

An Example of a Summary

This is an example summary that I wrote about a John Grisham essay. I am writing in the Plain Style. I begin with an intro paragraph, like if I were writing a real essay. I begin by trying to engage the reader's attention, though this is not required. You can begin your interpretive essays with the summary. At the end of my intro, I put my thesis statement (brown font) for this pretend essay. Notice how, in my intro, I offer a snapshot sentence (blue font) so my readers know what I am talking about before I state my thesis. I use the author's full name the first time, and use the last name only from then on. Finally, notice how I write about the essay in the present tense (red font) *unless* I am dating the essay (1998) and/or giving some historical fact or detail about the essay (green font).

intro:

Most Americans have walked by a homeless man on the street without stopping. Most of us have sat rigidly in our cars at a stoplight while a downtrodden person with a sign walks up and down the rows, asking for money, work, or both. In America, worthy causes are endless, but in 1998 famous novelist and former lawyer John Grisham **advocated** homelessness as a cause that needs particular attention. **In his article, "Somewhere for Everyone," Grisham argues that while the homeless must cope with a lack of food, shelter, and proper healthcare, their biggest obstacle is actually city laws and unconcerned Americans. Grisham effectively balances appeals to emotion, character, and logic in an attempt to move his audience from a state of apathy to empathy, and perhaps even to action.**

In the summary below, I have incorporated all the key features discussed in class. I have author tags (purple font), paraphrases with page citations (blue font), and direct quotes with page citations (red font). I do not use any stand-alone quotes. I have plenty of main ideas, and I already stated the author's full name and essay title in my introduction.

summary:

In this article, Grisham wants to reveal the problem of homelessness to American readers who are mostly uninformed about the crisis. **He begins by admitting** that he was once unconcerned about the issue of homelessness. **According to Grisham**, homeless people were overlooked or avoided in his hometown. As a result, he learned to ignore the problem. **He recounts an incident in New York City when a persistent street beggar followed him down the road and accosted him (2).** Grisham eventually escaped the man's harassment, and he writes that the **experience "did nothing to arouse my concern for the homeless" (3).** **He explains** his indifference to the homeless plight: **"I had other causes and concerns, and I supported other charities" (3).** He never thought about where they sleep, how they live with no health benefits, or how young mothers survive. He never realized that laws against loitering or sleeping on park benches **pose "a new and growing threat" to homeless people (2).**

The turning point comes when Grisham wants to write about a street lawyer for his next book and is forced to confront all these issues head-on. "My research," **he recalls**, "took me into the world of the homeless" (3). There, in Washington D.C., **Grisham experiences** the routines of street life and speaks with homeless people in person. Once a complacent American, Grisham's experience in D.C. compels him to realize that "the problem [...] is not solved by removing victims from our view" (3). **Instead, we must ask ourselves what kind of America we want: one in which children go hungry, or one in which we care for the homeless (Grisham 4).**

word count for the summary: 285

This summary is a bit longer than what most English 101 interpretive essays have, so I could probably cut a few quotes or ideas in a second draft. Or, I could spread the summary out over my essay, summarizing parts of Grisham's article as I interpret them.