

## 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*).

### **Before Reading: Introduce the Lesson**

- 1) Ask students to tell you about a recent activity in which they have participated (playing a video game, going to a fast-food restaurant, working on a project in art class, etc.) in as much detail as possible. Ask for a volunteer. Explain that s/he must take two minutes to tell about his/her experience. Have another student time the telling of the story.
- 2) Ask a third student to summarize what the volunteer described in no more than three sentences and include the most important information about what was said. Have the first volunteer decide whether all relevant information was included in the summary.
- 3) Explain to students that learning to summarize what they read is as important as summarizing information that is spoken.

### **During Reading: Direct Instruction**

- 1) Distribute newspapers to students. Direct their attention to two or three news stories chosen in advance that use the inverted pyramid format and include the newspaper Ws in the first paragraph. Draw an inverted pyramid on the board and explain its format.
- 2) Model how the inverted pyramid is a useful summarizing format by reading one of the stories to the class. Read the headline and explain how it provides the main idea of the story. Then read the lead paragraph and explain how it provides the essential information of the story.
- 3) Explain that news stories are designed and written so people can read them quickly. If readers want to know the key information about an event, they can read the lead paragraph. If readers want to know more, they can read the rest of the story.
- 4) Have students read a second pre-selected story independently. Ask them to highlight or underline the newspaper Ws that they find in the lead paragraph.
- 5) Explain to students that it would be hard for them to summarize a news story because the reporter has already summarized it in the lead paragraph. Instead, they are going to practice summarizing feature stories.
- 6) Direct students' attention to a feature story you have chosen in advance. Read the story aloud to the class. Ask students to discuss the differences they see between the feature story and the news story. Direct the discussion to include these characteristics of feature stories:
  - Feature stories are about timely topics, such as seasonal events or interviews with performers who are appearing in a new movie or television program.

- Feature stories do not follow the inverted pyramid format. They may begin with a quote, an unusual fact or a description of the individual or place featured in the story.
  - All of the important information is not at the top of the story. The newspaper Five Ws and the H may be found throughout the story. The story may have an unusual ending or closing comment.
  - The language of the feature story is more conversational in tone.
  - Feature stories may focus on one of the newspaper Five Ws and the H: *who, what, where, when, why, how*.
- 7) Lead students through the process they will follow on the activity sheet. Help students identify the Five Ws and the H in the feature story you have selected. Have students identify three more facts in the story. Ask students to suggest a “first line” for a summary about the story.
  - 8) Distribute the Lesson 8 activity sheet, *Make It Brief*. Have students complete the activity independently.

**After Reading: Reflect and Review**

- 1) Have students exchange and read each other’s summaries. Have students check whether the writer included the Five Ws and the H.
- 2) Ask students to discuss how beginning with the Five Ws and the H helped them to write their summaries.

**Performance Rubric**

Expectation: The student was able to ...	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Revisit
Identify the story’s Five Ws and the H			
Identify appropriate relevant facts from the story			
Summarize information in a well-written paragraph			

## Student Activity Sheet 8: **Make It Brief**

You can learn how to write good summaries by including the Five Ws and the H from the newspaper story.

- ✎ Pick a feature story from the newspaper. Write the Five Ws and the H in the first column of the chart below as you find them in the story.
- ✎ Next, list three important facts from the story in the second column.
- ✎ Use the Five Ws and the H and the other facts you found to write a paragraph summary of the story.

Five Ws and the H	Other important facts
Who _____	1. _____ _____
What _____	2. _____ _____
When _____	3. _____ _____
Where _____	4. _____ _____
Why/How _____	5. _____ _____

Write your paragraph summary below.

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