

Summarizing Practice

Instructions

In pairs, for each passage:

1. Read it carefully
2. Write down the topic
3. Underline any words you don't know & look them up
4. Decide together which you think are the key points in each paragraph, & highlight them
5. Compare with the class

Then, individually:

6. In a word document, write a summary of each text in your own words.
7. Share with me on OneDrive

Text One

One of the first uses of the circus train is credited to W.C. Coup. He partnered with P.T. Barnum in 1871 to expand the reach of their newly combined shows using locomotives – steam trains.

Before trains, moving the circus was hard. They had to lug around all their animals, performers, and equipment with a team of more than 600 horses. Since there were no highways, these voyages were rough and took a long time. Circuses would stop at many small towns between the large venues. Performing at many of these small towns was not very profitable. Because of these limitations, circuses could not grow as large as the imaginations of the operators.

After they began using circus trains, Barnum and Coup only brought their show to large cities. These performances were much more profitable, and the profits went toward creating an even bigger and better circus. More stages or "rings" were added, and the show went on. Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus relied on the train to transport their astounding show until they went defunct in 2017.

Text Two

In the Southwest during early half of the 1800s, cows were only worth two or three dollars apiece. They roamed wild, grazed off the open range, and were abundant. Midway through the century though, railroads were built, and the nation was connected. People in the Southwest could suddenly ship cows in freight trains to the Northeast. The Yankees there had a growing taste for beef and were willing to pay for it. Out of the blue, the same cows that were once worth a couple of bucks were now worth between twenty and forty dollars each. The only problem was that they had to get these cows to the train station.

A new profession emerged from this. It became lucrative to wrangle up a drove of cattle and herd them to the nearest train town. Of course, it was dangerous too. Cowboys were threatened at every turn. They faced cattle rustlers, stampedes, and extreme weather. But they kept pushing those steers to the train station. By the turn of the century, barbed wire had killed the open range. Some may say that cowboys, too, were finished by barbed wire, but it was the train that created them.

Text Three

Electric trolley cars or trams were once the chief mode of public transportation in the United States. Though they required tracks and electric cables to run, these trolley cars were clean and comfortable.

In 1922, auto manufacturer General Motors created a special unit to replace electric trolleys with cars, trucks, and buses. Over the next decade, they lobbied for laws and regulations that made operating trams more difficult and less profitable. In 1936, General Motors created several front companies to purchase and dismantle the trolley car system. They received big investments from Firestone Tire, Standard Oil of California, Phillips Petroleum, and others in the automotive industry.

Some people suspect that these parties wanted to replace trolley cars with buses to make public transportation less desirable. This would then increase automobile sales. The decline of the tram system in North America could be blamed on many things—labour strikes, the Great Depression, regulations that were unfavourable to operators. Yet perhaps the primary cause was having a group of powerful men from rival sectors of the auto industry working together to ensure its destruction.

Text Four

What's dressed in all black, practices stealth, and is a master of espionage, sabotage, and assassination? You guessed it: it's a ninja! A ninja was a covert agent or mercenary in feudal Japan. Their methods of waging irregular warfare were deemed dishonourable and beneath the honour of the samurai. Though ninjas appeared formally as specially trained spies and mercenaries in the 15th century during the Sengoku period, antecedents may have existed as early as the 12th century.

Perhaps the only thing more elusive than a ninja is the source of the word ninja. In Japan, ninja are more often referred to as shinobi. The word shinobi, short for shinobi-no-mono, means "to steal away", and appears in poems as far back as the eighth century. So how did this word become ninja? Some believe that during the Edo period in Japan, the word shinobi-no-mono was transformed to the very similar word (in Japanese characters) ninja, which is much quicker and easier to say.

Ninjas used many different tools and weapons to get the job done. They used throwing stars, bows, and acid-spurting tubes to name a few. But the favorite weapon of most ninjas may have been the katana. The katana is a long, curved sword with a single blade and a long grip to accommodate two hands. This sword was often carried in a sheath or scabbard on the ninja's back.

Though the sword was primarily used for fighting and killing, the scabbard served other purposes too. The ninja could remove the sword, angle the scabbard against a wall, and use it to climb to a higher place. Or, while stealthily negotiating their way through a dark place (such as an enemy's residence at night), ninjas may have used the scabbard as a walking stick, feeling or probing their way around objects so as not to knock into anything and alert the enemy. Perhaps the ninja's most sinister use of the scabbard was to put a mixture of red pepper, dirt, and iron shavings at the top of the scabbard. Then, when the ninja drew his sword, his opponent would be blinded.