



October 2012

Teachers helping teachers

Volume 1 Issue 1

# October skills focus: Summarizing

THE STANDARDS SAY:

Across ALL content areas, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading require that ALL students shall “**determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.**”

Across grade levels, in **literary and informational texts**, students:

**In grades 4-5:** summarize the text

**In grade 6:** provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments

**In grades 7-12:** provide an objective summary of the text

In **History/Social Studies texts**, students:

**In grades 6-8:** provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions

**In grades 9-10:** provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of a text

**In grades 11-12:** provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas

In **Science/Technical Subjects texts**, students:

**In grades 6-8:** provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions

**In grades 9-10:** provide an accurate summary of the text

**In grades 11-12:** summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms

As you can see, summarizing is an essential skill across all content areas, and objectivity and accuracy are highly prized also. So, just how should we teach our students to condense the author’s words or ideas without altering the meaning or providing interpretation even though they are using their own words?

Our goal this month is to share with you tried and true summarizing strategies. We are presenting student strategies that can be used in all subjects to summarize accurately and objectively.

## EKU Writing Project Content Area Literacy Task Force

**Our Mission...** We are here to help teachers connect with other professionals in order to share a variety of tested and proven classroom strategies.

Each month we will focus on a different literacy skill and bring you an overview of the skill as well as a variety of resources and strategies to use across all content areas.

### A Closer Look:

Summarizing in the Classroom

**2-4**

### Recommended

#### Reading:

What We Recommend  
You Check Out This  
Month

**5**

### Content Area Literacy

#### Task Force:

Who we are,  
what we do

**5**

# Summarizing:

## **Graphic Organizers** **Maggie Brewer, Social Studies**

Social Studies teachers have a large number of people, places, dates, battles, and events to help their students organize in addition to the vast amount of vocabulary that is part of their content. In teaching my World Civilizations classes about Imperialism in Latin America, I find this to be particularly daunting. During this time period Mexico alone has numerous presidents and revolutionary figures, not to mention the people and events that effected Cuba, the Philippines, Panama, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

One method I find useful when summarizing information that includes a large number of names or dates is a graphic organizer. In his book, *Summarization in Any Subject*, Rick Wormeli explains that “a person’s ability to retrieve information accurately and completely has a lot to do with how it first enters her mind when she is learning it.” He further explains the importance of making meaning for our students as well as providing visual representations.

The particular graphic organizer I help my students create for their study of Imperialism in Latin America starts with a blank piece of paper. In the middle of the paper students write “Imperialism In Latin America.” Students label each corner with the name of one country in the order they arise in the reading: Mexico, Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines. Students then list the people and events they read about for each country (Mexico: Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, Porfirio Diaz, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, and Venustiano Carranza, Cuba: Jose Marti, Spanish American War - Property of USA: Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines - Platt Amendment, Panama: Panama Canal, the Philippines: Emilio Aguinaldo). In the middle of the graphic organizer, under the title, students list the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 and the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 and briefly explain each as they read about it.

Rick Wormeli explains, and I have found it to be my experience, that although elementary teachers readily use graphic organizers, those of us who teach older children often expect our students to be able to create these visual organization structures for themselves. In actuality, these older students still need teachers to guide them as they create a graphic organizer that will “increase understanding and long term retention.”

## **Journal Writing** **Brittany Turner, Mathematics**

There are two main parts to mathematics instruction: computation and application. The application aspect requires students to develop deeper understanding of key math concepts. As a math intervention teacher I work with students who are lacking in either one or both of these areas. While computation is often the main focus in an intervention classroom, problem solving is equally important to teach. This is where summarization can prove to be highly beneficial. Writing a summary requires a thorough understanding of the process. The student must have mastered the content in order to rewrite the steps for solving a problem in his or her own words.

Summaries in a math classroom can be submitted verbally through discussion or in journal writing as a formative assessment. Using summarization may eliminate anxiety on students who struggle with basic facts and are highly reliant on calculators because it allows them to focus on process rather than computation. Students are also more likely to retain important mathematical ideas as well as increase their fluency with content area vocabulary if they are asked to write summaries. Student reflection through journal writing to summarize content while sharing with their peers may also cause them to self correct errors in their problem solving strategies. Summarization forces students to know the “how” and “why” of mathematics.

# A Closer Look

## Summary Ball Lisa Antoniou, Science

This kinesthetic activity is a great way for students to reflect on a recently read content and summarize as a group what they have learned. After reading a passage and/or article, place your students in a circle and...

- Begin by tossing an inflated ball to any student.
- Student has 3 seconds to state any fact, concept, or skill recently presented (information from our article for today)
- Student tosses the ball to another student who then has 3 seconds to do the same.
- If a student cannot think of something, then he/she sits down after tossing the ball.
- Students cannot repeat a fact, skill, etc. that has already been stated.
- Keep going until only one student is standing. You can have a small prize, bonus, or other incentive.
- Kids love it!

