of Master Simon. He was a tight, brisk little man, with the air of an arrant old bachelor. His nose was shaped like the bill of a parrot; his face slightly pitted with the smallpox, with a dry perpetual bloom on it like a frost-bitten leaf in autumn. He had an eye of great quickness and vivacity, with a drollery and lurking waggery of expression that was irresistible. He was evidently the wit of the family, dealing very much in sly jokes and innuendoes with the ladies, and making infinite merriment by harping upon old themes, which, unfortunately, my ignorance of the family chronicles did not permit me to enjoy. It seemed to be his great delight during supper to keep a young girl next him in a continual agony of stifled laughter, in spite of her awe of the reproving looks of her mother, who sat opposite. Indeed, he was the idol of the younger part of the company, who laughed at everything he said or did, and at every turn of his countenance; I could not wonder at it, for he must have been a miracle of accomplishments in their eyes. He could imitate Punch and Judy; make an old woman of his hand, with the assistance of burnt cork and pocket handkerchief; and cut an orange into such a ludicrous caricature that the young folks were ready to die with laughing. (258 words)

— WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Sketch Book*

Ten minutes were allowed a class of senior girls to write a précis of Irving's picture of Master Simon. Here is the summary that was voted the best. How do you account for its

brevity? Make a list of the details which the writer has omitted. Do you feel that a longer précis would be more satisfactory?

Précis — *Master Simon, a brisk little old bachelor, added greatly to the merriment of the company. He seemed, indeed, to be the family wit. The young people in particular were amused by his humorous tricks, though everyone in the room was kept in good spirits by his sly jokes and comical expression.* (51 words)

82

We rove up and down the woods, snapping the flower from its stem, thrusting aside the branch and the brier. The squirrel barks at us like a sort of sylvan *canis minor;* the brooding bird starts away with an aggrieved and accusing cry; everything protests at our ruthless and unmannerly haste, our eagerness and curiosity. But let us sit down somewhere in the depths of the woods, quietly observant and grateful-minded, keeping our notebooks in our pocket, since the powers that be here are marvelously close and conservative, and always distrustful of the interviewer. It is not long before we are the centre of an increasingly curious circle of spectators. The snappish squirrel comes back to look at us, silent and alert, but not inimical; the chipmunk darts down before us, and dives through his trapdoor, giving us the impression that the devouring earth has made a clean morsel of him. The birds perch lower, eyeing us with not unfriendly glances; we even catch glimpses of that shy party-colored woodlander, the redstart, flitting among the branches overhead. It is so quiet that the slightest noise becomes significant and noteworthy. — *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Woodland Mysteries"

83

They collided blindly with other men; they called out angrily. Great seas crashed over the bulwarks and smothered them; invisible torrents poured off the forecastle-head and washed aft, beating them down, stunning them. From somewhere out of the darkness came the voice of the mate, bawling orders. They felt for the clewlines, making the most of the intervals between the boarding seas. High above them they knew a man was making his way aloft in the darkness to ease up the chain sheets. They hauled and swore, arching their backs against the seas that tore at their gripping fingers and

85

UPON the main thoroughfares, a weird and muffled pandemonium prevails. From out the heart of the yellow-reddish murk resounds the beat of horses' hoofs; now and then a spark flies close from their iron shoes. Hoarse warning cries are heard from everywhere, and sometimes, where the fog for a moment is thinned, exaggerated shapes and monstrous figures loom up and creep along, great trucks, wains, and omnibuses with lanterns lit and the drivers leading the horses. Then again strange man-shaped spots appear, like demons come from infernal corridors; they swell out of the darkness surrounded by faint red haloes. These are pedestrians preceded by link-boys, bearing their flaming torches to guide their patrons on their way. The lofty and powerful electric arc-lights, so keenly radiant when the air is clear, now sputter dismally, invisible save at a few yards. From directly below the iron standards, the fierce white arc is dimmed to the luminosity of a red-hot ember. Before some of the railway stations wave great gasoline flambeaux, and fires in iron cressets struggle with the fog — like beacons before the sea-castle of some mediæval robber-lord. The detonators, placed upon the railway tracks in place of light signals, incessantly rend the air. The curbs are cumbered with useless hackney and hansom cabs, the horses unharnessed, the drivers disconsolate. The crawling omnibuses, blundering along the indistinguishable streets, often meet or mount upon the sidewalks amid cries and wild confusion, and there they remain, like ships becalmed at night. Those huge Behemoths and cars of Juggernaut, the gigantic, double-decked motor-omnibuses, with their two lurid yellow eyes and little sparks of red and green, stand trembling and snorting with impatience, immersed and obliterated in the fog. Universal night enthralls the world-metropolis; its currents of commerce stagnate in its veins, its mighty plans and purposes are frustrated or delayed, and this central heart of the trade of the whole earth is standing still in a dark paralysis.

— HERMAN SCHEFFAUER, *Black Fog in London*

V

Selections of Two or More Paragraphs

It is usually best to divide a précis into as many paragraphs as the original passage contains. Undoubtedly selections 97–103 in this volume should so be treated when summarized. When paragraphs are extremely short, however, and the whole passage contains but two or three hundred words, it is rather more satisfactory to compress the précis into a single paragraph unit.

Those passages taken from the Comprehensive English papers of the College Entrance Examination Board are starred (*).

The summary of selection No. 97 is taken from an English book on précis writing.

86

A HUNDRED years ago Napoleon, with the sword, carved out of Europe an empire. To accomplish this, the lives of men by the thousand were sacrificed. With misery and bloodshed its boundaries were extended, and in a few years it had vanished into the history of the past. In like manner, for centuries have men of dominance changed the maps of the world, with armies and the sword.

But within the memory of men who live to-day another kind of empire-builder gave to the new world an empire of another kind. With peace and prosperity, year by year, he developed its vast square miles of territory. With rails of steel he pushed its boundaries each year still further into the wilderness. Each year he opened up to the world new acres of fertile fields, rich mines, and the tremendous natural resources of a virgin country. It is an empire that time can never destroy. It is an empire that has brought prosperity to the world.

All this was done by a poor Canadian boy, born in a log cabin at the edge of the forest in the Province of Ontario, in the year 1837. James Jerome Hill was his name. (198 words)

— JOSEPH HUSBAND, *Americans by Adoption*

A group of high-school seniors, when given the selection above to summarize, were told to decide for themselves whether

three paragraphs or one would be the more suitable. Every pupil preferred to use but a single paragraph. Here is one of the best, that was written in just ten minutes.

