

Sample Summary

This example is taken from *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues*

The sample summary on this page is somewhat briefer than the average summary in this course. It is not intended as the example of a “perfect” summary. However, it has many strong points that allow it to serve as a good model for writing a summary.

To check out some of the strengths in the following short summary, keep an eye on how this student chose to

- Include transitional phrases and other elements that contribute to the unity and coherence of the paragraphs
- Integrate quotations into the text of the summary
- Use references to the author to remind the reader that these ideas belong to Levine
- Include selected examples from the original

In “The making of a Generation,” Arthur Levine reports the results from his 1993 survey of undergraduates to support his thesis that college students are defined by the key social and political events of their age. To provide background for the report and comparative analysis that follows, Levine first explains the results of his 1979 survey of college students, who cited the Vietnam War and Watergate scandal as most significantly affecting them. Those events produced a generation of people preoccupied with themselves rather than with the larger society.

The event cited most frequently by students in Levine’s 1993 survey was the Challenger explosion. When asked why that event had had such a profound effect on them, most reported that the tragedy had both disillusioned them and shaken their sense of safety. The second event cited was the fall of communism, which students viewed positively, though their enthusiasm had been dampened somewhat by the instabilities in many Central and Eastern European countries that erupted as a result of that fall. In third, fourth, and fifth places, respectively, were the Persian Gulf War, which many view critically; the AIDS epidemic, which both terrified and angers many young people; and the verdict in the Rodney King beating trial and the riots that followed, which left many students feeling disillusioned about the police, the judicial system, and humanity in general.

According to Levine, his survey reveals that while many of today’s generation of college undergraduates feel as if their personal success is manageable, they are uncertain about the future of their society and find themselves torn between choosing a career that provides personal financial security and one that makes some meaningful contribution to society.