

Language Skills – Practicing paraphrasing and summarising with loglines

A logline is a short, one or two sentence summary of a movie (or television show or book) written with the aim to catch the reader's interest. It is short but packed with detail such as the main theme of the story, what the characters are like, and it will be written in an exciting style.

A writer needs a useful way to summarise their script and so they write a logline. This will be a carefully written summary that uniquely captures exactly what their story is about. If it is written successfully, then producers and studios who read it (before the script) are more likely to be interested in making it into a movie.

As every movie has a different story, loglines always tell a different story. As summaries, loglines will often contain these narrative elements:

- The setting –
This is usually a place or a period in time.
- The hero or heroine –
Or it could be a group of them. The literary term for the main character is protagonist.
- The main character's present situation –
Where they start their story. In a logline, this is usually a time of difficulty or change in their life.
- The goal –
What the main character has to do for a happy ending to the story.
- The problem –
In literary terms, the villain, or hero's enemy, is called the antagonist. This could be anything from a fantasy figure with evil plans, to a long journey to be overcome.

Writing a logline is a good exercise for practising summarising and paraphrasing. There are two activities presented on the next pages. In the first, you can practice paraphrasing by rewriting a logline, and in the second, you can practice summarising by writing your own logline.

Once you've completed the activities and written some loglines, share them and see if anyone can guess what movies they are!

See www.everybitenglish.com//language-skills-paraphrasing for more information.

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Activity 1: Paraphrasing

Look up any logline and write it down. Then analyse it for the five narrative elements and write each element in the table. Use the keywords in the logline to help identify what element it is. Then think of some synonyms for the keywords. Use your new keywords to paraphrase the original by writing your own version of the logline.

Original logline:					
Narrative elements:	Setting	The main character(s)	Their present situation	Their goal	The problem
Keyword synonyms:					
Paraphrased logline:					

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Activity 2: Summarising

Think of a movie you know well. Fill in the table with ideas for keywords that describe and summarise the movie. Then compose your own logline for it. Afterwards, look up the original and see how close you were!

Movie:					
Narrative elements:	Setting	The main character(s)	Their present situation	Their goal	The problem
Summary and descriptive keywords:					
Your logline:					

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Activity 1: Paraphrasing

Original logline:					
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Activity 2: Summarising

Movie:					
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Summary and descriptive keywords:					
Your logline:					