

Writing a Summary

Key Vocabulary

summary

topic sentence

This book overflows with information. On every page and in every paragraph you will find many facts. Sometimes it is a challenge to remember all the interesting things that you are reading about.

What Is a Summary?

A good way to help you to remember what you have read is to write a short **summary**. A summary briefly states the main ideas contained in a piece of writing. Writing a summary helps you to sort out the most important information.

To prepare for writing a summary, look for the **topic sentences**, or the sentences that contain the main ideas. First, read through the entire selection and write down the topic sentences. Often a topic sentence is the first sentence in a paragraph. However, it may also be in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. Notice that the rest of the sentences give supporting details.

When you write a short summary, you will be concerned only with main ideas. In a longer summary, you might want to include some important details.

Summarizing the Lesson

To write a summary of Lesson 2 on ancient China, first read through the whole lesson. It will help to pay close attention to the bold headings within the lesson. Headings help you to figure out what each section is about. Headings also

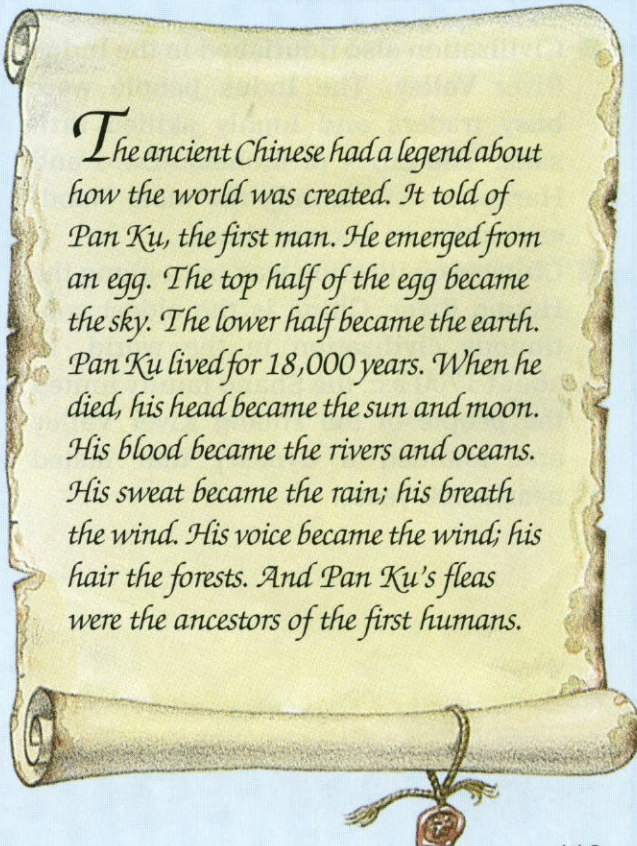
provide an outline of the main ideas of the lesson.

For example, the first heading in Lesson 2 tells you that one of the main ideas in your summary will have to do with the geography of the Huang River Valley. You can find it on page 114. Write down the most important ideas in each section.

As you read each section, ask yourself these questions: "What is the main idea of this paragraph? Which are supporting details?" When you have finished, write a summary using your own words.

Reviewing the Skill

Read the paragraph below. Then write a summary in two or three sentences.



The ancient Chinese had a legend about how the world was created. It told of Pan Ku, the first man. He emerged from an egg. The top half of the egg became the sky. The lower half became the earth. Pan Ku lived for 18,000 years. When he died, his head became the sun and moon. His blood became the rivers and oceans. His sweat became the rain; his breath the wind. His voice became the wind; his hair the forests. And Pan Ku's fleas were the ancestors of the first humans.