Précis — *Napoleon, like other war lords, with misery and bloodshed created an empire that soon faded away from the face of the earth. But the empire developed in the Canadian Northwest by James J. Hill will last forever, for it is founded on principles of peace and prosperity and development of the land.* (51 words)

87

Two men I honor, and no third. First, the toilworn craftsman that with earth-made implement laboriously conquers earth and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard hand, crooked, coarse, wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a man living manlike. Toil on, toil on; thou art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

A second man I honor, and still more highly: him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable — not daily bread, but the bread of life. Is not he too in his duty? If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have light, have guidance, freedom, immortality? — These two in all their degrees I honor; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth.

— THOMAS CARLYLE, *Sartor Resartus*

88

IT is a rule with few exceptions, that the standard of school and college athletics runs level with the standard of public opinion in school and college. Coaches may introduce dirty tricks; an occasional team may be willing to buy a victory at any price; but, in the last analysis, undergraduate policy and action are determined by social rewards and social penalties. If the feeling once gets abroad that a championship has been too dearly bought, the high price will not be paid a second time.

Not many years ago standards of honor in the classroom were not much higher than those on the athletic field to-day. The problem then was much like the problem now. It was solved, not by imposing

90

I SUPPOSE the most evident, certainly the most picturesque, exhibition of school spirit is to be seen in connection with athletics, and it reaches its climax in an inter-school game. The authorities of some schools say frankly that they permit such games, with their interruption of serious work and other disadvantages, chiefly because they tend to develop school spirit and school loyalty. Athletic contests are good, for they give training in self-subordination, self-control, alertness, and dogged perseverance. The individual loses himself in the good of the whole. This makes for character and good citizenship. We must not underestimate the value of the enthusiasm which comes from rallying against a common antagonist. When the rivalry is good-natured and every rule of fair play is observed, the effect is wholesome.

Yet it is not always the student who cheers most loudly for the team, and who is most carried away by school spirit on public occasions, who is at heart most loyal to the school. There is a greater loyalty even than that generous spirit which prompts one to rejoice in victory. It is the desire that one's school shall stand only for that which is right. It is the determination that it shall be respected, and still more, that it shall be worthy of respect.

— LAURA A. KNOTT, *Vesper Talks to Girls*

91

PERHAPS the final test of anybody's love of dogs is willingness to permit them to make a camping-ground of the bed. There is no other place in the world that suits the dog quite so well. On the bed he is safe from being stepped upon; he is out of the way of drafts; he has a commanding position from which to survey what goes on in the world; and above all, the surface is soft and yielding to his outstretched limbs. No mere man can ever be so comfortable as a dog looks.

Some persons object to having a dog on the bed at night; and it must be admitted that he lies a little heavily upon one's limbs; but why be so base as to prefer comfort to companionship! To wake up in the dark night and put your hand on that warm soft body, to feel the beating of that faithful heart — is not this better than undisturbed sloth? The best night's rest I ever had was once when a cocker spaniel puppy, who had just recovered from stomach-ache (dose one to two soda-mints), and was a little frightened by

the strange experience, curled up on my shoulder like a fur tippet, gently pushed his cold, soft nose into my neck, and there slept sweetly and soundly until morning.

— HENRY C. MERWIN, *Dogs and Men*

92 *

C. E. E. B., 1921

EXPERIENCE is a continuous process of choice and comparison, selecting one thing and correlating that in the mind with another. I believe that choice and comparison are in some degree present every time that anyone is really conscious of anything. It is easy to show that choice is always present; you have only to go somewhere, and stand still, and reflect how many things there are about you which you are not seeing. Existence is too full for you. You see only the things that your tastes and purposes determine, and of these you see sharply only such features as affect those tastes and purposes. Other persons will see other things, and other features of the same things.

Suppose that you are standing by the side of the road, and a horse and wagon jogs by. You see the horse and wagon, and you observe that it is picturesque. The horse is shaggy, a strawberry roan. But suppose that there is a farmer standing beside you, and he sees it too; he observes that the horse is lazy, ewe-necked, pot-bellied, has a ringbone on the left hind foot, and other features which relate to the purposes of agriculture. How different is your perception from his, though you are looking the same way and standing almost in the same tracks! It might be, indeed, if you chose to look a different way, and if you happened to have that genius for concentrating yourself upon what you do see which is called absent-mindedness — it might be that you would never be aware there was a horse there at all, or so much as the noise of a wagon.

— MAX EASTMAN, *The Enjoyment of Poetry*

93

You will discover, at once, that work and play, taken as modes of mere outward, muscular activity, cannot be distinguished. There is motion in both, there is an exercise of force in both, both are under the will as acting on the muscular system; so that, taken outwardly, they both fall into the same category. Indeed, they cannot be

discriminated till we pass within, to view them metaphysically, considering their springs of action, their impulse, aim, and object.

Here the distinction becomes evident at once: namely, that work is activity *for* an end; play, activity *as* an end. One prepares the fund or resources of enjoyment, the other is enjoyment itself. Thus, when a man goes into agriculture, trade, or the shop, he consents to undergo a certain expenditure of care and labor, which is the only form of painstaking rightly named, in order to obtain some ulterior good which is to be his reward. But when the child goes to his play, it is no painstaking, no means to an end; it is itself rather both end and joy. Accordingly, it is a part of the distinction I state, that work suffers a feeling of aversion, and play excludes aversion. For the moment any play becomes wearisome or distasteful, then it is work: an activity that is kept up, not as being its own joy, but for some ulterior end, or under some kind of constraint.

— HORACE BUSHNELL, *Work and Play*

94

IN bad play we may find rhythm dominant and all other form sacrificed. Rules, limits, and finish are at the minimum. Dash, risks, construction, and originality are not encouraged. Everything is bound with the fetters of perfect safety or of perfect fatalism. People can keep up a bad game indefinitely or fitfully without a tendency to rebound into work or constructive thought. Passivity and receptivity are so completely in possession of us that there is little for the "actor" to do but to sit still until he becomes a mere spectator. Gambling, listening to lectures, gossip, swinging, rocking, chewing tobacco or gum, opium-smoking, and in some people, cigarette-smoking, are amusements of the vicious type. They have no end or form. They leave you as passionless and passive as the suburbanite reading his after-breakfast newspaper on the train to town.

