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Lesson in Action

AT A GLANCE

Before Reading

- Explain the value of summarizing for comprehending across content areas.
- Define a summary: a brief restatement of a text in a reader's own words.
- Tap prior knowledge: Groups of three or four students work at desktop computers.
- Create a Do and Do Not chart on summarizing; upload to the class's website or wiki.
- Model how to summarize a paragraph displayed on an interactive whiteboard.
- Compare summary against the Do and Do Not chart.
- Repeat process, but make intentional errors for class to find.

During Reading

- Give directions: craft a summary of the social studies chapter.
- Review the steps to use in summarizing.
- Circulate around the classroom to provide differentiated support.
- Pair students to write brief summaries.
- Add summaries to each student's page on the class wiki.
- Have students record summaries.

After Reading

- Have students assess their own and peers' summaries against the Do and Do Not chart.
- Have students make revisions, as needed.
- Give feedback (if needed) for students to make revisions.

Summarizing: Informational Text

Context

Ms. Bailey, a veteran Grade 6 teacher, wants to help her students strengthen their reading comprehension across all subject areas. She plans to teach summarization as a reading strategy and to have students apply this skill by crafting summaries of their social studies reading as a unit-long activity. Her class is varied in terms of reading level, with several English language learners and students on individualized education programs, so Ms. Bailey knows she will have to make sure that students understand that summarizing is a skill that can be in a student's toolkit at any reading or writing level.

Common Core State Standards

- ▶ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/6/2) (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/6/2>) Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Lesson Objective

Students will learn how to craft summaries of informational texts, deciding what belongs and what does not belong in a summary.

Technology

- ▶ Digital social studies textbook to allow students to manipulate text and use embedded supports
- ▶ Interactive whiteboard to demonstrate and model using embedded supports
- ▶ VoiceThread (<http://voicethread.com/>), for recording audio summaries and self-critiques
- ▶ Natural Reader (<http://www.naturalreaders.com/>) to have text read aloud to students
- ▶ A class wiki, for saving and sharing student summaries and other content

Assessment

- ▶ Student self-assessment using VoiceThread
- ▶ Teacher assessment of written summaries

Ms. Bailey's Class in Action

Before Reading

Ms. Bailey explains that summarizing is an important skill that will help students comprehend their social studies texts. "What about science?" asks one student.

When Ms. Bailey turns the question back to the class, the students agree that summarizing can help you comprehend all of your texts.

Ms. Bailey defines a summary as a brief restatement of a text in the reader's own words.

"To write a good summary," she says, "a reader must be thinking about the meaning of the author's words and the text's most important concepts. Keeping these things in mind will help you make sense of a text."

Ms. Bailey reminds students about summaries they have read or heard in various contexts in the past. She organizes the class into small groups of three or four, mixing stronger and weaker readers. Each group gathers around one of the classroom's desktop computers. "Your task is to create a 'Do and Do Not' chart for summarizing." She reminds students how to create a simple two-column chart in their word processor.

After 15 minutes, the groups share their ideas. Ms. Bailey records the groups' comments in the class wiki, displaying it on the interactive whiteboard. Students debate their ideas about which is a "do" and which is a "do not." During the discussion, Ms. Bailey listens closely and adds, deletes, and moves items from column to column.

Summarizing Tactics

Do	Do Not
Always state the main idea of the text or reading.	Do not copy from the resource text and just change a few words.
Include only the most critical information.	Do not switch the order and just change a few words.
Use your own words.	Do not include unnecessary details.
Try to keep the same order of the original information.	Do not change the original ideas of the author.
Include information that supports the main idea.	

She adds the chart to the class wiki in a section on reading strategies and e-mails it to all the students so they can refer to the guidelines, as needed, at school and at home.

Ms. Bailey previously prepared a Google Doc with the reading excerpt, which she now displays on the whiteboard and which students open on their tablets or e-readers. Together, they read the following:

The First and Second Continental Congresses took place around the start of the American Revolution. Delegates from the different colonies got together to talk about their relations with Britain. The Continental Congresses helped to define the issues of the Revolution and of American independence. At the second Continental Congress, the delegates adopted the Declaration of Independence.

The First Continental Congress ran from September 5 to October 26, 1774. The delegates from the colonies met in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia. There were 45

delegates at the Congress. Georgia did not have any delegates, but all the other colonies did.