## Midas Touch

### Jennifer Bernhard, Literacy Specialist

Using the MIDAS touch to summarize text

Our Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects (RI.2 6-12) underscore the importance of summarizing complex text accurately and without bias or opinion. Using the **MIDAS** touch to separate the gold from the gravel is a systematic approach to help readers mine for the

- M** - main idea
- I** - identify supporting details
- D** - disregard unimportant information
- A** - analyze redundant/unnecessary information to determine its importance
- S** - simplify, categorize, and label important information.

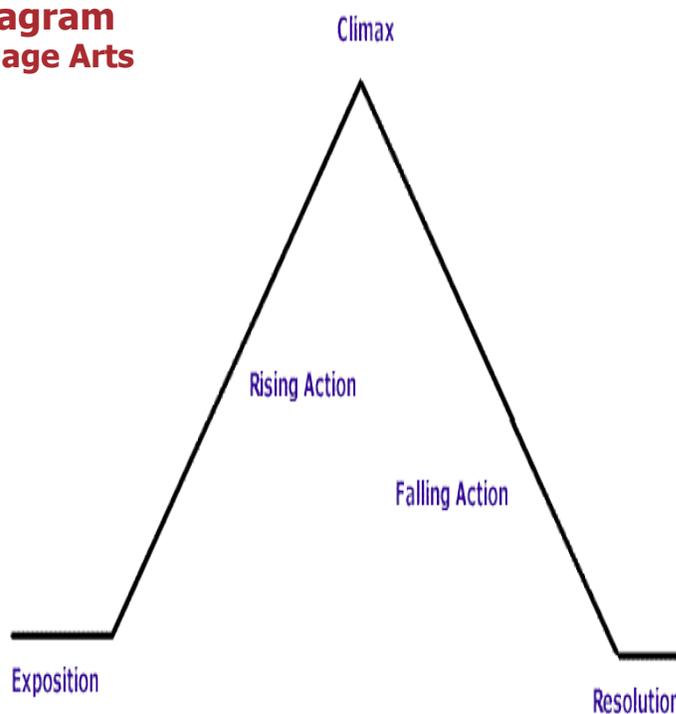
For an example of this strategy applied to a PLVS text on Motorcycle Helmet Use Laws go to:  
[http://teach.clarkschools.net/jbernhard/literacy\\_web/ContentAreaLiteracy/SummarizingPLVStext.pdf](http://teach.clarkschools.net/jbernhard/literacy_web/ContentAreaLiteracy/SummarizingPLVStext.pdf).

## Literature Plot Diagram Mona Eldridge, Language Arts

When summarizing literary or short stories, students must take elements from the story and construct a summary in their own words.

While reading short stories, students fill out a plot line diagram which includes the exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, author's theme, symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony.

Using the information they write on the plot diagram, students construct a summary in their own words. As an introduction to summarizing short stories, I read aloud, or we listen to a common story such as "The Three Little Pigs" and construct a plot line and write a summary of the story together. This activity helps them to stay focused on the task and to write about only the important facts that actually happen in their short story.



# From the Library Media Specialist: Texts for Summarizing

Katie McClain

## Kindergarten-3rd Grade

- This Year's Garden* by Cynthia Rylant
- Uncle Jed's Barbershop* by Margaree K. Mitchell
- My Grandmother's Journey* by John Cech
- And Still the Turtle Watched* by Sheila MacGill-

## Callahan

- Charlie Anderson* by Barbara Abercrombie

## Grades 3-6

- Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki
- Elijah's Angel* by Michael J. Rosen
- The Stranger* by Chris Van Allsburg
- Rose Blanche* by Roberto Innocenti
- Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco

## Middle and High School

- Waiting to Waltz, a Childhood* by Cynthia Rylant
- The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen
- A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck
- Always Remember Me: How One Family Survived World War II* by Marisabina Russo
- Rules* by Cynthia Lord

## Instructor Resources

- Strategies that Work* by Stephanie Harvey
- Comprehension Strategies for your K-6 Literacy Classroom* by Divonna Stebick and Joy Dain
- Teaching for Deep Comprehension* by Linda Dorn
- Mosaic of Thought* by Keene and Zimmerman
- Revisit, Reflect, and Retell* by Linda Hoyt
- Reading with Meaning* by Debbie Miller
- Guiding Readers and Writers* by Irene Fountas

## Word Problems

Amanda Terry, Mathematics

When summarizing in mathematics, word problems are where the skill is most used for younger students. Students must be able to read what the text is saying in order to pull out information needed to solve the problem. Summarizing in mathematics is helpful in making sure students are able to understand the variety of concepts needed to complete the problem at hand.

