Summary

Present a summary of the novel using no fewer than 200 words and no more than 300 words. Use grammatically correct English and check your spelling before handing in the report. Write your own answers. Do not copy from the internet!

Use paragraphs to structure your text.

The book is about a group of friends, who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, they’ve got HIV, one is pregnant, and sometimes they live a life by being violent to innocent people. When they don’t take drugs they think life is to boring for them and they will eventually look for another kick. Like sex, alcohol or violence. They live very isolated, where they only come out of when they need drugs. They think life is boring and worthless. Their lifes are full with troubles because of their addictions and their life style.

Mark Renton is a junky with a serious addiction. During the days he stays in Swanneys apartment. Swanney is Marks dealer for heroin. At Swanneys place Mark meets his friends. Sick Boy and Spud. Mark decides to ‘get of the skag’ as he calls it. What means that he will stop with the drugs. And Sick Boy decides to join him. They use the Sick Boy-method to stop with drugs. Their only problem is now to continue life in the good way.

After a while mark decides to get along again with friends who don’t do drugs. He goes along with Begbie: a very aggressive person. They go out to clubs, drink something and try to get contact with women. Mark meets a girl: Diane. She takes him home and he stays over at her place. The next morning he discovers that she still lives with her parents and that she is under-aged. Mark quits the relationship because he doesn’t want to go to prison.
To forget the whole situation he and Sick Boy get into heroin again. On that moment they start a wild and exciting life. They steal doctor’s recipes and start to trade in medicines of HIV-patients. They rob stores to get money for their addiction.

Spud and Mark get caught while stealing cds. Mark doesn’t have to go to jail because he says he wants to join a program that will take care of him so he won’t be using drugs anymore.

Mark is not satisfied though with the 3 portions of methadone he gets everyday and decides to go to Swanney again.

Swanney makes a mistake with the doses of the drugs and Mark gets an overdoses.

He gets sick and gets in the Hospital. When he comes out of the hospital his parents decide to help him. They lock him up in his room to fight against the chemicals that are in his body.

After this Mark really is off the drugs and starts a new life.

He finds work in London and tries to ‘break up’ with his friends who are still addicted to drugs.

Then suddenly Mark gets called for a funeral in Edinburgh. There he meets Sick Boy, Spud and Begbie again. They need his help for a big heroin deal. Mark joins them and helps them to test and sell the heroin.

They find a man who wants to buy the 6 kilo heroin and they earn 16000 pounds.

They go crazy and stay in a hotel together. But at night Mark can’t sleep. He decides to get away with all the money and start a whole new life without drugs. He leaves Sick Boy and Spud behind with a flipped Begbie.

**Setting: time and place**

Explain in this part where the story is situated and when the story takes place (e.g. in the 1980s). Explain the relevance of these facts for the story.

The story takes place in Leith (Edinburgh) in the 80/90-ies.

Most parts of the story takes place in bars and cafes because all what the junkies had in their house had to be sold for the money. So because they don’t have anything to do, and anything in their house, they go to cafes.

Quote: Page 62

‘Spud and Renton were sitting in a pub in the Royal Mile. The pub aimed at an American theme-bar effect, but not too accurately; it was a madhouse of assorted bric-a-brac.’

This is one of the moments that the guys are in a pub. At this moment they are discussing the fact that Spud is going to an interview for a job. They don’t want him to spoil the chance.

There is also a part in London, the part where Mark tries to start a whole new life with a good job.

The entire story is told chronologically, without too much flashbacks or flash forwards. Only occasionally, someone thinks back of something that happened a long time ago, and then there are some small flashbacks, which do not last very long.

The scenes succeed another quickly. This is also one of the reasons why the story is quite difficult. After some event, the story jumps to something completely different, with sometimes a few weeks of time in
between the events.
The main subject of the story is the addiction to drugs, so when someone takes a shot, it is explained very extensively. These scenes do not really have a great impact on the story, but just bring a lot of realism.

Quote: page 344
‘He had done what he wanted to do. He could....He contemplated his life in Amsterdam.’

If you read this you know that (almost) the whole story took place in Leith (Edinburgh).

Title explanation

Provide an explanation for the title.

