

Whittle, Whittle it Down: Summarizing

Summary

This "jigsaw" activity will give students the opportunity to work in groups to summarize a 1 to 2 page informational text. It "jigsaws" down to 1 class summary and can be done in 2 or 3 days. This plan was designed for a class of 22 students but can be easily modified by varying group size.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 2](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 5](#)

English Language Arts Grade 7

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 2](#)

English Language Arts Grade 7

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 a.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 7

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 b.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 7

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 d.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 2](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 a.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 b.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 d.](#)

Time Frame

3 class periods of 30 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

Overhead transparency of informational text

Chart paper with *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* (1. Collapse lists, 2. Use topic sentences, 3. Get rid of unnecessary detail, 4. Collapse paragraphs, 5. Polish the summary)

Paper copies or books of informational text (one for each group)

Blank transparencies

Pencil

Paper

Background for Teachers

Teacher must be familiar with the Five Rules for Writing a Summary.

Five Rules for Writing a Summary

1. *Collapse lists*

. If there is a list of things, supply a word or phrase for the whole list. For example, if you saw *swimming, sailing, fishing, and surfing*, you could substitute *water sports*.

2. *Use topic sentences*

. Sometimes authors write a sentence that summarizes the whole paragraph. If so, use that sentence in your summary. If not, you'll have to make up your own topic sentences.

3. *Get rid of unnecessary detail*

. Sometimes information is repeated or is stated in several different ways. Some information may be trivial and unnecessary. Get rid of repetitive or trivial information. Summaries should be short.

4. *Collapse paragraphs*

Often, paragraphs are related to each other. For example, some paragraphs simply explain or expand on other paragraphs in a selection. Some paragraphs are more important than others. Join the paragraphs that are related. Important paragraphs should stand alone.

5. *Polish the summary*

. When you collapse a lot of information from many paragraphs, the resulting summary sometimes sounds awkward and unnatural. There are several ways to remedy this: add connecting words such as *like* or *because*, or write introductory or closing statements. Another method is to paraphrase the material; this will improve your ability to remember what you read and enable you to avoid plagiarism - using the exact words of the author.

From "Direct Instruction of Summarization Skills" by V.C. Hare and K.M. Borchardt, 1984, *Reading Research Quarterly* 20 (1) pp. 62-78. Copyright 1984 by the International Reading Association.

Student Prior Knowledge

definition of summary

definition of informational text

Intended Learning Outcomes

Student will understand the meaning of a summary and be able to summarize a short informational text with 80% accuracy.

Instructional Procedures

DAY 1

WHOLE CLASS ACTIVITY:

Teacher reviews meaning of summary with the class.

Teacher introduces *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* chart

Teacher and students choral read overhead of informational text piece (not more than 2 pages long)

Teacher reviews *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* chart and points out ideas for a good summary.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY/groups of 5:

Teacher gives each student in the group one card of five different colors. (I reuse laminated colored index cards).

Students work together in their group to compose a summary according to the guidelines on the

Five Rules for Writing a Summary chart. Each student must have a finished copy of the groups summary at the end of the period.

DAY 2

Display *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* chart

WHOLE GROUP

Reread overhead copy of informational text.

SMALL GROUP

Group students in groups according to their colored cards. (This will give you one student from each group now making up a new group)

Students will take turns reading their summary to the group. They will then revise and write a group summary using the summaries written from the day 1. These summaries must be completed and handed into the teacher by the end of the period. (The teacher should have a group summary from each color group and will then copy each of these onto an overhead.

DAY 3

Display *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* chart.

Without identifying groups, teacher will display each group summary on the overhead. Students will then as a discussion group, assess each summary according to the guidelines on the *Five Rules for Writing a Summary* chart giving the following evaluation:

needs improvement

almost adequate

pretty good

Know what your doing

Teacher and students make a final summary, using the group summaries to display on chart in the room.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

This is a group activity and special needs, esl or other low functioning students can be grouped so as to work with students who will mentor them in the process.

Extensions

This lesson can be used in the beginning of teaching summaries or as an assessment at the end of the unit.

Bibliography

Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning

, Fifth Edition by J. David Cooper, Nancy D. Kiger

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