A strategy that could be used to assist with summarizing in math is Think-Pair-Share. Have each student think, on their own, of what the problem is telling them to do. Then have them write it down. Next, have the students share with a partner and justify why they are correct. Last, share with the class coming up with what the problem is asking and what information led to the answer.

## Coming Soon:

**November: Vocabulary**

**December: Evidence and Support**

**January: Mentor Texts**

**February: Critique and Analysis**

**March: Publishing Opportunities**

**Our goal is to bring you a variety of classroom strategies each month!**

**This is a  
publication of  
the  
Eastern  
Kentucky  
University  
Writing Project**

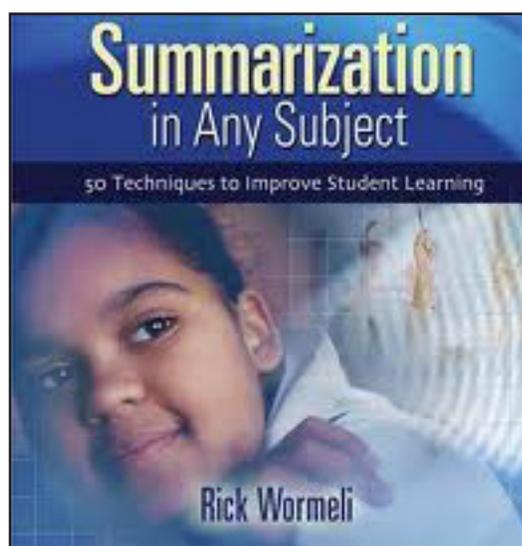
**Content Area  
Literacy Task  
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and Contributing  
Teachers:**

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**Recommended Reading:**  
*Summarization in Any Subject:  
50 Techniques to Improve  
Student Writing*  
**by Rick Wormeli**

**This book is a go-to resource for the teacher contributors of  
this newsletter, which even features strategies from the book  
such as the summary ball, Think-Pair-Share, graphic  
organizers, and journal writing.**



***From Amazon.com:***

Rick Wormeli, a teacher certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, makes the case that summarization is not only one of the most effective ways to improve student learning, it's also one of the most flexible, responsive, and engaging.

Here, you'll find a classroom-tested collection of written, spoken, artistic, and kinesthetic summarization techniques for both individual assignments and group activities across the content areas. Suitable for students in grades 3-12, these techniques are easily adjustable to any curriculum and presented with ample directions and vivid, multidisciplinary examples. They are valuable additions to every teacher's repertoire.



**ECU Writing Project**  
WRITING TEACHING LEADING

## Progressive Summary Strategy

Rhonda Orttenburger, Social Studies

Reference: *Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* by Janet Allen

Developed by Patricia Martin and Peter Pappas

**Explanation** - Select a paragraph from an informational text. Read the first two sentences to the class. Ask them to summarize them in 5 words or less. Record group thinking so everyone has visual access.

*It's not surprising that health information is sometimes confusing. It's confusing even for grown-ups.*

First two sentences in 5 words or less	Health information is confusing.
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Read the next two sentences to your students and ask them to summarize the first four sentences in 10 words or less. Record group thinking so everyone has visual access.

*It's not surprising that health information is sometimes confusing. It's confusing even for grown-ups. Health and the body are complicated scientific subjects. What can do if you get health information, but you don't understand it?*

First four sentences in 10 words or less	Health information can sometimes be confusing and difficult to understand.
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Continue reading any additional sentences to the class and ask them to summarize the entire paragraph in 15 words or less. Record group thinking so everyone has visual access.

*It's not surprising that health information is sometimes confusing. It's confusing even for grown-ups. Health and the body are complicated scientific subjects. What can do if you get health information, but you don't understand it? Ask questions. Ask about websites or books where you could find more information.*

Paragraph in 15 words or less	Health information can sometimes be confusing so ask questions to help you find answers.
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Evaluate the accuracy of the summaries. Would someone else reading the summary understand the subject? Does it contain the information accurately and fairly?

### Progressive Summary Strategy

I can use this tool *while* I read and *after* I read.

#### How I use this tool:

Your teacher will read a paragraph to you one sentence at a time.

1. Listen to the first two sentences and summarize them in 5 words or less.
2. Listen to the next two sentences and summarize the first four sentences in 10 words or less.
3. Summarize the entire paragraph in 15 words or less.
4. Evaluate the accuracy of the summaries.
  - a. Would someone else reading the summary understand the subject?
  - b. Does it contain the information accurately and fairly?

First two sentences in 5 words or less	
First four sentences in 10 words or less	
Paragraph in 15 words or less	

**Conclusion** – After modeling this strategy several times, students then work in small groups and pairs before ultimately writing one on their own. This strategy is just one of many instructional strategies teachers can utilize to address Standards RI.4.2, RI.5.2, and RI.6.2.