Good play is subject to rules; it has a clear-cut form and organization. It may use rhythm and repetition, but subordinates them to improvisation and adventure. It gives intense and varied delight, but in such dynamic form that pleasure is ever quickly lost and found again. It is full of give-and-take, dramatically loses its life to find it, and ever seeks, asks, knocks at the door of the unexplored. Its house is full of symbols and empty of idols.

— RICHARD C. CABOT, *What Men Live By*

or distorted. This occurs oftener now than formerly, and bids fair to occur yet oftener in the future.

— EDWARD A. ROSS in *The Profession of Journalism*

97

THE fondness for rural life among the higher classes of the English has had a great and salutary effect upon the national character. I do not know a finer race of men than the English gentlemen. Instead of the softness and effeminacy which characterize the men of rank in most countries, they exhibit a union of elegance and strength, a robustness of frame and freshness of complexion, which I am inclined to attribute to their living so much in the open air, and pursuing so eagerly the invigorating recreations of the country. These hardy exercises produce also a healthful tone of mind and spirits, and a manliness and simplicity of manners, which even the follies and dissipations of the town cannot easily pervert, and can never entirely destroy. In the country, too, the different orders of society seem to approach more freely, to be more disposed to blend and operate favorably upon each other. The distinctions between them do not appear to be so marked and impassable as in the cities. The manner in which property has been distributed into small estates and farms has established a regular gradation from the nobleman, through the classes of gentry, small landed proprietors, and substantial farmers, down to the laboring peasantry; and while it has thus banded the extremes of society together, has infused into each intermediate rank a spirit of independence. This, it must be confessed, is not so universally the case at present as it was formerly, the larger estates having, in late years of distress, absorbed the smaller, and, in some parts of the country, almost annihilated the sturdy race of small farmers. These, however, I believe, are but casual breaks in the general system I have mentioned.

In rural occupation there is nothing mean and debasing. It leads a man forth among scenes of natural grandeur and beauty; it leaves him to the workings of his own mind, operated upon by the purest and most elevating of external influences. Such a man may be simple and rough, but he cannot be vulgar. The man of refinement, therefore, finds nothing revolting in an intercourse with the lower orders in rural life, as he does when he casually mingles with the lower orders of cities. He lays aside his distance and reserve, and is glad to waive the distinctions of rank, and to enter into the honest

heartfelt enjoyments of common life. Indeed, the very amusements of the country bring men more and more together; and the sounds of hound and horn blend all feelings into harmony. I believe this is one great reason why the nobility and gentry are more popular among the inferior orders in England than they are in any other country; and why the latter have endured so many excessive pressures and extremities, without repining more generally at the unequal distribution of fortune and privilege. (476 words)

— WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Sketch Book*

The following précis of Irving's comments upon rural life in England is taken from the introduction to *Précis Writing for Schools*, by C. L. Thomson, published by Horace Marshall & Son in London. Notice that Mr. Thomson reduces an original of 476 words to 163; that he follows closely the order of Irving's reasoning, but not his words; that he uses the paragraph plan of the *Sketch Book*. Mr. Thomson's summary serves as an excellent illustration of what the teacher in England expects of English boys and girls in précis work. How does it compare with the abstracts made by American high-school students printed elsewhere in this volume? Can you explain any of the differences which you notice?

Précis — *The outdoor life led by the upper classes in England has had a most salutary effect upon the national character. Living in the open air, and participating in rural recreations, they have resisted the enervating influences of rank, and preserved a healthy tone of mind and body. In the country, too, men of different ranks are more friendly with one another than in cities. This is due to the distribution of the land into estates of various sizes, whereby class distinctions have been partly obliterated, though this cause has operated less since the larger estates have begun to absorb their poorer neighbors.*

Beautiful scenery has, moreover, so ennobling an effect upon character that men of refinement find nothing revolting in intercourse with the peasants, with whom they are frequently associated in rural sports. To this is due the exceptionally good feeling between the upper and lower classes. (163 words)

98*

C. E. E. B., 1921

COULD the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never-so-little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well, he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out.

Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working-day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of his business, *the power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together.

— WILLIAM JAMES, *Talks to Teachers*

99

ATHLETICS are conducted either for education or for business. The old distinction between amateur and professional athletics is of little use. The real problems of college athletics loom large beside the considerations that define our use of the terms "professional" and "amateur." The aims of athletics reveal the fact that the

precision. We want to get our effect, to amuse, and startle, and persuade. For that purpose we color facts too highly, twist them, distort them, amplify them, let the rich or heavy brush of our imagination play over them, till the original tissue is quite disfigured out of its native substance. We all need to cultivate precision, a careful, slow, thoughtful accuracy of statement that leaves nothing to be corrected or regretted afterwards.

And yet color is the charm of speech. We may admire Voltaire, but we love Shakespeare. So too the persons whose talk we love are not always faultlessly precise, but have a quick, vivid, piquant way of putting things, which makes us remember them.

Color is the charm of life. Of course we must cultivate accuracy and correctness and propriety: they are quite indispensable. But what makes our spirits attractive to ourselves and to others is color, the wayward, the unexpected, whim, fancy, grace. Precision may be the foundation and beefy nourishment of life; but color is all that makes it worth living.

— *The Youth's Companion*, March 1, 1923

101

I HAVE no wish to utter a jeremiad; but it would also be foolish to palliate a condition as familiar to my readers as to myself. To-day the character of journalism has been altered by a series of mechanical inventions: the telephone, high-speed rotary presses, stereotyping, typesetting machines, color presses, rotogravure, the electric-telegraphic typewriter. Allied to these is a series of institutional developments: an enormous increase in the bulk of advertising, greatly enlarged circulations, universal use of syndicated material, "chain" newspapers in various cities under common ownership. These several factors work together to produce a number of important results, which I will catalogue briefly.

First, the ascendancy of the afternoon over the morning paper (because papers live on advertising, advertising is directed at women, and women have more leisure in the evening than earlier).

Second, a consequent premium put on haste, which means that the news is more and more presented in fragmentary, "skeletonized," and often garbled form.

Third, an increasing use of pictures, which have been found to appeal to large numbers of people who are almost illiterate, but possess the buying power which the advertiser seeks.

Fourth, with a few conspicuous exceptions, a continuing degeneration and flabbiness of journalistic English. This is primarily due to haste, facilitated by the use of the typewriter, and secondarily to the use of the telephone, because of which the man who writes is less and less often the man who has personally seen.

