

### A Pre-Reading Summary (John J. Wolfe)

What do I mean by "a verbal summary"? You'll develop your own style of doing this, but in my discussion section, it would look something like this. During the last five minutes of class, I'd ask my students to look at the reading assignment on the syllabus for next time. I'd then go on to the following summary. The article can be found on-line at

[http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?030106fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?030106fa_fact)

(As you read it, you'll notice that to do this, I have to be really familiar with the article: I pretty much have to know at the outset how the article breaks down and what I want my students to learn from the article. In other words, I can't do this on the fly. I need to study the article in order to do a summary like this.)

start with a little background	Okay, everyone, for next week we're asking you to read Scott Turow's 13-page essay, "To Kill or Not to Kill." Turow is a Harvard-trained attorney and a best-selling novelist. Some of you might know his novels – including <i>Presumed Innocent</i> , which was made into a Harrison Ford movie about ten years ago.
a major summary of the piece	In this article, Turow explains why and how he changed his mind about the death penalty. You'll read about how at first he was ambivalent about capital punishment; he could see arguments both ways. However, while serving on the State of Illinois Capital Punishment Advisory Panel, he ended up opposed to it.
a glance at the structure of the piece	In the article, Turow will describe three cases that challenged and shaped his beliefs about capital punishment. Your job will be figure out how each of these cases affected Turow's beliefs. In other words, what does each of these cases teach Turow about the death penalty?
a focus question for the first case	You'll first read about the case of Alex Hernandez, who was convicted to life in prison after confessing to the rape and murder of a ten-year-old girl. Turow handled his appeal. As you read this, pay special attention to Turow's discussion of how the justice system (the courts and the police) deals with <b>heinous crimes</b> , particularly horrible or shocking crimes.

<p>this is important – I point out a potentially confusing digression where Turow breaks from his 3-case structure</p>	<p>Following this, Turow will survey some of the major arguments in favor of the death penalty and will suggest his problems each of these. Pay special attention to his discussion of "victims' rights," what he calls the "strongest" argument for the death penalty.</p>
<p>I'm trying to both summarize and direct their attention to the key points.</p>	<p>Next, Turow will discuss another death penalty case he was involved in. Chris Thomas, a 21-year-old black man, was given the death penalty after shooting a by-stander during an armed robbery. Pay attention to how this case – a case of a man who was clearly guilty -- poses a challenge to the death penalty.</p>
<p>I guess these questions would then show up again in the thought questions.</p>	<p>For the third case in the essay, Turow describes the situation of Henry Brisbon, a shockingly violent killer currently serving a three-thousand-year sentence in an Illinois maximum security prison (at the cost of \$50,000 a year to the taxpayers). As you read this, try to figure out what point Turow wants to make by including the long section about Brisbon. (In other words, how does the Brisbon section fit into the argument that Turow is making? It's not as clear as the two other cases, so you'll have to do some thinking about this.).</p>
<p>Here I'm cuing them to connect sections in the text</p>	<p>Finally, Turow closes the essay by summarizing the recommendations that the Advisory Panel made to the Governor of Illinois. As you read those, you'll want to think about how these recommendations address the problems with the death penalty that come out earlier in the essay.</p>
<p>A summary</p>	<p>So basically, you'll be reading about three cases – the specific crimes – that challenge and shape Turow's beliefs about the death penalty. Pay attention to the conclusion. Turow is a novelist and trial attorney – he knows how use language.</p>
<p>A reminder about three levels of reading</p>	<p>As you read an article remember the three levels of reading that I always ask you to do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) the textual – what does Turow say in this article,</li> <li>(2) the personal – what do you feel about what Turow is saying, and</li> <li>(3) the intertextual – what would the other thinkers we've been reading (Barzun, Orwell, Koch, the ACLU) think about Turow's ideas?</li> </ol>

