**Category**: Summarizing and Responding to Texts Effectively

**Title**: Summarizing the Taboo

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**Lesson Objective:** Students will learn how to objectively report details without interjecting their personal opinion or bias. This activity can be used before any major assignment that involves the use of primary or secondary texts. This activity also works well with ethnography assignments that require students to objectively report on a culture that may seem shocking or unconventional to them.

**Preparation and Materials:** Students should be familiar with summarizing and reporting information before class. You will also need an internet connection, computer, and access to a projector. Before class, you should browse YouTube for episodes of National Geographic’s *Taboo*. This show focuses on a specific theme for each episode and profiles different families/individuals in ten-minute segments. I’ve found that *Taboo* America works best, as its issues—though still fringe lifestyles to mainstream society—are more relatable to first-year students. NOTE: It is imperative that you select your clips before class as many can be quite graphic. When I taught this lesson, I used a clip on modern vampires in New Orleans and a clip on iDollators (sex doll fans). They can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePItlhv4S4c>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdTZMEtmnk8&noredirect=1>

**Introduction:** At the beginning of the lesson, briefly discuss summarizing/reporting, highlighting the main goals of reporting information and outlining the process of reporting, particularly the unbiased nature of reporting. Ask students via class discussion to name examples of unbiased reports.

**Procedure:** After class discussion, introduce the video clips by explaining a bit about what the show does and how it profiles individuals. Focus on how the show is similar to the upcoming assignment, specifically how the analytical report requires students to describe a community without passing judgment.

Have students watch the clips (I showed two in my class, both fairly controversial). Encourage students to take notes during the videos, marking down relevant information, much like a reporter would take notes for an article. After the video, give students 5-7 minutes to “report the details” by providing an unbiased summary of what they viewed. Then, give students 5-7 minutes to write an analytical response, where they are free to comment on the videos from an opinionated point of view. This section of the activity can be themed to suit your class needs.

**Conclusion:** Optionally, students may share their writing (this was particularly fun for my students, because they had conflicting views!). To wrap up class, highlight how summarizing is vital to the upcoming assignment and useful in general writing.