Fifth, a steady tendency to condense news articles into mere tabloid summaries. This is due to the great increase in the physical volume of advertising, and the desire nevertheless to hold down the bulk of the paper.

Sixth, a wider and wider use of syndicated material, so that newspapers all over the country are partly identical from day to day in their contents. This is true not only of telegraphic news, obtained from one of the three great news-gathering associations, but of "feature" articles, drawings, even editorials. To-day this process is being extended to the local news, through the development of coöperative systems of gathering and distributing at least the routine items in each municipality.

Seventh, the great invested capital and earning power of a successful paper to-day. Because of this fact — the result of the increase in advertising — ownership has slipped out of the hands of the editor, whose type of mind is rarely compatible with large business dealings, and has passed to that of wealthy individuals or corporations. This means that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the editorial attitude of the paper reflects the natural conservatism of these "capitalistic" owners, or is of a wishy-washy type which takes no vigorous stand on any subject.

Eighth, the passing of rivalry from the editorial to the business office. Since the textual contents of newspapers are so largely identical, there is no longer the fierce editorial rivalry which formerly inspired the journalist to seek constant improvement in his paper. Instead, rivalry has been transferred to the business and circulation departments. The chief journals of each city struggle hard for the coveted post of leader in volume of advertising. Circulation men fight to the death for every last hundred subscribers. Unfortunately, their race for added sales is reflected editorially in the production of journals which more and more represent, not an editor's notion of a good paper, but a circulation manager's notion of a good seller.

— Bruce Bliven, "Our Changing Journalism"

102

In a preceding paper I have spoken of an English Sunday in the country, and its tranquilizing effect upon the landscape; but where is its sacred influence more strikingly apparent than in the very heart of that great Babel, London? On this sacred day the gigantic monster is charmed into repose. The intolerable din and struggle of the week are at an end. The shops are shut. The fires of forges and manufactories are extinguished; and the sun, no longer obscured by murky clouds of smoke, pours down a sober, yellow radiance into the quiet streets. The few pedestrians we meet, instead of hurrying forward with anxious countenances, move leisurely along; their brows are smoothed from the wrinkles of business and care; they have put on their Sunday looks and Sunday manners with their Sunday clothes, and are cleansed in mind as well as in person.

And now the melodious clangor of bells from church towers summons their several flocks to the fold. Forth from his mansion issues the family of the decent tradesman, the small children in the advance; then the citizen and his comely spouse followed by the grown-up daughters, with small morocco-bound prayer-books laid in the folds of their pocket-handkerchiefs. The housemaid looks after them from the window admiring the finery of the family, and receiving perhaps a nod and smile from her young mistresses at whose toilet she has assisted.

The ringing of bells is at an end, the rumbling of the carriage has ceased, the pattering of feet is heard no more; the flocks are folded in ancient churches, cramped up in by-lanes and corners of the crowded city, where the vigilant beadle keeps watch, like the shepherd's dog, round the threshold of the sanctuary. For a time everything is hushed; but soon is heard the deep, pervading sound of the organ, rolling and vibrating through the empty lanes and courts; and the sweet chanting of the choir making them resound with melody and praise. Never have I been more sensible of the sanctifying effect of church music than when I have heard it thus poured forth like a river of joy through the inmost recesses of this great metropolis, elevating it, as it were, from all the sordid pollutions of the week, and bearing the poor world-worn soul on a tide of triumphant harmony to heaven.

The morning service is at an end. The streets are again alive with the congregations returning to their homes, but soon again relapse into silence. Now comes on the Sunday dinner, which to

vivisectionist like Dorothy Canfield there are forty persons who have the brutality that comes from lack of imagination. Dostoevsky, who wrote on small-town life in a manner that makes *Main Street* seem cheery, said, "Everybody in the provinces lives as though he were under a bell of glass. It is impossible for him to conceal anything whatever from his honorable fellow citizens. . . . The provincial, by his very nature, ought to be a very profound psychologist. That is why I am sometimes honestly amazed to meet in the provinces so few psychologists and so many imbeciles."

Many are surprised that there is so much more tolerance of opinion in England than in America, and more in New York than in Podunk. But the reason is clear enough. Tolerance and individual liberty accompany a diffusion of intelligence and civilization. There is no tolerance whatever among small boys.

Miss Montague has described a woman and a man who, perhaps, never ought to have been born, but whose birth was only the beginning of their bad luck. Julie Rose is a creation, absolutely real, who suffers as the chronically timid always suffer in a harsh environment. The village types are clearly depicted; she is the only one who has "nerves," and is therefore incomprehensible to her vulpine neighbors, who, in place of sympathy and understanding, have simply predatory instincts. She is a doormat, cursed with self-consciousness, and feels acutely every hobnail. In a stout heart courage may rise with danger, but the morbidly fearful never become callous, never "get used to it" — *it* being life. They are like gun-shy dogs; the oftener you shoot, the worse they feel. Every fresh outrage is as devastating as though it were accompanied by the shock of surprise.

Julie is saved, not by any kindly, muscular champion, but by the appearance of a man equally shrinking and unassertive. United they stand, divided they fall. The union of these two will seem improbable only to those who regard them as contemptible nincompoops, to those whose minds are hermetically sealed in fat. In order to understand the desperate adventure of Julie and Bixby, one must remember that men and women who seem obsequious and self-obliterating are often boiling with suppressed rage. It is the spiritual history of political revolutions.

To write a novel with such a hero and such a heroine required originality and unusual literary skill. The author of *Deep Channel* has both, and has succeeded in producing one of the best novels of the year. —WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, in *The Atlantic's Bookshelf*

VI

Letters

All books that deal with précis writing in English schools lay great stress upon the fact that "précis work offers practical training for the Civil Service and for positions in commercial houses." It is evidently a more common practice in England than in America for business men to require their clerks to make summaries of a long correspondence.

The précis of a letter should always be written in the third person. As a rule, it is well to follow the paragraphing of the original.

Three of the letters that follow are old and famous. The others deal with affairs of modern life.

