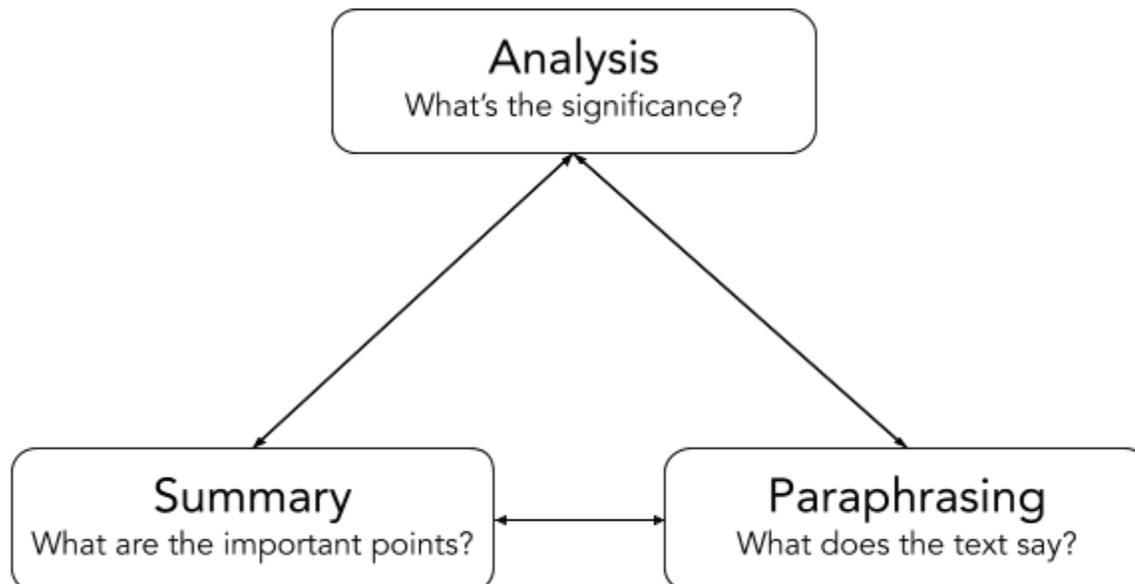# Developing Analysis

The distinction between paraphrase, summary, and analysis is central to academic writing, especially to assignments which require critical responses to sources. Paraphrasing and summarizing a text can be important steps in the process toward discovering your analysis.

NOTE: Paraphrasing and summarizing of someone else's ideas require citations! Your own analysis does not.

1. **Paraphrasing is about understanding.** By putting the ideas in your own words, you can better comprehend specific pieces of the explicit content of a source.
2. **Summarizing is about simplifying.** By pulling out the main points in the paraphrase, you reduce the content of the source to its essential components.
3. **Analyzing is about finding significance.** By expressing your own observations and ideas about the source, you show how the components function as a whole (the source itself, the subject of the source, the audience of the source, the discipline the source contributes to, etc.).

Remember that writing is a process, and the development of analysis of a source might require a lot of back-and-forth between the original texts, your own summaries and paraphrases of certain passages, and your analysis of how the sources fits in to the overall context of your writing.

How you analyze a source will depend greatly on how you plan to use the source in your writing. For ideas of questions to ask yourself for generating analysis, see the CLAS Book Reviews handout.



**Analysis**
What's the significance?

**Summary**
What are the important points?

**Paraphrasing**
What does the text say?

UC **SANTA BARBARA**

Example of Analysis Development

Original Passage (excerpt from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*):
> I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

---

*In order to paraphrase, it's best to read the text, put it away, and then try to write what it said in your own words. It may be shorter or longer than the original text.*

Paraphrase: As long as a person keeps their life simple and their goals clear, they will find success and elevation of character and thought. By moving forward confidently and maintaining simple fundamental values, anyone can open up their mind to new, happier possibilities.

---

*The summary is shorter, extracting the most important aspects: Thoreau's overall message.*

Summary: After his experience of living alone in a cabin in the woods, Thoreau asserts that simplicity is a fundamental element to leading a successful life and achieving an elevation of character.

---

*The analysis is longer and reveals ideas that were not explicitly stated in the original source. In the context of an essay, the analysis ties together ideas from the source into the overall argument of the paper, and may contain pieces of your own paraphrasing and summary.*

Analysis: In studying his own experience of living alone in the woods, Thoreau asserts repeatedly that simplicity is a fundamental element to a successful life by applying his observations of the behavior of animals and even himself in a natural setting to his and other philosophers' observations of society. Thoreau argues that an existence free from luxuries and unnecessary material possessions opens our minds to new, more meaningful and elevated philosophies. Does this mean, then, that our expanding global economy and rapid technological developments that consistently turn out new consumer products will inevitably lead toward an international shallowness of character?

UC **SANTA BARBARA**