



# UNIT 3: SUMMARY QUESTIONS

## SUMMARY WRITING:

- A summary is a restatement of the main points of a passage using your own and fewer words than the original.
- Summary writing tests both your Reading and Writing skills.

### Reading:

- demonstrate understanding of **explicit meanings**
- demonstrate understanding of **implicit meanings**
- select for specific purposes

### Writing:

- organize facts, ideas and opinions
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- **Explicit meaning:** This is the obvious /or surface/ meaning of a word or phrase.
- **Implicit meaning:** This is the meaning of a word or phrase that is suggested but not stated openly.

## SUMMARIES COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS. YOU MAY HAVE TO:

- read one lengthy passage and summarise only the points contained in one or two paragraphs of it
- read one lengthy passage and summarise points related to a particular aspect or aspects of it which occur throughout the passage
- read two lengthy passages and summarise all the points relating to a particular aspect or aspects of them.

The image features a dark blue background with white, stylized circuit board traces in the corners. These traces consist of straight lines of varying lengths and angles, ending in small white circles, resembling a network or data flow diagram. The traces are located in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners, framing the central text.

# **SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

## YOUR SUMMARY WRITING CAN BE IMPROVED IF YOU KEEP THE FOLLOWING POINTS CLEARLY IN YOUR MIND:

- summary writing needs good planning and can not be rushed.
- most examination questions will give a clear indication of the number of words that you should aim to write.
- the most important part of the process is deciding what to include and what should not be included- that's why your active reading skills are essential.
- it is important to organize your time efficiently when answering a summary task /reading the original passage, making notes of the relevant points, planning your answer/

## NOTE MAKING:



- Writing down very brief summaries of key points in a passage relating to the summary question.

# A GUIDE TO WRITING A SUCCESSFUL SUMMARY

1. Read the question carefully
2. Read right through the passage/s/ once
3. Identify the information that is relevant
4. Make notes in your own words.
5. Count the main points
6. Write the summary
7. Final check.



**1, 2**

## Step 1: read the question carefully

This is very important, as it is unlikely that you will be required to summarise the whole of the original passage(s). The wording of the question will direct you towards the points you should include. For example, the whole passage may be about everyday life in Japan, but you may be asked to summarise only what it tells you about going to school in that country. You must, therefore, keep the wording of the question clearly in mind when reading the passage(s).

## Step 2: read right through the passage(s) once

This will allow you to gain a good, overall understanding of what the material is about.

### Step 3: identify the information that is relevant

Refresh your memory of what the question asks you to do and then read through the passage(s) again very carefully. At this stage you should underline or highlight on the question paper all the information that is relevant to the question. You must be ruthless. Ignore anything that is not relevant, no matter how interesting you may find it. It may help if you give your summary a title.

#### Study tips

- 1 Some points in the original passage may be harder to find than others – this may be because they are **implied** by the writer, rather than being explicitly stated. Your final summary will be more successful if you are able to identify and include these implied points.
- 2 You can safely **ignore**: illustrations, quotations, long descriptions and strings of adjectives.



## Step 4: make notes in your own words

Now is the time to put pen to paper. You should make rough notes of the points you have identified, using your own words as far as possible. Remember, the use of your own words is important as this is a way of showing that you have understood the passage(s). Try to:

- paraphrase (rephrase) parts of the text to which you refer
- use synonyms – words with the same meaning – instead of the exact words from the text.

This will make it very clear that you understand what you have read.

### Study tip

Check that you have made **each point only once**: it's an easy mistake to include three examples of the same point. The writer of the original passage is allowed to repeat ideas; you don't have the space to do so.



## Step 5: count the main points

Once you have noted all the main points, count how many you have identified. If you have identified 20 points and you are aiming to write a summary of about 200 words, then, as a rough guide, try to write about ten words for each point.

### Study tip

One of the main mistakes in summary writing is to use up too many words writing the early points, so the summary becomes top-heavy and unbalanced. Remember that all points should be given equal weighting.

## Step 6: write the summary

Once you have written rough notes in your own words, you should write them up as a piece of continuous prose, trying to keep your expression as concise as possible. If your notes are sufficiently detailed, this may only be a fine-tuning job.

