

My Students Can't Summarize! Please Help!



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Session Handout

Using Text Structure to Summarize Texts

Focus on the three primary text structures: compare-contrast, cause-effect, and problem-solution. Other text structures such as sequence and description are often nested under the primary structures. Compare-contrast, cause-effect, and problem-solution structures are more likely to promote deeper cognitive investment from close reading and encourage higher order thinking skills.

	Compare-Contrast	Cause-Effect	Problem-Solution
Step 1: Determine the Underlying Text Structure	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Are we looking at similar things? Are we comparing? Are we looking at different things? Are we contrasting? Are we reading about the differences and similarities about something? (It may or may not be overtly stated.) Is the text presenting things to compare? Contrast?</p> <p>Does the text use key words or phrases like: As well as, also, both, just like, the same as, too, in addition to, additionally, whereas, comparatively, on the other hand, however, as opposed to, similarly, likewise</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Are we reading about something that is happening or happened? Are we reading an explanation? Are we reading about an event or process? (effect) Are we reading about why or how something happened? (cause)</p> <p>Does the text use key words or phrases like: Because, since, due to, so, therefore, hence, thus, as a result of, consequently, resulting in, in order to, on account of</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Are we reading about something disrupting a character or person's life? Does there seem to be a problem that needs solving? Does a character or person seem to learn something?</p> <p>Does the text use key words or phrases like: Problem, solution, conflict, issue, because, so that, in order to, resolve, solve</p>
Step 2: Use the Structure of the Text to Get the Main Idea	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): What is being compared? What is being contrasted? (Things, subjects, ideas, etc)</p> <p>What things are the same? What things are being compared? What things are different?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thing 1 • Thing 2 <p>How are they being compared? Contrasted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How 1 • How 2 <p>MAIN IDEA STEM</p> <p>_____(thing 1)_____ and _____(thing 2)_____ are being compared by/using/on _____(how 1)_____ and _____(how 2)_____.</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): What happened? What were the effects?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect 1 • Effect 2 <p>How or why did it happen? What caused the event or process to happen?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause 1 • Cause 2 <p>MAIN IDEA STEM</p> <p>_____(cause 1)_____ causes / results in / leads to _____(effect 1)_____.</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): What were some of the problems we read about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (problem) • (problem) <p>What seems to be the main problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main problem <p>What were some of the solutions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (solution) • (solution) <p>What was the main solution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main solution <p>MAIN IDEA STEM</p> <p>The problem is _____ (main problem) _____ . The solution is _____ (main solution) _____ .</p>
Step 3: Generate the Summary by Adding Key Strategic Details (A strategic (key) detail aligns to the structure and supports the main idea. The text structure and the main idea statement help students focus on the key details they need when generating a summary.)	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What are some details that relate to the first thing? What are some details that support how the things are compared?</p> <p>Thing 1, How 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 <p>Thing 2, How 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 <p>Thing 1, How 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 2 <p>Thing 2, How 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 2 <p>SUMMARY STEM</p> <p>_____(thing 1)_____ and _____(thing 2)_____ are being compared by/using/on _____(how 1)_____ and _____(how 2)_____. _____(thing 1)_____ is/has/uses _____(detail 1)_____ for _____(how 1)_____. _____(thing 2)_____ is/has/uses _____(detail 1)_____ for _____(how 1)_____.</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What was the cause? What were some details that we learned about the cause?</p> <p>Cause 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 • Detail 2 <p>What was the effect? What were some details that we learned about the effect?</p> <p>Effect 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 • Detail 2 <p>SUMMARY STEM</p> <p>_____(cause 1)_____, particularly (detail 1 about cause 1) has been shown to cause / leads to / results in _____(effect 1)_____. (detail 2 about cause 1) is also a factor that often results in (effect 1).</p> <p>Summary stem may be reversed to discuss effect first: _____(effect 1)_____ is/was caused by / is produced by / is triggered by _____(cause 1)_____. (detail 1 about effect 1) specifically arises from (detail 1 about cause 1).</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What are some important things/supporting details about the cause of the problem? What caused the problem? (initial incident) The problem is _____: It was caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 • Detail 2 <p>What are some important things/supporting details about the solution? What solved the problem? (climax) The solution is _____: • Detail 1 • Detail 2</p> <p>What was learned? What are some important things/supporting details about the lesson? The lesson is _____: • Detail 1 • Detail 2</p> <p>SUMMARY STEM</p> <p>The problem is _____(main problem)_____. It was brought about by/caused by _____ (Detail 1 about the problem)_____. The solution is _____(main solution)_____. The problem was solved/overcome by _____(Detail 1 about the solution)_____. The lesson is _____, and was _____(Detail 1 about the lesson)_____.</p>

