

PARAPHRASING STRATEGY

Strategy

Read a paragraph

Ask yourself what were the main idea and details?

Put the main idea and details into your own words

Finding the Main Idea

What is this paragraph about?

This paragraph is about _____

What does it tell me about _____?

It tells me _____

Places to Look

Look in the first sentence of the paragraph

Look for repetitions of the same word or words in the whole paragraph

Paraphrase Requirements

Must contain a complete thought (subject and verb)

Must be totally accurate

Must have new information

Must make sense

Must contain useful information

Must be in your own words

Only one general statement per paragraph is allowed

Level 9, Passage 3 (N)
“House of Secrets”

The old place on Marquette Road had been empty for decades. Most people hoped it could be saved, but neglect had left the entire structure unstable. The roof had holes in it, and boards were falling off of the outside walls. Broken windows had allowed the elements and wild creatures to invade it. A demolition date was scheduled.

Ownership of the house was unclear. The historical society had tried to purchase the property for years. The last owner refused to sell it even after moving away. When he died, family members bickered over it until most of them had died. The remaining family members did not seem to care what happened to it or even know who owned it.

The house had quite a history. It was built in 1845 by descendants of French-Canadian explorers who settled along the Mississippi River. From a large sycamore tree that once shaded the front yard, a trio of bandits was hanged in 1857. Confederate and Union soldiers occupied the house at different times during the Civil War. According to local legend, the last owner’s grandfather died of fright after seeing a ghost in the house and was found dead but sitting bolt upright in a chair.

A few weeks before the scheduled demolition, historical society members were allowed to search the house and grounds, but they found very little. An architectural salvage company arrived to carefully remove any woodwork, hardware, ceramic, glass, or other items of interest that could be saved. It was when they began removing mahogany panels covered with countless coats of paint from a wall across from the main stairway that they found a concealed door and another, smaller stairway.

Underneath the house, and not connected to the main basement, were six hidden rooms that had been sealed off, perhaps during renovations done around 1900. One room had crumbling cots and a hidden stairway, prompting historians to wonder if it was a previously unknown stop for the Underground Railway, a network of homes set up to help runaway slaves escape to the North. Behind a locked door in the furthest room, the historians found an office with a desk and cabinet still full of books and papers. A small safe sat in the corner. A locksmith opened it, and inside were bags of gold and silver coins.

After these discoveries, the city, historical society staff, and volunteers worked quickly to formulate a plan to save the house. With strong community support, a portion of the gold coins, and a very large grant, the house was not demolished but painstakingly rebuilt and restored. Now it is a very popular museum.

Level 9, Passage 3
"House of Secrets"

Name: _____

Please circle the letter next to the best correct answer for each item.

1. What is this passage about?
 - a. Early explorers and settlers who traveled the Mississippi River during the nineteenth century.
 - b. Proper materials needed to restore and renovate historic homes.
 - c. A historic site saved from near-certain demolition.
 - d. The ways city laws affect older neighborhoods.

2. The house had fallen into disrepair because...
 - a. It had been rented out since the 1960s, and very few repairs had been done.
 - b. It had been empty for decades.
 - c. It was heavily damaged in a severe storm.
 - d. Squatters and vandals had destroyed it.

3. The house ...
 - a. Cost over \$350,000 to fully renovate.
 - b. Was built in 1900 by French-Canadian explorers.
 - c. Was occupied at various times by Confederate and Union soldiers during the Civil War.
 - d. Was thought to be the site of buried pirate gold and silver treasure.

4. What prompted the decision to renovate rather than demolish?
 - a. Organizers contacted many donors who gave generously, and the house was spared.
 - b. The city's planning department issued a new ruling designed for this particular property.
 - c. The owners fought against the demolition.
 - d. Sealed off basement rooms were believed to be part of the Underground Railroad.

5. What conclusion can we draw from this story?
 - a. Be sure to explore something before destroying it.
 - b. Very old houses deteriorate as the years go by.
 - c. You won't succeed unless you work hard and keep trying, no matter who tries to lead you astray.
 - d. Early explorers along the Mississippi found a treasure of gold and silver.

6. What did historians find in the house?
 - a. Bags of silver and gold coins.
 - b. Jewelry and other stolen goods.
 - c. Clothing and papers related to escaped prisoners.
 - d. Skeletons of past residents.

Paraphrasing Sheet

Name _____ Date _____ Lesson# _____

C = Correct O = Own Words M = Makes Sense

Paragraph #1

C/O/M

Main Idea: _____

Points

Detail 1: _____

Detail 2: _____

Paragraph #2

C/O/M

Main Idea: _____

Detail 1: _____

Detail 2: _____

Paragraph #3

C/O/M

Main Idea: _____

Detail 1: _____

Detail 2: _____

Next time you will do even better if you:

- Put it in your own words
- Work on the main idea
- Record only what's in the paragraph
- Other _____
- Include only useful information
- Avoid repeating

Total

SCORE: _____ /9 = _____ %

1/9=11% 2/9=22% 3/9=33% 4/9=44% 5/9=56% 6/9=67% 7/9=78% 8/9=89% 9/9=100%