### Study tip

An important word of warning – **do not include:**

- personal opinions
- extra information or explanations
- your own comments or opinions on the points made in the original text(s)
- quotations from the original passage(s).

The readers of your summary do not want to know your personal opinions about the topic; instead, they want to know how well you have understood the original writer's viewpoint.

## Step 7: final check

Once you have written your summary, read it through to check that it makes sense. You may not have to count the number of words you wrote. If, for example, you know that you usually write about eight words per line, then a quick count up of the number of lines you have filled will give some indication of how many words you have written in total.

### Study tip

Summary tasks, unlike formal précis exercises, do not usually require you to write a specific number of words. Although a precise word limit is unlikely to be specified on a question paper, it is important that you try to express your understanding concisely within about one side of A4 paper. It is a good idea to focus your mind on this requirement when writing your answer. It is unlikely that a very long answer will gain the highest marks available for a question because you will not have shown your ability to select the key points and to stick to them. If you write considerably less than the suggested length, it is most probable that you will penalise yourself (and reduce your score) because it is almost certain you will have left out some of the important points.



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## PRACTICE: PASSAGE “BALLOON FLIGHT”

- Ex 1. Read the passage ‘Balloon Flight’ carefully and then write a summary of *what the writer saw from his balloon flight and his thoughts and feelings about the experience*. You must use continuous writing and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 180 words.

# Balloon Flight



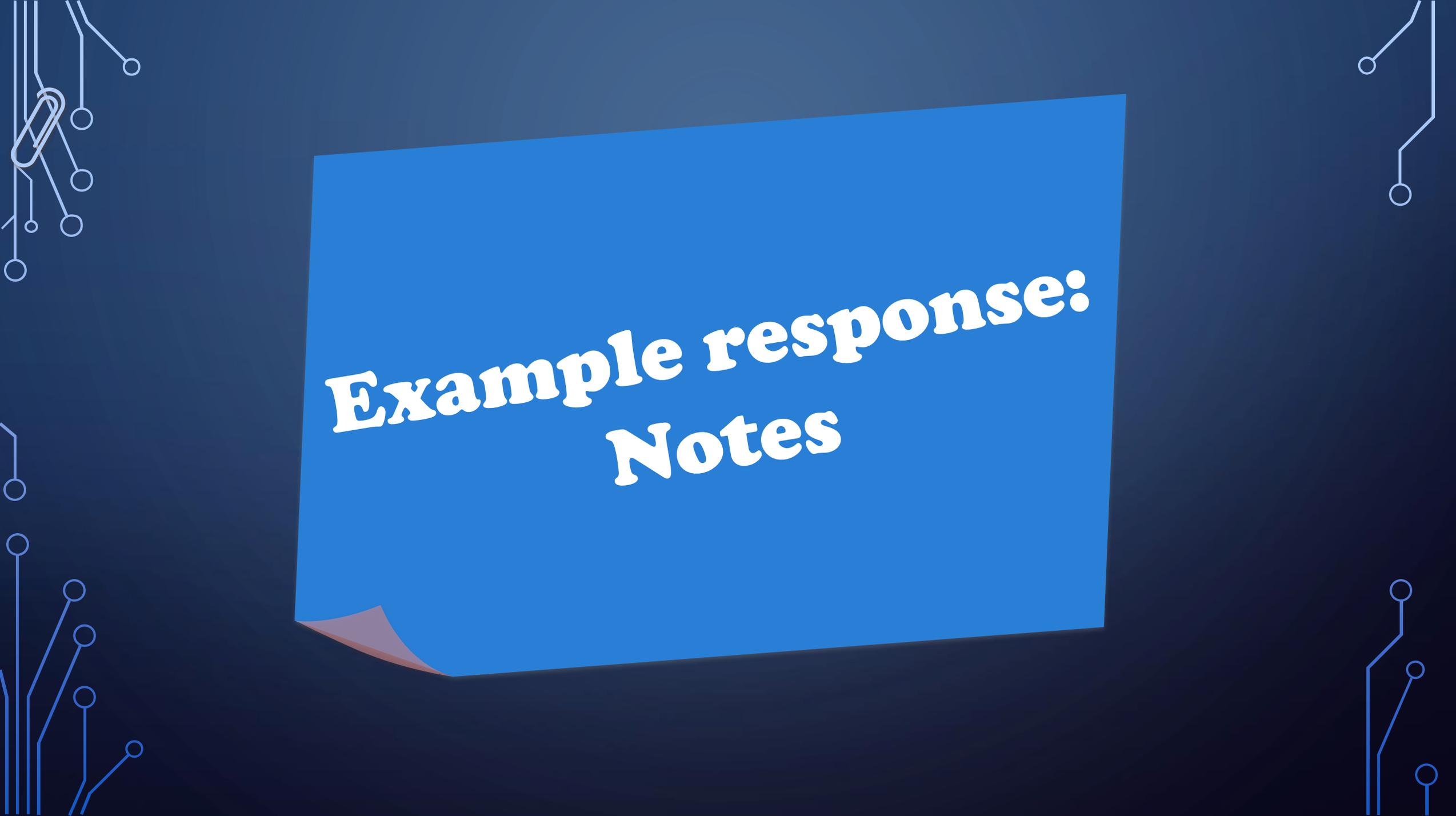
The pilot of my balloon is a Swede called Lars and his co-pilot is his English wife Kali. They have flown all over the world but are almost as excited about today's flight as we are. The air will be both clear and cool. Visibility should be near-perfect.