Trainspotting was a quite difficult name of the book. I could not think of a better reason of the name because of what I’ve seen in the film. (I have seen the film after reading the book, so I could see if I understood everything right)

The only reason I could think of was the paper Mark had in his bedroom during the days that his parents are taking care of him after his overdoses.

A few days later I met a boy in the train. He said Trainspotting stands for: The characters have nothing to do in their lives. They just hang around, doing nothing. They could just spot trains if they want to. I thought that was quite reasonable.

But in the lesson, where we discussed Trainspotting, I heard my teacher speak for an explanation of the title Trainspotting. And I really think that is the best explanation.

Almost all of the characters are addicted to drugs. Where Trainspotting can stand for is the fact that they have to keep looking for a drug dealer. Because otherwise they won’t get what they need.

After the explanation of my teacher I decided to have a look at the internet to see what other explanations there were and I found this:
Train means in the Scottish dialect (that is what the characters speak in this book) Dealer. So Trainspotting stands for: searching for drugs.
So the title says it all in one word where the lives of the characters are about!!

Ending

Explain the way the book ends. Focus on the real ending, especially the final sentence and possibly even on the final punctuation. Try to find your explanation for the ending of the novel you are analysing.

Also provide a quote to illustrate your point. Make sure you explain why the quote illustrates your answer.

Quote: page 344
‘He had done what he wanted to do. He could....He contemplated his life in Amsterdam.’

To me it was quite a surprising ending of the book. I had never expected that Mark would run away with the money. Although on the other side I could expect it, just to have his kind of revenge on Begbie because he had stayed with him in London for quite a long time without doing anything for him.
I also think it is a combination of an open ending and a no happy ending. Mark has to leave Scotland,
because of the money, and to be honest with you, I truly believe that Mark will continue his life in a good way, where he is clean from drugs.

Point of view

Explain the point of view in the novel: is it first or third person. Third person point of view can be specified into omniscient or limited point of view.
Also provide a quote to illustrate your point. Make sure you explain why the quote illustrates your answer.

This book has a limited point of view.

As far as I could understand the book right it is written in the limited point of view. The book only told about the people who were there at the moment. If there was a situation in the pub, the story was only about the people in the pub or a flashback.
I also think that most of the story is written in Marks point of view. But that is the problem, I didn’t understand the book very well, so this is actually a kind of a guess.
This quote is not from Marks point of view, I guess it is Spud who’s telling the story now.

Quote: page 153

‘Begbie pished his jeans…
- Pished yir keks, Franco? Rents asks him, pointing at a wet patch oan the faded blue denim. ..... Domestic cats, likesay.’

This bit shows that he is only talking about the people in the pub itself.
A limited point of view.

Theme

Explain the theme. The theme of a novel is really the answer to the question: ‘what is the author really trying to tell us? What message is the author trying to get across?’
Do not confuse this aspect with the subject of the novel, though the subject can lead you to the theme. The theme should be described not specifically, but more in an abstract way: do not write that a man is cheating on his wife (subject), but that the novel’s theme is about the moral choice between honesty and dishonesty.

Also provide a quote to illustrate your point. Make sure you explain why the quote illustrates your answer.

The theme of this novel is obviously addiction.
Addiction to drugs, alcohol and sex, but mainly drugs. This is worked out quite extensively: the taking of drugs itself, but also the effects, and the attempts of the characters to quit taking it. The book is about people with a lot of bad luck in there live, and when things finally seem to go better, they just fall back in the same black hole because of some setback.
Quoted page 177  
Junk Dilemmas No. 66

Junk Dilemmas No. 66 is written while someone just had a ‘shot’. How he feels etcetera. Or read my next quote that shows how it goes after having an overdoses of drugs.

Quoted page 188-189 (told by Mark)  
‘House Arrest’

This bed is familiar, or rather, the wall opposite it is. .... Mibbe ah could go back tae the clinic, Ma, ah hopefully suggest.

Reading these two pages made very clear to me how Mark felt after having his overdoses of drugs. His mother is sitting next to him on his bed, trying to tell him how much she wants him to get him of drugs. While he tries to get drugs somehow as you can read in the last sentence of my quote. By saying he wants to get back to the clinic he actually means he wants to go away because he needs drugs. And when he is at the clinic he might be able to escape and start using drugs again.

