

Summarizing the Costs of the Civil War

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Summarizing is briefly stating the main points of an event, discussion, or piece of writing.

A strong summary includes the central idea and important supporting details. It objectively paraphrases information and does not include personal opinions.

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You summarize when you

- tell a friend about a movie you saw
- answer the dinner table question, “How was school today?”
- write an essay about your summer vacation

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Directions: Notice how one reader highlighted the major points and wrote a summary of **Passage A**.

Passage A

In the Civil War, which lasted four years, about 600,000 young Americans, North and South together, lost their lives. That is not the total casualty list; it is the number that actually went under the sod. The wounded, the missing, the prisoners, were in another list. Six hundred thousand is the number of lives that were actually lost.

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If you want to understand what a terrible drain that was on the country, reflect that the total population in the United States in the 1860s was about an eighth or a ninth of what it is today. The number of men killed in that war, if you interpret **it in today's terms, would come to something between four and four and one-half million.** In other words, a perfectly frightful toll of American lives was taken.

There are a good many reasons why the toll was so high. **More than one-half of the men who died were not killed in action; they simply died of camp diseases:** typhoid fever, pneumonia, dysentery, and childhood diseases like measles and chicken pox.

from "Reflections on the Civil War," page 32

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Summary: In addition to all those who were wounded, missing, or taken prisoner, a total of about 600,000 soldiers died in the Civil War. As a portion of the population, that would translate to 4–4.5 million in today's terms. Fewer than half of those soldiers died in battle. The rest died of diseases because of poor conditions in the camps.

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Directions: Underline the main points in **Passage B**. Write your summary in the space provided.

Passage B

What began as an organized protest march quickly turned violent when the angry protesters set fire to the draft office. One New York City woman kept a daily diary of the riots. Here, she describes the events of the first day.

“All day yesterday there were dreadful scenes enacted in the city. The police were successfully opposed; many were killed, many houses were gutted and burned;

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Negroes were hung in the streets! All last night the firebells rang, but at last the rain came down in torrents and scattered the crowds, giving the city authorities time to get organized.”
—Maria L. Daly, July 14, 1863

Many immigrants were fearful that freed slaves would move north and take away their jobs if the North won the war. Thus, the rioters harbored a particular hatred toward blacks. On the afternoon of the first day of the riots, the rioters looted and then set fire to the city’s black orphanage.
from “The Great Draft Riots,” page 69

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from “The Great Draft Riots,” page 69

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Summary: The Draft Riots of July 1863 began as a protest march, but turned violent when protesters set fire to the draft office. In the following days, police were killed and houses gutted and burned. Fearing that freed slaves would move north and take their jobs, rioters targeted blacks by hanging them and setting fire to an African American orphanage.