



## Analysis vs. Summary

When you **summarize** a text, you are giving basic information about it: *who, what, where, when, and how*. You are condensing the selection into a much smaller form, dropping out information that isn't relevant. For example, a summary of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* might look something like this:

In *Lolita*, the main character, Humbert Humbert, loses a childhood friend and lover. As he grows older, he attempts to find this girl again, resorting to prostitutes and other methods of finding his lost love. As part of an advertising job, he moves to America where he moves in with Charlotte Haze and her daughter, Dolores. As the novel progresses, Humbert falls in love with Dolores and marries Charlotte to be near her daughter. Charlotte finds out and prepares to take Dolores away but is hit by a car before she can tell anyone of Humbert's predilections. This leads to Humbert taking Dolores across the country, threatening, and bribing her to keep their affair a secret. Eventually, Dolores is abducted by another man; Humbert does not speak with her again for five years. Upon finding Dolores married and unwilling to leave her husband for him, Humbert kills her abductor and drives away, at which point he is arrested for driving on the wrong side of the road.

In contrast to a summary, an **analysis** of a text should include information on *why*. You will typically be focusing on one part of the text, such as the use of color or the significance of names. To again look at *Lolita*, a brief analysis might focus on why Nabokov chose the name "Humbert Humbert" for his main character, or what Nabokov might have been trying to say by having Humbert be a European academic. For example:

In 1919, Nabokov moved from Russia to England to escape the totalitarianism of the Russian government. He repeatedly expressed disgust with the Russian government of the time, and it is not a stretch to assume that this may have informed his writing. Specifically, Humbert Humbert, a European academic, may be seen as a tyrant in his own right, oppressing and raping (both literally and metaphorically) the virginal Dolores—similar to how the Russian government took away Nabokov's childhood, forcing him to grow up faster than he should have.

Instead of looking at the text as a whole, you're looking at a *specific* part of it—in this case, the relation of Humbert and Dolores to Nabokov's own life. However, this is just one aspect of the text that may be analyzed. There are many topics that could yield a good paper, but you must remember to pick only **one** thing to focus on—a *summary* is broad; an *analysis* is specific.