

Lesson 8: Summarizing Information

Newspaper Focus: News and Feature Stories

Background – Summarizing is one of the most difficult comprehension skills for students to develop. Student summaries are either too vague or a collection of many poorly organized details. The newspaper provides many excellent examples of summaries because news stories often are written in an “inverted pyramid” format. The headline provides the main idea and the lead paragraph answers most of the Five Ws: *who, what, where* and *when*; the *why* and/or *how* often appear further down in the story or must be inferred. Therefore, it is not appropriate to have students summarize news stories – the reporter has already done it in the lead. However, feature stories do not follow the inverted pyramid format and can be used to develop summaries. Feature stories are stories about timely topics, but they are not necessarily late-breaking or hard news. The language of feature stories is less formal than that of news stories; it is more conversational. While feature stories contain the newspaper Five Ws, they often focus on one of the Ws. You will find feature stories about remarkable people (*who*); unusual collections, hobbies or special events (*what*); or fascinating places to visit (*where*).

5-8 English Standards

A. PROCESS OF READING

1. Formulate questions to be answered while reading.
6. Identify accurately both the author's purpose and the author's point of view.
7. Summarize whole texts by selecting and summarizing important and representative passages.
8. Read for a wide variety of purposes (e.g., to gain knowledge, to aid in making decisions, to receive instructions, to follow an argument, to enjoy).

B. LITERATURE AND CULTURE

9. Apply effective strategies to the reading and use of moderately long nonfiction texts (e.g., reference sources, articles, editorials, histories, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, letters, and commentaries) which have an appropriate complexity of content and sophistication of style.

D. INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

3. Identify both the author's purpose and the author's point of view when reading expository information.
4. Identify different ways in which informational texts are organized.
5. Produce and support generalizations acquired from informational text.

E. PROCESSES OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

2. Use planning, drafting, and revising to produce, on demand, a well-developed, organized piece that demonstrates effective language use, voice, and command of mechanics.

G. STYLISTIC AND RHETORICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

6. Write and deliver oral presentations that achieve distinct purposes (e.g., to summarize, to narrate, to inform, to explain).

9-12 English Standards

A. PROCESS OF READING

3. Identify the author's purpose and analyze the effects of that purpose on the text.
6. Use the context of a work to determine the figurative, idiomatic, and technical meanings of terms.
7. Use the context of a work to determine the meanings of abbreviations and acronyms.
11. Represent key ideas and supporting details in various written forms (e.g., outline, paraphrase, concise summary).

B. LITERATURE AND CULTURE

8. Apply mature strategies to the reading and interpretation of lengthy adult level nonfiction texts with appropriate complexity of content and sophistication of style.

D. INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

2. Distinguish between apparent fact and opinion in nonfiction texts.
3. Use discussions with peers as a way of understanding information.
5. Analyze and synthesize the concepts and details in informational texts.

E. PROCESSES OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

3. Use planning, drafting, and revising to produce, on demand, a well-developed, organized piece that demonstrates effective language use, voice, and command of mechanics.

G. STYLISTIC AND RHETORICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

5. Write pieces and deliver oral presentations that achieve distinct purposes (e.g., to persuade, evaluate, analyze, defend).