

History and the Writing Process: Summary & Description vs. Analysis & Argument

Summary: tells what is happening; summarizes book/article/event; basically paraphrases the material in plain language

Ex: General Robert E. Lee arrived at the Appomattox Court House in April 1865 to officially surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant.

Description: may take note of a particular analysis or idea, but makes no argumentative comment on those ideas

Ex: When General Robert E. Lee arrived at the Appomattox Court House in April 1865 to officially surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant, he had direct control over only the Army of Northern Virginia.

What is missing? --any ANALYSIS of HOW these ideas function in the event/material and so of WHY the author might have chosen to use them

Analysis: asks and answers how ideas function in the narrative, what they signify or mean

Ex: Because General Robert E. Lee had control over only the Army of Northern Virginia in April 1865, when he met with General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House he did not surrender the entire Confederate Army.

Argument: uses analytical points to make an arguable claim about the idea/event as a whole

Ex: When General Robert E. Lee arrived at the Appomattox Court House in April 1865 to surrender officially to General Ulysses S. Grant, he had direct control over only the Army of Northern Virginia. Therefore, the end of the Civil War did not come with Lee's signature, but rather with the surrender of the forces under General Stand Watie weeks later.