104

Samuel Johnson to the Earl of Chesterfield

February 7, 1755

My Lord, —

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World* that two papers in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honor which, being very little accustomed to favors from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I have done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your

outward rooms or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON

105

Benjamin Franklin to George Washington

PASSY, 5 *March*, 1780

SIR:

I have received but lately the letter Your Excellency did me the honor of writing to me in recommendation of the Marquis de Lafayette. His modesty detained it long in his own hands. We became acquainted, however, from the time of his arrival at Paris; and his zeal for the honor of our country, his activity in our affairs here, and his firm attachment to our cause and to you, impressed me with the same regard and esteem for him that Your Excellency's letter would have done, had it been immediately delivered to me.

Should peace arrive after another campaign or two, and afford us a little leisure, I should be happy to see Your Excellency in Europe,

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Yours,
A. LINCOLN

107

63 FOUNTAIN STREET
HARTFORD, CONN.
June 30, 1924

STONE, CROSSWELL, AND MARDEN,
865 Congress Street
Portland, Maine

GENTLEMEN:

In the church of my home town of Brattleboro, Vermont, there is an old organ operated by water power. Occasionally during the winter the water will freeze and one of the boys will be called upon to man the bellows in order that the service may go on. It used to be my especial delight to get in back of that old organ, in a little narrow passageway all covered with dust and dirt, and pump the handle up and down, so that the organist out front might make the rafters of the church rumble.

And now I wonder — if that is n't just the kind of fellow you had in mind when you inserted your advertisement in Wednesday's *Herald:* a fellow who can get in back in all the dust and dirt, a fellow who can keep his head up but his nose everlastingly on the grindstone, who can keep the bellows constantly going up and down and give the organist out in front the wherewithal to make the business world rumble. If this is the kind of fellow you had in mind, would you be willing to talk with one who used to work the bellows handle not so very long ago?

I am young, will be twenty-three years old the latter part of this month. I have just completed my academic work at the College of Business Administration of Boston University, and am now looking for that chance to take hold of the bellows handle. I am five feet eleven and three-quarters inches in height, and weigh one hundred and sixty-five pounds. I have brown hair, brown eyes, and a fairly full face. My health is excellent.

While I was going to high school I used to work in a combination newspaper office, printing shop, and stationery store. I did everything there from being printer's devil to editing the newspaper. It was work I liked and I was interested. Then when I came to Boston University I tried to keep in those and kindred lines as much as I could.

First I started in taking English courses — every one I could possibly get into my schedule. Later I studied publicity work and advertising. I went out for positions on the University publications; and succeeded in obtaining places on the editorial staffs of the B.U. *News*, the weekly newspaper, and the *Beanpot*, the humorous monthly.

I am ready to go to work now, and naturally I turn to the field where my interest lies. I don't expect to make a fortune in six months or anything like that. What I do want is a place where I can get my hands on the bellows again, and an opportunity to work them hard enough so that the organist will feel that my efforts are worthy of a decent living wage.

If you think that you have room for me in your business and that I am the kind of fellow you want, I would appreciate an opportunity to tell you more fully about myself.

Yours very truly,

BERNARD L. KEMPER

108

59 Otis Street
Red Bank, Iowa
August 12, 1924

Mr. David Waterman
Commissioner of Highways
Red Bank, Iowa

My dear Mr. Waterman:

I wish to protest most vigorously against the attitude taken by your department concerning the repairs on Otis Street about which I wrote you on July 20th. I have received no reply to my letter, nor has anything been done to remedy conditions that are growing every day more annoying and dangerous. May I once more call your attention to these conditions.

Directly opposite my front walk Otis Street is lower by nearly a foot than it is to the north and south. At this lowest point there is no drain or sewer as there should be, with the result that water flows into this hollow from both directions, making a small pond which often does not entirely disappear for three days after a hard storm. In the thaws of March both street and sidewalks are often covered with three inches of water; and after the heavy shower of July 16th for nearly twelve hours it was impossible to approach within a hundred yards of my walk.

Then again, the heavy trucks of the Dufont Sand and Gravel Company have broken the surface of Otis Street opposite my house so badly that now, when passing, they bump and clatter in a most disagreeable manner. Dishes rattle on the shelves of my dining-room closet, and the plaster on the ceilings of three rooms has cracked and begun to flake off. Patching such as your department did a year ago does little or no good. The entire street needs re-surfacing for a distance of nearly fifty yards opposite my property. To pay the road taxes which I am assessed, and then have my house shaken to pieces by trucks bouncing along over a street rougher than it has been for twenty years, is a condition of things unwarranted and unbearable.

In the third place, Otis Street is never sprinkled. Why should this be so, when every other street in this neighborhood is regularly watered twice a day in the summer by the city sprinklers?

Will you please look into these matters at your earliest convenience? I hope you will come and see for yourself the conditions

who has become proficient in the use of adding, computing, billing, and bookkeeping machines, and who is probably qualified for a position in your accounting or auditing departments.

If you wish to see either Miss Davis or Miss Crandall, please call Newton North 2500.

Yours very truly,

OLIVER M. CARDWELL

110

WHEELOCK BADGER COMPANY
Chestnut and Market Streets
PHILADELPHIA, PENN.

May 4, 1924

MR. GEORGE BOND
Media High School
Media, Penn.

MY DEAR MR. BOND:

Thank you for sending in Miss Waite to us the other day. It is against the rules of the organization to employ girls under sixteen, but inasmuch as Miss Waite is to be sixteen in December, and is planning to come in only for special work while still continuing school, I am willing to concede a point.

I have discussed with Miss Walsh the number of girls whom we could use for Saturday positions and holiday work. We believe that we could use three junior or senior girls for sales positions on Saturdays, provided they had had some working experience, preferably in selling. These girls would be paid $2.50 per day. In the case of any new salesgirl without store experience, we should want her to come in one afternoon in advance of employment, for store training.

We could also use regularly on Saturdays three girls as stock girls, or in the cashier department. Any stock girl would receive $2.00 per day, which is also the pay for cashiers, or examiners as specials, if they are over eighteen. If under eighteen, they would be paid $1.75. The stock girl has to do a certain amount of carrying and needs to be a fairly husky type, although the work is not so strenuous as that done by the stock boys.

I could probably give regular Saturday places to three boys. This would be in stock work and they would be paid $2.00 or $2.34 ($14.00 a week rate) according to whether they were over or under eighteen.

Any of the young people that you send us would work the regular store hours, from 8:50 to 5:30.

Of course, we should want to see any people that you might suggest before we make final arrangements for hiring them for special work.