We're up in the sky about the same time as the sun, and for a while it is uncomfortably cold. The ride, though, is magnificent. The strange and unique landscape all begins to make sense as we rise above it. The eastern horizon is broken by the 12,848-foot peak of Erciyes Dagi, its summit partly ripped away by the eruption that helped shape everything we can see. Long, flat tables of rock mark the height of the plateau created by the vast lake of lava, most of it now cracked, fissured and fashioned into the bluffs, cones and tall pillars that cover the ground like sentinels of some petrified army.

With the hard, bright sun at a low angle and a fresh-fallen blanket of snow on the ground, it's not only the rocks that stand out. We can see the fine detail of fields and orchards and vineyards. Though the volcanic rock makes for fertile soil, the climate has changed over the last few years and, according to Kali, the combination of warmer winters and late frosts has ruined harvests. Vines and apricot trees have been worst affected and certainly the apricot orchards look especially vulnerable under the snow. Many farmers are turning to tourism instead, or leaving the area altogether.

Lars seems less interested in what's happening on the ground than what's happening in the air. He reads the air currents with obsessive delight, alert to all the subtle shifts and patterns, such as the emptying of the cold air from the valleys as the land warms up. He takes us up to 8,000 feet. From here the detail is less distinct. The rock forests of Cappadocia have given way to a wider view. From the Taurus Mountains in the south and to the rising Anatolian plateau to the east.

