Teaching Summarizing
From Elizabeth Stephan, Library

Competencies Highlighted:

1. Analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms
2. Analyze and interpret information from varied sources, including print and visual media

Description: The final assignment in this Library 201 course was a research bibliography where students had to, among other things, summarize fifteen different sources. Teaching someone how to summarize an article is difficult because students find distilling a key idea from a myriad of details challenging. So I decided to use an image that had a lot of detail yet wasn’t immediately recognizable. Students spent a few minutes looking at the image and then described it using simple descriptive words and then longer phrases. As they described and discussed the image, I wrote down their responses. Little by little, I gave students more information on the image. Then, as a class, they composed a two to three sentence summary of the image. Following this visual exercise, we had a discussion on how they initially approached the image (scanned it quickly and then looked deeper for connections) and how this same mental process could be applied to reading a scholarly article.