Sincerely yours,
LEONARD H. SMITH
Employment Manager

111

HAYES AND RICHMOND
Real Estate and Insurance
400 South Street
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

January 30, 1924

MR. HOWARD WELLWOOD
726 Grand Avenue
Fort Worth, Texas

DEAR SIR:

In accordance with your request of May 10th, I have looked over the house at 202 Walnut Street, to determine what repairs should be made in order to put it into condition for rental.

It appears that the roof leaks in four or five places. These places are small and could be patched so that the roof would be tight for probably two years. The expense would be small compared with the cost of reshingling at this time with fireproof shingles. The cost of a new roof-covering, that would meet the building requirements, would be at least $300.

The house will go another year without painting, except for the window sashes, which should be painted outside and inside to protect the putty and improve the general appearance of the house.

The oak floors in the two front rooms are worn and stained. They could be shellacked and varnished at a cost of about fifteen dollars, but I would advise having them refinished with a power sanding-machine. The fifty or sixty dollars that this would cost would add enough more to the rental value of the house to warrant the expenditure.

On the first floor the hall, front room, living-room, and dining-room need papering and painting, and the ceilings should be whitened. It would probably cost fifty dollars to do the work in a thorough manner, using paper costing an average of fifty cents a

roll. The walls and woodwork of the kitchen and pantry could be painted at the same time with waterproof paint at less expense than if undertaken later as a separate job, although these rooms are in fair condition.

If you want definite figures on all or any part of these repairs, I will get a reliable builder and painter to make estimates, and will do all I can to have the work completed promptly and satisfactorily. The house then ought to rent for eighty-five or ninety-five dollars a month.

Very truly yours,
JOHN H. RICHMOND

112

MURRAY, ORR, AND QUINLAN
Sporting Goods and Athletic Supplies
47 West 39th Street
NEW YORK CITY

January 14, 1924

MR. F. N. ANDERSON
Gorham, N. H.

DEAR SIR:

Before filling your order of June 1st. for

1 #130 Tennis Net
2 Campbell Rackets
6 Champion Tennis Balls
1 Set Double Court Tapes

we must ask you for further information regarding several items.

Unfortunately our stock of #130 Tennis Nets is entirely sold out. It will be at least ten days before a new supply is received from the factory. Net #131 is the small size. It is made of a slightly heavier cord than #130, and costs $1.00 more. Shall we substitute this net in place of the one which you order, or shall we ship the remainder of the order at this time, and send the net when the new supply comes in? Or would you prefer to have us hold the entire order until shipment can be made in one lot?

The Campbell Tennis Rackets which you ordered are made in five different weights: 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 ounces. It would be well for you to specify which weight should be sent with your order. The light weights are suitable for immature players, while the heavier rackets are made to meet the demands of stronger and more experienced players.

113 B

CITY HALL, SYRACUSE, N. Y.
December 19, 1923

HARRY P. BOURDON
42 Hillside Ave.
Syracuse, N. Y.

MY DEAR HARRY:

When I saw the Hamlin property being cut up last fall, I wondered myself what the boys of Ward 16 were going to do for coasting.

Your suggestion for using Hillside Avenue is a good one, and there is only one possible objection that I can foresee. The junction of Hillside Avenue and Court Street is already a dangerous corner. Coasting, of course, will make it only more so. This fact will make it necessary to have an officer stationed at the corner to warn automobiles, as well as the boys and girls coming down the hill.

However, I will present the matter at the next meeting of our Committee on Highways, and if necessary will call a public hearing. In the meantime you must report to your Club that I shall certainly do everything in my power to help them find a safe and suitable place to coast.

Sincerely yours,
CHARLES I. STENGEL

113 C

BERLEMAN AND ROLLINS
Real Estate Brokers
68 Front Street
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

December 28, 1923

MR. CHARLES I. STENGEL
City Hall, Syracuse, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:

As property-owners and heavy taxpayers on Hillside Avenue in Ward 16 we protest against the granting of a license for public coasting on that street.

We have two houses for sale and three for rent near the corner of Court Street and Hillside Avenue. These pieces of valuable real estate will be seriously injured by such coasting privileges as have been already granted in Wards 4 and 5. In fact, it is quite

probable that we shall be obliged to bring in a suit for damages against the city if the avenue is turned into a public coasting-park.

Hoping that you will see our business point of view, we remain,

Yours truly,

BERLEMAN & ROLLINS

113 D

113 HILLSIDE AVENUE
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
December 29, 1923

ALDERMAN STENGEL
City Hall

DEAR SIR:

I am both shocked and surprised to hear that you are in favor of granting a coasting permit for Hillside Avenue this winter. Illness prevents my attending the hearing to-morrow evening. I therefore send you this written protest, which I request you to read at the public meeting.

I object to coasting on Hillside Avenue for many reasons, but for these three in particular: The roadway becomes so slippery that it is dangerous for automobiles as well as for people on foot who may wish to cross; the laughing and screaming after dark is annoying to us who desire to live in peace and quiet; worst of all, coasting will bring to Hillside Avenue an undesirable element from the lower part of the city, whom we do not need, and who otherwise would never come on our street.

Yours truly,

(Miss) CONSTANTIA DINNENBACK

113 E

106 HILLSIDE AVENUE
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
December 29, 1923

MY DEAR MR. STENGEL:

I am sorry that I must be out of town to-morrow, and therefore cannot attend the meeting before your committee concerning the matter of public coasting on Hillside Avenue.

By all means let the boys and girls have this privilege, but only under two conditions: (1) During coasting hours there should be a

capable officer on guard at the corner of Court Street, or there will be another tragedy like the Parker case of last winter; (2) All coasting should be prohibited after 9:30 P.M. at the latest, in fairness to the residents of Hillside Avenue, some of whom retire early, and also in consideration of the children themselves.

I fear there is going to be strenuous opposition to granting the permit, but hope you can convince your committee that the majority of us do not object to Hillside Avenue being used for coasting purposes.

Sincerely yours,
ARTHUR L. STAPLES

113 F

42 HILLSIDE AVENUE
SYRACUSE, N. Y.
Jan. 10, 1924

DEAR MR. STENGEL:

At a meeting of the Ajax Club last evening up in Sid Farrar's attic you were unanimously elected an honorary member, that is, you have all the privileges, but won't have to pay any dues.

You made a great fight for us, Mr. Stengel, and I hope you heard us cheering you outside of the City Hall after the committee voted to allow coasting on Hillside Avenue this winter. Some of the fellows wanted to have a torchlight parade right off, and march up and down the hill singing and cheering, but I told them we might get you in trouble if we did, so we went up in Sid Farrar's attic and had a regular meeting there.

