

# DETERMINING THEME AND SUMMARIZING A TEXT



In this learning plan, students will learn that authors often write to teach the reader a lesson about life. Summarizing the important parts of a story and analyzing the characters' actions and changes can help readers determine the theme of a story.

## STANDARDS

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

## OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Students will be able to summarize a story.
- ✓ Students will be able to identify the theme of a story.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

What are the important parts of a story?

How do the characters' actions and changes help you determine the theme of a story?



## MATERIALS

- Create a Summary worksheet
- Chart paper
- Variety of picture books (see daily plans for suggested titles)
- I Can Write a Summary worksheet
- My Summary worksheet
- What's the Theme? worksheet
- Sum it Up worksheet

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## ASSESSMENTS

Formative assessments and checks for understanding occur throughout the lesson:

- Students' discussions about summarizing
- Students' discussions about theme
- Students' discussions and work during guided practice
- Students' work completed during independent practice

Summative Assessment:  
Sum it Up

## DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

- Provide students with a summary of a familiar text and have students underline the different parts of the summary.
- Have students read a short story and write a summary using the graphic organizer.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Invite students to write a summary of a book from the classroom library.
- Have students watch a short video and determine the theme. Have students share their thinking with a partner.
- Encourage students to find themes in familiar texts, like fairy tales, short stories, or poems from the classroom library.



## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

### Activity 1

#### Parts of a Summary

Students will learn all about the parts of a summary.

### Activity 2

#### Guided Practice

Students will practice summarizing a book read aloud.

### Activity 3

#### Independent Practice

Students will write a summary.

### Activity 4

#### What's the Theme

Students will determine the theme of a text by answering and analyzing the questions.

### Activity 5

#### Sum it Up

Students will write a summary and determine the theme of a story.

### ACTIVITY 1: PARTS OF A SUMMARY

- Tell the students they will be learning how to summarize a story.
- Explain that summarizing means to tell the most important parts of a text in your own words but in a much shorter way.
- Begin by reading aloud a picture book, such as Clark the Shark by Bruce Hale
- After reading the story, ask students to help you answer the following questions:
  - Who was the main character in the story?
  - What did the character want?
  - What was the problem?
  - How did the character try to solve the problem?
  - What was the resolution or outcome?
  - How did the story end?
- Use student answers to write a simple summary on chart paper.
- Explain to students that you just wrote a summary.
- Provide each student with a copy of the Create a Summary worksheet and invite them to complete it using the read-aloud.
- Have students share their completed worksheets with a partner.

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## ACTIVITY 2: GUIDED PRACTICE

- Review with students the different parts of a summary. Refer back to the summary written during activity one.
- Display the I Can Write a Summary worksheet and explain that you will read aloud a text, and students should pay careful attention to note the parts listed on the worksheet.
- Read aloud a text, such as *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett. As you read, stop periodically to model how to complete the sections of the worksheet labeled Somebody and Wanted.
- After you finish reading, instruct students to complete the sections of the worksheet sections labeled But, So, and Then with a partner.
- Call on a few pairs to share the problem the character faced and the actions the character took to solve the problem.

## ACTIVITY 3: INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

- Review the different parts of a summary with students.
- Explain that today students will use what they have learned about summaries to write their own!
- Provide each student with a My Summary worksheet and explain the directions.
- Students will read a text, fill out the boxes in their worksheets, and then take that information to write a summary in paragraph form at the bottom of the page.
- Have students read a book of their choice and then complete the worksheet.
- Circulate and provide support as needed.
- Have the students share their summary paragraphs with a partner.

## ACTIVITY 4: WHAT'S THE THEME?

- Tell the students that they will learn how to identify themes in a story.
- Provide students with the following definition:
  - The theme is the lesson or message the author wants you to learn from the story that can be applied to life.

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## CONTINUED-- ACTIVITY 4: WHAT'S THE THEME?

- Tell the students that they will learn how to identify themes in a story.
- Provide students with the following definition:
  - The theme is the lesson or message the author wants you to learn from the story that can be applied to life.
- Create an anchor chart of common themes:
  - Never judge a book by its cover.
  - Believe in yourself.
  - Family is everything.
  - Trust yourself and others.
  - Love yourself just the way you are.
  - Treat others the way you want to be treated.
  - Love one another.
  - Follow the rules.
  - Hard work pays off.
  - Face your fears.
  - Nothing is impossible.
  - Take responsibility for your actions.
  - Good things come to people who wait.
  - Learn from your mistakes.
  - Kindness matters.
- Have students discuss common themes found in books they have read.
- Add any additional themes shared by the students to the anchor chart.
- Explain that readers can determine the theme of a story by analyzing how characters respond and change in various situations.
- Display the What's the Theme? worksheet.
- Read aloud a picture book of your choice, such as [A Bad Case of the Stripes](#) by David Shannon. As you read, stop periodically and think aloud about the characters' problems, actions, and changes. Record your thinking on the What's the Theme worksheet.
- Model how to determine the story's theme by analyzing all the clues and discuss with the students. Do they agree or disagree? Why?
- Pass out the What's the Theme worksheet. Then, have students choose a short picture book from the library or a text they recently read.
- Tell the students they will gather clues about a character to determine the story's theme.
- After students complete the worksheet, have a class discussion about the different themes found. Add any new themes to the Common Themes chart.

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## ACTIVITY 5: SUMMARIZING AND IDENTIFYING THEME

- Invite students to share what they have learned about summarizing and themes. Refer back to anchor charts and worksheets from prior sessions as needed.
- Explain to students that they will write a summary and determine the theme of a short picture book or book they have already read.
- Pass out the Sum It Up worksheet. Then, have students choose a short picture book from the library or a text they recently read.
- After completing the worksheet, invite students to display their worksheets on their desks.
- Instruct students to complete a gallery walk to read the summaries and themes displayed.
- After students finish, discuss the themes and summaries.
- Remind students that authors write stories to teach us lessons that we can relate to our lives. Identifying the important parts of a story and the characters' actions and changes can help us summarize and determine the theme of the stories we read.



# CREATE A SUMMARY

Summarize: Retell the most important parts of a story in your own words.

Use these 5 steps to retell a story in your own words.

**Somebody**



Who is the main character?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Wanted**



What did the character want?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**But**



What was the problem?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**So**



What actions did the character take to solve the problem?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Then**



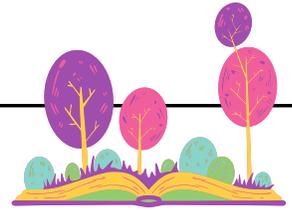
What was the resolution of the story? How did it end?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# I CAN WRITE A SUMMARY



Summarize: Retell the most important parts of a story in your own words.

<p><b>Somebody</b> Who is the main character?</p>	
<p><b>Wanted</b> What did the character want?</p>	
<p><b>But</b> What was the problem?</p>	
<p><b>So</b> What actions did the character take to solve the problem?</p>	
<p><b>Then</b> What was the resolution of the story? How did the story end?</p>	

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# MY SUMMARY

Read a text. Fill in the sections to plan your summary.  
Use the lines to write your summary.



<b>Somebody</b> Who is the main character?	
<b>Wanted</b> What did the character want?	
<b>But</b> What was the problem?	
<b>So</b> What actions did the character take to solve the problem?	
<b>Then</b> What was the resolution of the story? How did the story end?	



## Summary:

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# WHAT'S THE THEME?

Read a text and answer the questions.



\_\_\_\_\_

Book Title

What problem did the character face?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What important actions did the character take to try and solve the problem?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did the character grow and change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story?\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What did the character learn?\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What lesson did the author want you to learn?\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What's the theme?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



