

## Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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### Tip #22: Summarizing Fiction

There are many effective ways to have students think about what they are reading and be able to summarize when finished. It is important to give them lots of practice with this skill in a variety of ways. At 8th grade, summarizing and analyzing information/ideas from a text is reading standard R8.1. It also shows up in writing standard W8.1, demonstrating the use of writing strategies and process.

1. **Story Triangle** (Everyday Reading Strategies, Prentice Hall, 2003)

Use this blackline master to help students determine the important information in fictional text they are reading. Students interact with the story on a personal level since students must describe rather than just list the characters, events, and the problems. The [first page will give you a blackline master](#) you can make copies from for your students. The [second page shows you how this strategy applies](#) to one of the stories found in the Prentice Hall Literature Program. The model provided is based on a story called "Seventh Grade."

2. **SWBS Somebody...Wanted...But...So** (Beers, Kylee. Why Kids Can't Read. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003.)

SWBS also offers students a framework for writing a concise summary, but it also moves students beyond just summary writing. Here is a really quick example:

Somebody: Cinderella, a poor servant, (character)

wanted: desperately to go to the ball with her stepsisters and eventually did with the generous help from her fairy godmother, (plot)

but: her magic ran out at midnight as she was dancing with the prince. She left in a hurry accidentally leaving behind one of her shoes, (conflict)

so: when the prince came around looking for its owner, he was finally able to find his Cinderella. They got married and lived happily ever after. (resolution)

I hope I got that storyline right! Sometimes it is hard for students to retell an entire story with such a short frame. Consider letting the kids complete the SWBS even if they end up in the middle of the story. Next tell them to add THEN and start the SWBS again.



Another nice technique is to have the students change the character's name and do the SWBS again from a different point of view. I love how this hits so many skills at one time.

Somebody: A fairy godmother

wanted: to get points for doing a good deed for a person in need,

but: some wicked stepsisters and lack of time interfered with her success

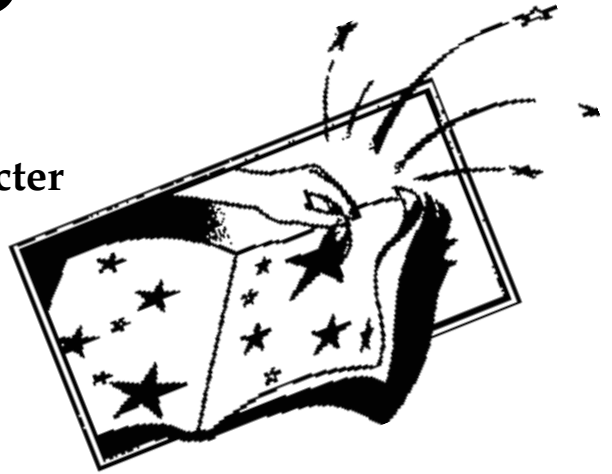
so: she relied on the perseverance of the prince to make Cinderella happy in the end.

That was a lot harder for me to complete, but it caused me to see how the plot might be viewed from another point of view. Let me know how this works for your students. Next email tip will be summarizing suggestions for nonfiction text. Stay tuned!



# Story Triangle

1. Name of main character
2. Two words describing main character
3. Three words describing setting
4. Four words stating main problem
5. Five words relating one event
6. Six words relating second event
7. Seven words relating third event
8. Eight words reporting solution



1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

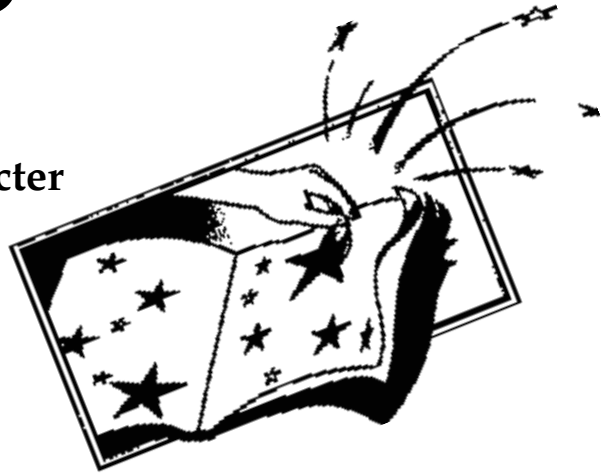
6. \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Victor

2. friendly shy

3. Fresno school warm

4. Victor's shyness with Theresa

5. Victor tries talking to Theresa.

6. Victor looks for Theresa during lunch.

7. Victor fakes knowing French and embarrasses himself.

8. Theresa impressed by Victor's "French," requests his help.