The fellows have agreed to be as quiet as possible while coasting, and to go in at half-past nine. That was all they wanted anyway.

Fred Seton and I have got our new double-runner finished, and it's painted red and green. When we have some snow we want you to come out and see how she goes. We 'll let you steer or push or sit in the middle. She 's going to be the fastest sled on the hill.

Thank you for getting us the permit to coast.

Yours very truly,
HARRY P. BOURDON,
President Ajax Club

P.S. Fred and I want to name our new double "The Flying Bertha" for Mrs. Stengel. Do you think she will mind?

Précis — *It is not stature that makes a man great in character. Nor does he become any better for living many, many years, like an oak tree. A lily which lives for but a single day may be perfect in form and beauty. So it is with man. His life, too, may be short and yet be perfect.* (57 words)

115

WHEN all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down:
Creep home, and take your place there,
The spent and maim'd among:
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young.

— CHARLES KINGSLEY

116

BREATHES there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,

Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

— WALTER SCOTT, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*

117

THE mountain and the squirrel
Had a quarrel,
And the former called the latter "Little Prig";
Bun replied,
"You are doubtless very big;
But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together,
To make up a year
And a sphere.
And I think it no disgrace
To occupy my place.
If I'm not so large as you,
You are not so small as I,
And not half so spry.
I'll not deny you make
A very pretty squirrel track;
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;
If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

118

ABOU BEN ADHEM — may his tribe increase! —
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
And with a voice made all of sweet accord,

Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow men."
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And, lo, Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

— LEIGH HUNT

119

I STOOD, one Sunday morning,
Before a large church door,
The congregation gathered,
And carriages a score —
From one out stepped a lady
I oft had seen before.

Her hand was on a prayer-book,
And held a vinaigrette;
The sign of man's redemption
Clear on the book was set,
But above the cross there glistened
A golden coronet.

For her the obsequious beadle
The inner door flung wide;
Lightly, as up a ballroom,
Her footsteps seemed to glide —
There might be good thoughts in her,
For all her evil pride.

But after her a woman
Peeped wistfully within,
On whose wan face was graven
Life's hardest discipline —
The trace of the sad trinity
Of weakness, pain, and sin.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years, slide soft away
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mixt, sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die —
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

— ALEXANDER POPE, "Solitude"

122

OFT in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me:
The smiles, the tears
Of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone,
Now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
Thus in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

When I remember all
The friends so link'd together
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!

Thus in the stilly night
  Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
  Of other days around me.

— THOMAS MOORE, "The Light of Other Days"

The following précis of Moore's poem (No. 122) was written by a high-school boy in ten minutes. Has he succeeded in using largely his own words? Notice the two sentences to correspond to the two stanzas. What other good points do you find in this abstract? Can you suggest any improvements?

Précis — *Often at night, just before I fall asleep, I remember the happy years of my boyhood and the faces of old friends who all, all are gone. Then I feel as sad and lonesome as one who is left alone in the dreary gloom of a great banquet-hall, from which all the guests have gone.* (55 words)

123

THE quality of mercy is not strain'd.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Merchant of Venice*

124

SWEET day; so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

— GEORGE HERBERT, "Virtue Immortal"

125

SAY not, the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

127

WHETHER on Ida's shady brow,
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceased;

Whether in Heaven ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air,
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove
Beneath the bosom of the sea,
Wandering in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry —

How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoyed in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move,
The sound is forced, the notes are few.

— WILLIAM BLAKE, "To the Muses"

128

IN an age of fops and toys,
Wanting wisdom, void of right,
Who shall nerve heroic boys
To hazard all in Freedom's fight —
Break sharply off their jolly games,
Forsake their comrades gay,
And quit proud homes and youthful dames
For famine, toil, and fray?
Yet on the nimble air benign
Speed nimbler messages,
That waft the breath of grace divine
To hearts in sloth and ease.
So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, *Thou must,*
The youth replies, *I can.*

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON, "Voluntaries"

129

WANTING is — what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
— Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
— Framework which waits for a picture to frame;
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with naught they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

— ROBERT BROWNING

130

HOME they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry;
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend, and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee;
Like summer tempest came her tears —
"Sweet my child, I live for thee!"

— ALFRED TENNYSON

131

BREAK, break, break,
  On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
  The thoughts that arise in me.

Oh, well for the fisherman's boy,
  That he shouts with his sister at play!
Oh, well for the sailor lad,
  That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
  To their haven under the hill;
But oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
  And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
  At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
  Will never come back to me.

— ALFRED TENNYSON

132

I, WHO have lost the stars, the sod,
  For chilling pave and cheerless light,
Have made my meeting-place with God
  A new and nether night —

Have found a fane where thunder fills
  Loud caverns, tremulous; and these
Atone me for my reverend hills
  And moonlit silences.

A figment in the crowded dark,
  Where men sit muted by the roar,
I ride upon the whirring Spark
  Beneath the city's floor.

In this dim firmament, the stars
  Whirl by in blazing files and tiers;
Kin meteors graze our flying bars,
  Amid the spinning spheres.

Heaven gives our years of fading strength
  Indemnifying fleetness;
And those of youth, a seeming length,
  Proportion'd to their sweetness.

— THOMAS CAMPBELL, "The River of Life"

134*

C. E. E. B., 1920

PERHAPS in this neglected spot is laid
  Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
  Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
  Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
  And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem, of purest ray serene,
  The dark, unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
  And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
  The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
  Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

— THOMAS GRAY
"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

135

A THING of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing

A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching; yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read—
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

— JOHN KEATS, "Endymion"

136

I WOULD not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polish'd manners and fine sense
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent step may crush the snail
That crawls at evening in the public path,
But he that has humanity, forewarned,
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes
A visitor unwelcome into scenes
Sacred to neatness and repose, the alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die.
A necessary act incurs no blame.
Not so when held within their proper bounds
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,
Or take their pastime in the spacious field.

There they are privileged; and he that hunts
Or harms them there, is guilty of a wrong,
Disturbs the economy of Nature's realm,
Who when she formed, designed them an abode.
The sum is this: if man's convenience, health,
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all — the meanest things that are —
As free to live and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in his sovereign wisdom made them all.