From <http://palinstravels.co.uk/book-4253>



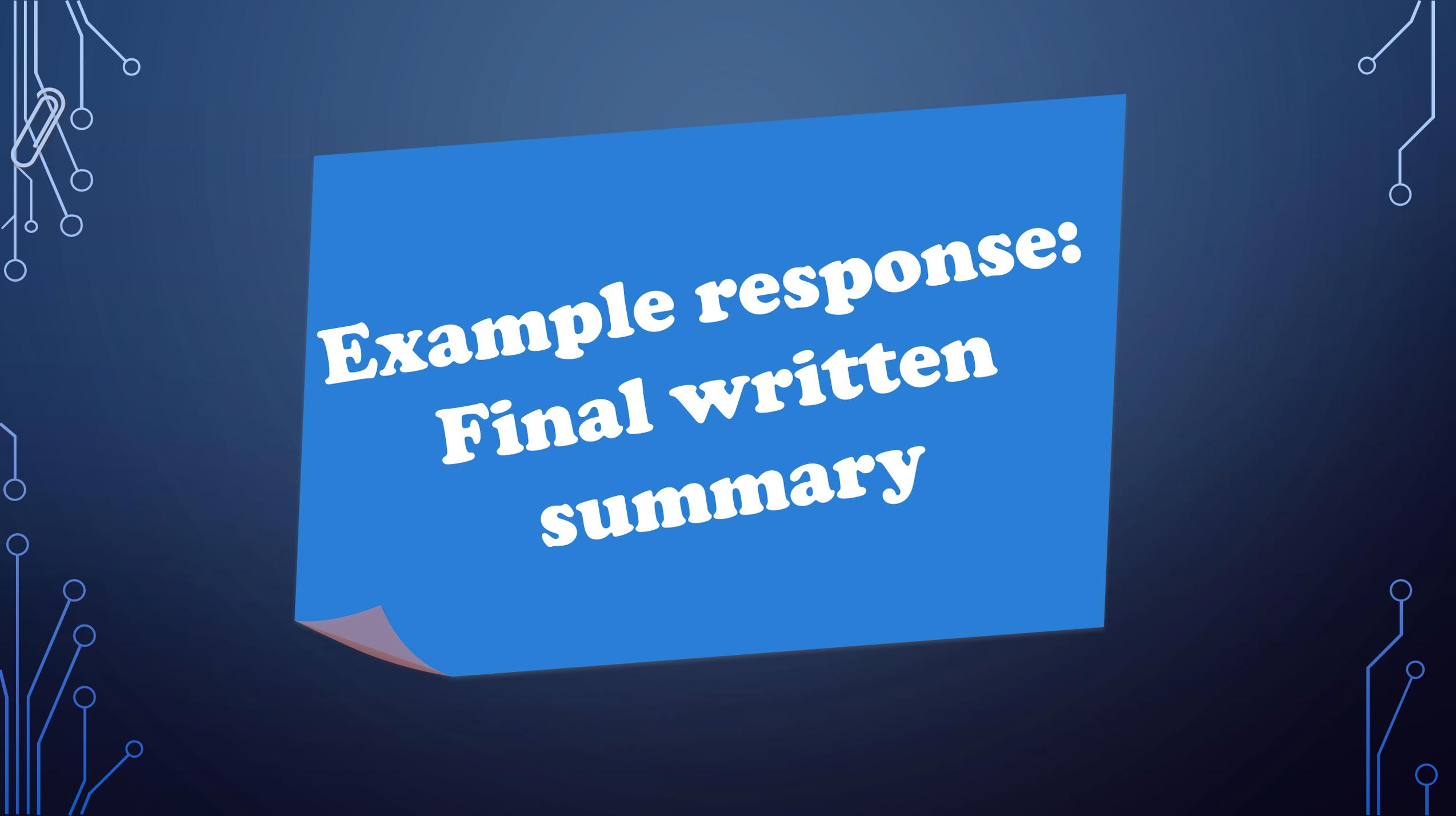
**Example response:  
Notes**

### What the writer saw

- 1 The mountain/peak of Erciyes Dagi
- 2 (Long,) flat tables of rock
- 3 Bluffs, cones and tall pillars
- 4 Bright sun
- 5 (Blanket of) snow
- 6 Fields and orchards
- 7 Less distinct details/wider view when higher up
- 8 Taurus Mountains/Anatolian Plateau

### The writer's thoughts and feelings about the experience

- 1 He was excited.
- 2 He was initially feeling cold.
- 3 He found the ride magnificent.
- 4 He began to understand the landscape.
- 5 He thought that the apricot orchards were under threat from the change in climate.



**Example response:  
Final written  
summary**

At first, the writer saw the mountain, Erciyes Dagi, towering above the flat tables of rock and the high cliffs, and pillars of rock that rose from them. He saw the bright sun which allowed him a clear view of fields and orchards covered by a blanket of fresh snow. From 2400 metres the writer's view of the ground became less distinct but he could see for a far greater distance, all the way from the Taurus Mountains to the Anatolian Plateau.

The writer was very excited about his flight, especially as visibility conditions were perfect. They took off at sunrise when he felt very cold at first but this did not prevent him from appreciating the magnificent ride. Being able to see the whole spread of the landscape from the air made it easier for him to understand its formation, and the overview of the apricot trees helped him to appreciate how much farming in the area was threatened by climate change, especially by the cold frosts of winter. (170 words)



**NOW, IT'S  
YOUR TURN**