The Borderers

(EXAMPLE OF SUMMARY)
The exhausted baron and his daughter
take refuge for the night in a wayside inn.
They agree that Matilda will continue her journey alone.

Prelude

Baron Herbert, deceived by Rivers, has forced his daughter Matilda to write a letter to Mortimer, the Captain of a Band of Borderers, in which she renounces her love for him.

Prelude

The baron and his daughter set off on a journey of three days across the Moors towards Scotland. Rivers persuades Mortimer to follow them unobserved.

Prelude

It is towards the end of the first day of an exhausting journey for the blind old man. The two Borderers have got slightly ahead of the victims. Mortimer is still aghast at Matilda’s incomprehensible letter which he has been re-reading.

Scene One

A road in the Borders.

Mortimer and Rivers appear, then conceal themselves.

The exhausted baron and his daughter
take refuge for the night in a wayside inn.
They agree that Matilda will continue her journey alone.
Her father will follow when he recovers strength.

Rivers comes to the inn.
In private conversation, he assures Herbert that the tie between Matilda and Mortimer is broken. He offers to accompany the blind man on the next stage of his journey to the north.
In a nearby wood, Rivers stages an encounter between Mortimer and an accomplice, a Beggar Woman. She reinforces his lies about Herbert, his relationship to Matilda, and the character of Lord Clifford. Mortimer is increasingly incensed.

Scene Two
A room at the inn. Rivers, at first alone, is joined by Mortimer.

Meanwhile, Matilda continues her journey north. She falls into company with a party of pilgrims.

An old man in the party recognises Matilda. He tells her how the King has reasserted his power and restored Herbert to his ancestral lands in Devon.

On the following day, Herbert sets out again. The two Borderers accompany him, allegedly intending to pass the next night in a Convent on the moors. (Blind Herbert is unaware of Mortimer’s identity.)

In wild weather they have come to Stony-Arthur, the half-ruined castle of Lord Clifford on the edge of the moor. The exhausted Herbert lies asleep in the former dungeon.

Scene Three. Outside the castle. Mortimer is increasingly tormented by the thought that he must kill the old man in cold blood. Rivers is trying hard to strengthen his resolve.

The band of Borderers arrive at the gallop. Rivers explains the (false) charges against Herbert. The Borderers concur that his ‘monstrous crime’ must be ‘avenged’, but only after a trial in their camp.

Matilda and the pilgrims reach a roadside inn. They are told that Herbert is heading for the Convent accompanied by ‘two friends’.

Scene Four
(The following day) A desolate part of the moor. Rivers and Mortimer appear, having left Herbert resting close by. Rivers is still trying to persuade Mortimer to kill Herbert now, here, on the open moor, without the agreed trial.

Scene Five
Another part of the moor at a short distance. Herbert is discovered resting.
In their camp on the moor,
the band of Borderers meet under a beacon.
They have discovered River's villainy from the Beggar Woman who confessed her role in the plot.
They ride off, hoping to be in time to prevent the murder.

Scene Six
On the edge of the moor.
Mortimer appears, at first alone, deep in thought.

Matilda and the pilgrims arrive in the same place.
Matilda remains as the pilgrims continue on their way.

She tells Mortimer of her father's restoration.
Soon he 'will sun himself before his native doors'.
She pleads her constancy and tells how she was compelled to write him the fateful letter.

Mortimer realises that she is innocent
and that he has left an innocent man to die.
He promises to escort her to a nearby hut
and to return after finishing some 'business with Rivers.

Scene Seven. Another part of the moor nearby.
A desolate prospect — a ridge of rocks —
a Chapel on the summit of one —
Moon behind the rocks — night stormy —
irregular sound of a bell ...

Enter Robert, a peasant, 'in search of a stray heifer'.
(He is the owner of the hut where Matilda now is.)

Scene Eight
A room in a Hostel.
Mortimer has joined Rivers to do his 'business' with him.

The scene changes to Robert's hut where Matilda has found refuge.
Robert's wife tells Matilda how her husband's nature
was scarred by years of wrongful imprisonment.

Robert returns — alone.
Reluctantly, self-defensively,
he confesses he has abandoned a blind old man
to die on the moor, fearing to be charged with his murder.

Matilda overhears the end of the conversation.
She realises the old man must be her father.
She and Robert hurry out in a final attempt to rescue him.

Two or three hours have elapsed.
On the edge of the stormy moor, Rivers tries to catch up with Mortimer who is desperately trying to find Herbert.

Scene Nine
Nearby on the edge of the stormy moor.

Scene Ten  (Robert's cottage)
Robert enters to ‘prepare’ Matilda for her lover’s coming.

Mortimer goes into the bedroom to see the body.
And returns...

Matilda sinks senseless.

Rivers enters.
He believes that Mortimer has killed Herbert as planned, and that he will soon recover from his feeble remorse.

A tumult of horses is heard outside.
The band of Borderers burst into the cottage.

Rivers is seized and stabbed to death.

Mortimer defends his noble aims and achievements but ‘resigns his station’.
The Borderers are urged to watch over Matilda and to ensure she enters her ‘long-suspended rights’.
Then he pronounces his own verdict on himself:

The End