— WILLIAM COWPER, *The Task*

137*

C. E. E. B., 1918

OH, well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong.
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,
Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,
And ever weaker grows through acted crime,
Or seeming-genial venial fault,
Recurring and suggesting still!
He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand,
And o'er weary, sultry land,
Far beneath a blazing vault,
Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill
The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

— ALFRED TENNYSON, "Will"

In cradle of the rude imperious surge
And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads and hanging their
With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds,
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
Canst thou, O partial Sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry IV, Part II*

140

FAREWELL! a long farewell, to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must forever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!
I feel my heart new open'd. Oh, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry VIII*

141

To be, or not to be: that is the question.
Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die; to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'T is a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; to sleep;
To sleep? Perchance to dream! Ay, there 's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffl'd off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There 's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pains of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*

VIII

A Group of Sonnets

For a discussion of the sonnet and précis writing see Introduction, pages 24–27.

Selections 146, 148, 151, 156, 159, and 160 have appeared on papers of the College Entrance Board Examinations.

On pages 141, 144, 145, 146 will be found summaries written by high-school students in classroom practice.

142

When Letty had scarce passed her third glad year,
And her young, artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a colored sphere
Of the wide earth, that she might mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world; old empires peeped
Between her baby fingers; her soft hand
Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leaped,
And laughed and prattled in her world-wide bliss;
But when we turn'd her sweet unlearned eye
On our own isle, she raised a joyous cry,
"Oh! yes, I see it, Letty's home is there!"
And, while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair!

— Charles Tennyson-Turner, "Letty's Globe"

143

Erelong I paced those cloisteral aisles, erelong
  I moved where pale memorial shapes convene,
  Where poet, warrior, statesman, king, or queen
In one great elegy of sculpture throng,
When suddenly, with heartbeats glad and strong,
  I saw the face of that lost friend serene
  Who robed Hiawatha and Evangeline
In such benign simplicity of song!
Then, swiftly as light mists on morning leas,
  All history, legend, England, backward drawn,
  Vanished like vision to incorporate air.

146*

C. E. E. B., 1919

MUCH have I traveled in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold.
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

— JOHN KEATS, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"

This sonnet, No. 146, which appeared on the fall paper of the College Entrance Examination Board in 1919, proved to be a stumblingblock in several classes of high-school seniors. All but a few students fell down on the figurative language in the first eight lines. The first three summaries below show that the writers considered the sonnet a poem about traveling. The author of the fourth précis saw that it concerned reading.

The misunderstanding of the poem may be attributed to several factors. The words "expanse," "demesne," "fealty," and "serene," as used by Keats, led many students astray. Then their knowledge of mythology was meagre. They had not read Homer, and Chapman meant nothing to them. Above all, they lacked imagination, so that when the poet began, "Much have I traveled," the picture that came to their minds was of trains and ships and automobiles. In the same way, lack of imagination left almost meaningless such expressions as "the realms of gold" and "round many western islands." In a word this sonnet was too difficult for high-school seniors to handle alone

Précis — *I have traveled far and visited many kingdoms, but not until I heard Chapman speak of Homer's land did I appreciate its existence.*

Précis — *Although I had heard considerable of Homer in my foreign travels, I felt no interest in him until Chapman gave me a great thrill — such a thrill as one has on seeing for the first time a new and wonderful sight.*

Précis — *I have traveled in many places whose beauty is ascribed to Apollo, but these were as nothing to the wide and glorious expanse of Homer when I read Chapman's account of it.*

Précis — *I have read many wonderful books in my lifetime, and I have especially enjoyed the great poets. I had often been told of the works of Homer, but I never had had a chance to read them until Chapman gave them to me. Then I was so delighted that I can only compare my wonder to the feeling that an astronomer has when he discovers a new star, or that an explorer has when he looks for the first time upon a new world or a new ocean.*

Here is a one-sentence précis written after the poem had been discussed in class.

Précis — *In all my wide reading of the great English poets I never made such a wonderful discovery as I did when I first read Chapman's translation of Homer.*

147

To one who has been long in city pent,
'T is very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven — to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel, an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by,
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

— JOHN KEATS

148*

C. E. E. B., June, 1921

THE poetry of earth is never dead.
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.
That is the grasshopper's, — he takes the lead
In summer luxury, — he has never done
With his delights; for, when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never.
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems, to one in drowsiness half lost,
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS

149

I MET a traveler from an antique land,
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

— PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, "Ozymandias of Egypt"

The following summaries of No. 151 were written in ten minutes by pupils of the senior year in high-school. Read them carefully and compare them with the original. Which is the better précis and why?

Précis — *The world is too much for us. We lay waste our powers and see in Nature little that is ours, for we have given our hearts away. We are out of tune with everything. Great God! I would rather be a pagan, if I only might have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; have sight of Proteus rising from the sea; or hear Triton blowing his wreathèd horn!*

Précis — *So absorbed are we in worldly matters, such as making money and spending it, that we can no longer appreciate the beauty in Nature all about us. As for me, I would rather be a pagan and believe in the beautiful old myths, than give my heart away to sordid things.*

152

MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men.
Oh, raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power!
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

— WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

153

OH, FRIEND! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handywork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom! We must run glittering like a brook

In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense —
This is idolatry, and these we adore;
Plain living and high thinking are no more;
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

— WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

154

WHEN, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee; and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Which précis, of the three below — of No. 154 — seems to you the most satisfactory? Point out the strong and weak points of each.

Précis — *When I fall into the depths of despondency, I sometimes think of thèe, and then suddenly all my discontent passes away.* (21 words)

Précis — *When trouble and disgrace are all around me, and I am discontented with everything in my life, I sometimes think of thy sweet love. Then my hopes rise again, and I am so happy that I would not change places with a king.* (43 words)

Précis — *Sometimes everything goes wrong. I seem to have no friends and am generally dissatisfied with myself. I envy one man for his looks, another for his wealth, and still another for his skill — in fact, I am contented with nothing and despise myself. But if, when I am in this miserable condition, by any good chance I happen to think of you, my spirits rise up again like a bird and I am happy once more. For when I remember your love, I feel as rich as a king.* (88 words)

155

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoan'd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

156*

C. E. E. B., Sept. 1920

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

159*

C. E. E. B., 1919

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

— JOHN MILTON, "On His Blindness"

160*

C. E. E. B., 1917

ONE lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity —
Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labor, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Laborers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

— MATTHEW ARNOLD, "Quiet Work"

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