Sum It Up: Introduction to Writing Summaries

Students are often taught that written pieces should be long and detailed, but this isn't the case when it comes to summaries. This lesson gives students the chance to practice keeping summaries concise in a fun and engaging way.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to write short, informative summaries of stories and events.

Materials and Preparation

- Four short video clips (see "Related Books and/or Media" for examples)
- A piece of lined paper for each student

Key Terms:

- summary
- concise

Get more lesson plans at www.education.com/lesson-plans/
Lesson

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Ask your students to brainstorm answers to the question: What constitutes a good piece of writing?
- Have each student discuss her answer with a partner.
- Allow students to share their answers with the rest of the class.
- Introduce the concept of a summary to the class. For example, explain that summaries are different from other types of writing in that they're very short and concise, or specific. They give information about things that occur in a story or event without using a lot of detail.
- Hold up a novel, or have students take out their own novels if they have them on hand. Direct attention to the back cover. Explain that the writing on the back is an example of a summary.
- Tell students to ready their pencils; they'll be writing 10-word summaries today!

Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (10 minutes)

- Play the first movie clip. A good clip to use is the ending of Disney's Frozen, which depicts an event that can be summarized in one sentence.
- Remind the class of the purpose of a summary. Then, give an example of a 10-word summary for the clip. An example of a summary for the Frozen clip is: Anna sacrificed herself for Elsa, which broke the frozen curse.
- Give some non-examples to establish how not to write a summary. For instance: The yellow cat walked across the street with the dog. Although this is exactly 10 words long, it fails to give a general overview of what was shown in the clip.

Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling (10 minutes)

- Play the second movie clip.
- Give students several minutes to partner up and, as pairs, come up with 10-word summaries for the clip.
- Allow pairs to share their summaries with the rest of the class. Write these summaries on the board.
- Repeat the summarization process with the third video clip.
Independent Working Time (5 minutes)

- Play the fourth video clip.
- This time, have each student work independently to write her own 10-word summary.

Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** Have more advanced students write a 10-word summary on another topic: the novel they're currently reading, a section of a textbook, etc. Then, have them write a second, longer summary and compare it to their first. Ask them to determine which is better via a guiding question such as: *Which summary gives a better overview of the topic?*
- **Support:** Give more leeway to students that have trouble writing a summary containing exactly 10 words. For example, ask them to write an summary containing 8-12 words instead. You may also provide them with additional examples of 10-word summaries.

Technology Integration

- An interactive whiteboard can be used to project the video clips.

Related Books and/or Media

- **VIDEO:** The Ending of Disney's *Frozen*
- **VIDEO:** The "Physical Exercise" Clip from Disney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*
Review

Assessment *(5 minutes)*

- As students complete the assignment, walk around and make sure their summaries are 10 words long at most.
- The summaries written over the course of this exercise can be used as pre-assessments for future lessons, as they help determine whether students understand concepts like main ideas or unimportant details.

Review and Closing *(5 minutes)*

- Ask students if they think all summaries are 10 words long. Then, ask them why they think this exercise involved 10-word summaries.
- Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to help them practice being concise. Remember to emphasize the importance of conciseness in writing summaries.