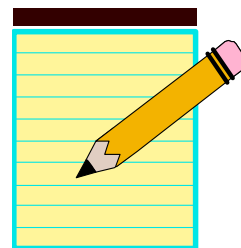


Improving Summary Writing



- ➡ Teach students the difference between writing a review and writing a summary. They are very closely related. A summary is a concise account of the main idea (facts). A review is an account of the facts in addition to the writer's opinions. They have different purposes, and students need to keep that in mind.
- ➡ To keep a summary opinion-free, avoid using a conclusion sentence. When writing a summary, follow the logical order of the original text and let it end itself naturally.
- ➡ Many elementary students are familiar with the skill of retelling. It is important to help them understand the difference between retelling and summarizing. Young students are encouraged to retell everything they remember from a piece of text as a way for teachers to monitor and assess comprehension. A retelling is long and full of details. In contrast, a summary is a concise account of just the main ideas and is much shorter in length.
- ➡ A summary should condense the facts from the original text. The final summary should be somewhat short.
- ➡ Help students understand the purpose behind summary writing. Writing a summary leads to improved comprehension. It should not be viewed as an isolated task. Model for students how a well-written summary showcases their comprehension of the text.
- ➡ A well-written summary should keep the same tone of the original text.
- ➡ When writing the A part of the A+B+C topic sentence, students should identify the piece of text to the best of their ability. Including the title and author should be a minimum expectation. Identifying the kind of writing makes for an even stronger topic sentence.

Okay Identification: *Holes*...

Better Identification: *Holes* by Louis Sachar...

Best Identification: The novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar...

- ➡ Provide a wall chart of strong verbs from which the students can choose for the B part of the A + B + C topic sentence. Some students might need two lists: a short list of basic verbs and a longer list of more advanced verbs. (Do not allow the use of the verb "to be." It is a passive approach to writing a topic sentence.) In any case, students need practice using the various verbs to discover their nuances of meaning. It is not unusual for students to use some verbs incorrectly as they experiment with language.
- ➡ The fact outline can be problematic for less able readers. Finding main ideas can be difficult. Refer back to two-column notes. Start with the "one main idea per paragraph" rule. This gives students a tangible goal. If the text has 7 paragraphs, the fact outline should have 7 items in the list.
- ➡ Do not assume students will automatically use correct paragraph format for their summary. Many will be tempted to write their paragraph as a list. Take time to model using indentation and wrap around text to show them how to make it look like a real paragraph.

Tips retrieved from *Maureen Auman's Practical Writing Series*. Videotapes available through the MS Literacy Lending Library. Contact Amy Goodman at 267-0221 to check these out.

http://www.readwriteconnect.com/flash/products_SUW_PWS_videos.html