To begin modeling, Ms. Bailey asks herself: “What are the key ideas in this text?” and “What are the key details that I need to include in a summary?”

She points out that the main idea appears right in the first paragraph: “The Continental Congresses helped to define the issues of the Revolution and of American independence.” She highlights that text with her cursor, selecting the feature of having that text reread aloud by NaturalReader. She then italicizes this sentence and increases the size of the font to make the sentence stand out for students.

Ms. Bailey reads aloud: “The First Continental Congress ran from September 5 to October 26, 1774.” She thinks aloud: “This is a key detail as it tells us when the first congress began. I will include this in my summary.” Once again, she italicizes the sentence and increases the size of the font.

Ms. Bailey reads the sentence, “The delegates from the colonies met in Carpenter’s Hall, Philadelphia.” She asks herself, “What information can I delete? It is important to know that the delegates met in Philadelphia, but the specific building is a detail and doesn’t need to be included in a summary.” She marks that it might not be necessary information by changing the style to strike-through.

Looking at the larger, italicized text, Ms. Bailey starts to craft a summary as follows as the class follows along:

The Continental Congresses shaped our young country’s way of governing. The First Continental Congress met in the autumn of 1774 in Philadelphia with 45 delegates in attendance.

As a last step, she asks students to assess the summary by using the Do and Do Not chart they came up with at the start of the lesson. The students agree on the main point, but they have differing opinions on how much detail is necessary.

Ms. Bailey provides two additional model summaries of the same text and accompanying think-alouds for students. In her second model, she intentionally makes an error, such as including an unimportant detail or reversing the author’s intent, in order to demonstrate how she self-corrects as she creates her summary.

During Reading

Ms. Bailey has reserved the computer cart for the day to ensure that every student will have access to a laptop.

“Earlier, we practiced making summaries of social studies texts. Writing summaries helps us to make sure we understand what’s important in a text. But how else might summaries be useful for us?”

“It makes the reading shorter?” asks a student.

“Right! When we have summaries, we can remind ourselves what was important about a text we read without having to go back and reread the whole thing.”

Ms. Bailey introduces a project that will continue for the next week: The students are going to create their own summaries of their chapter of social studies reading, section by section.

Students access the appropriate page in the digital and print copy editions of their social studies textbook. Wearing headphones and using a text-to-speech tool such as

NaturalReader, the students listen to the page of text being read while following along in their books.

Ms. Bailey reviews the lesson on summarizing and the Do and Do Not chart.

She reminds the class to use the strategies and embedded technology supports they learned about: “As you read today, use the guidelines I shared with you yesterday. Highlight or italicize main ideas and important details, and make changes to the text in order to highlight the essence of the text before you begin to compose. Take advantage of the text-to-speech tool. It really helps me to have text read aloud.”

“Are the bold words the most important ones?” asks a student.

“Great question! The bold words are new vocabulary and key terms—you will find them defined in the sidebar and the glossary. The bold terms are often great clues about what’s important in the text, but the definitions themselves are not as critical as using the terms correctly in your summary.”

As students read and modify the text, Ms. Bailey circulates around the classroom. She pauses to check in with each student and provide support.

After Reading

Ms. Bailey pairs students to work together to write brief summaries. She has several pairs read their summaries aloud. Each pair asks for comments and suggestions to cut unnecessary details or add missing key information.

Later, students upload their summaries to their individual pages on the class wiki. They will add additional brief summaries of each section of the chapter as they work through this unit.

Ms. Bailey asks students to use the Do and Do Not chart to assess their work. Students return to the VoiceThread recordings of their summaries and add additional commentary that self-critiques their work. They also visit the VoiceThread summaries of two classmates and record feedback for their peers. They make revisions before their work is collected.

Reflection

Ms. Bailey was pleased with the quality of the summaries she saw in her students’ work. She is pleased that students will see that summarizing has real benefits. She plans to have students craft summaries of an informational text in another subject matter, with a similar level of support and scaffolding, and to encourage students to use those summaries for studying for a closed-book quiz. She also knows that students will struggle more with summarizing literary texts, and she plans to bring in more literature once students have shown continued proficiency in summarizing informational texts.