Information about the author

Only provide information on the author if this information leads to a better understanding of the novel. Write no more than 100 words. The fewer the better.

Irvine Welsh was born in Leith in 1961. He moved with his family to Muirhouse, in Edinburgh, at the age of four. At the age of 19 he moves back to Edinburgh where he worked for the city council in the housing department.

The book takes place in Leith (Edinburgh), so that explains why he could be so close to the characters and the environment of the characters.

SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANALYSIS

For each novel several essay questions are suggested. Pick one essay question per book that you would like to answer. Write at least 300 words in total. Write your own answers. Do not copy from the internet!

Explain this quote:  
‘He had done what he wanted to do. He could now never go back to Leith, to Edinburgh, even to Scotland, ever again. There, he could not be anything other than he was. Now, free from them all, for good, he could be what he wanted to be. He’d stand or fall alone. This thought both terrified and excited him as he contemplated life in Amsterdam.’

(page 344)

Mark Rent had experienced so many problems with his friends that he decided to run off with the money.
That is the reason why he can not ever can go back to Leith, to Edinburgh, or even to Scotland. Mark Rent took the 16000 pounds to start his own brand new life without his ‘friends’, without influences, without drugs, and so hopefully without problems. He is now free from them all: free from his ‘friends’. No more bothering, no more problems, no more obligations, no more drugs. No more Begbie, not anyone that he hates or doesn’t like. Mark Rent hated Begbie. Begbie used him when he was staying in London to start a new life with a good job and a clean life. But Begbie found him in London and actually ‘destroyed’ his life that he had created in peace. Begbie ‘took over’ his house, caused lots of troubles for him and also made a mess of his life by using him for the money and for a roof above his head.

But of course it is not just Begbie. It are also the other ‘junkies’, his parents and maybe even Diane so they won’t be able anymore to bother him. He could be who he wanted to be: No more pretending of whom he wanted to be. No more faking, no more obligated using of drugs, or obligated hanging out with ‘friends’ in pubs and get drunk. He can start his own life now without influences of junkies. He can live his life on his own now, not dependent of his ‘friends’ where he used to live together with.

Contemplating life in Amsterdam: Apparently Mark Rent lived in Amsterdam where he must have had an exciting life, because as he is thinking about the fact that he can stand or fall alone, makes him think of Amsterdam.

CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that every analysis has to be rounded off with a conclusion. In it you make final remarks and comments that you have not been able to give under any other category, as well as present your own opinion about the novel. Whether you enjoyed reading the novel (or not) should of course be accompanied by an explanation.

Provide at least one favourite quote from the book and explain why you chose this particular quotation. Simply stating that you liked or disliked the book is not enough!

You should write at least 150 words.

Trainspotting was another weird experience for me. When I first started the book, I couldn’t understand the book at all. Because of the Scottish accent. When I started reading the book I just got a bad mood, because I really could not understand what the story was telling me. That was so frustrating that I almost decided to get the film first before I would finish the book. But eventually I didn’t. I decided to look for the peaces in the book that I might understand and it worked. At the end of the book I thought I understood the book for as far as I could and as far as I think that was needed.

After reading the book I got the film. Why? Well, I wanted to see if I understood the book right. Did I have the right interpretation of everything that I have read?

I saw that the film was a bit different from the book, but luckily I could see that I had understood a lot of things from the book.

Now, my conclusion: I did not like the book.
The way the book is written (the accent) was to me very annoying. I don’t like the themes; I think the book was sometimes very perverted. No, reading this book was not a pleasure to me. It made me having a bad mood because I was reading this book because I had to, and not because I wanted to. According to the other book reports I had to make; Armadillo was even better than this book to me!!

A quote of a bit I really disliked from the book: Page 25-26
‘Ah whip oaf ma keks and sit oan the cold wet porcelain shunky. Ah empty ma guts, feeling as if ..... Ah then wipe ma arse wi the clean part ay ma pants and chuck the shite-saturated keks intae the bowl beside the rest ay the waste.’

I just think this is disgusting. It just made me sick while reading it.
I would never ever read this book again because it is not my style. Not my theme and not my way of language use.