Sample Problem-Solution Summary for *The Dinner Party*, by Mona Gardner

	Problem-Solution
<p>Step 1: Determine the Underlying Text Structure</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Are we reading about something disrupting a character or person's life? <i>Yes</i> Does there seem to be a problem that needs solving? <i>Yes</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Use the Structure of the Text to Get the Main Idea</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): What were some of the problems we read about? <i>The characters are at a dinner party and there's a snake in the room. There's a cobra under the table. There's a disagreement between two of the guests.</i> What seems to be the main problem? <i>The disagreement between the colonel and the young girl has revealed a conflict of gender perception: Are men better in a crisis than women?</i> What were some of the solutions? <i>The American has everyone stay very still. The hostess has a bowl of milk placed out on the veranda.</i> What was the main solution? <i>The hostess settles the disagreement by revealing that she knew a cobra was in the room because it crawled across her foot. She demonstrates perfect control in a crisis.</i></p> <p>MAIN IDEA STEM The problem is <i>that a colonel and a young woman disagree about whether or not women can handle themselves in a crisis.</i> The solution is <i>that the hostess demonstrates perfectly how well women can act in a crisis.</i></p> <p>MAIN IDEA SENTENCE <i>The problem is that a colonel and a young woman have conflicting ideas about who is better in a crisis, men or women. The conflict is resolved when a woman demonstrates perfect control during a life or death situation.</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Generate the Summary by Adding Key Strategic Details (A strategic (key) detail aligns to the structure and supports the main idea. The text structure and the main idea statement help students focus on the key details they need when generating a summary.)</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What are some important things/supporting details about the cause of the problem? The problem is: <i>a colonel and a young woman have conflicting ideas about who is better in a crisis, men or women.</i> It was brought about by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The colonel insisting that a woman's unfailing response to any crisis is to scream.</i> <i>The young woman disagrees with him.</i> What are some important things/supporting details about the solution? What solved the problem (climax)? The solution is that <i>a woman demonstrated perfect control during a life or death situation.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The American 'tricks' the guests into being very still. The milk in a bowl is bait for a snake. The American is astute enough to pick up on the details and figure out the danger in the room.</i> <i>Mrs. Wynnes' facial expression. She discreetly calls for a bowl of milk to be placed away from the guests.</i> <i>Although the American displays perfect control and crisis management skills, it's really Mrs Wynnes who had the 'ounce more control' to not panic, not to scream. And considering that the cobra was on her foot, that had to have taken iron will to not jump or startle the snake into striking. She shows that her crisis response was to be controlled and not to panic.</i></p> <p>Was there a lesson? What are some important things/supporting details about the lesson? <i>Yes. The colonel learned that women can have as much control as a man.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mrs. Wynnes' response to a life-or-death situation was perfectly controlled and executed.</i> <i>She shows that women can have that 'ounce more control' the colonel thought only men had.</i> </p>

SUMMARY STEM

The problem is _____ (main problem) _____. It was brought about by/caused by _____ (Detail 1 about the problem) _____. The solution is _____ (main solution) _____. The problem was solved/overcome by _____ (Detail 1 about the solution) _____. The lesson is _____, and was _____ (Detail 1 about the lesson) _____.

SUMMARY**Summary 1 (basic and tightly aligned to the stem):**

In The Dinner Party, a short story by Mona Gardner, the main problem is the disagreement between two characters, a colonel and a young girl. The disagreement was brought about by the colonel, who says men have 'that ounce more control' than women. The girl disagrees. The disagreement is settled when a woman demonstrates perfect control during a life or death situation. The colonel learns that women can have as much control as a man, as Mrs Wynnes explained that she knew a cobra was in the room because it slithered across her foot.

Summary 2 (more developed, more leeway with the stem):

Who is better in a crisis, men or women? The Dinner Party, by Mona Gardner presents an interesting answer to this question. Two of the characters, a colonel and a young woman, have conflicting ideas. The colonel insists that, "a woman's unfailing reaction in any crisis is to scream" and suggests that men have the "ounce more" that makes them better at controlling themselves in a crisis. Although the American displayed superior people management skills and was able to 'trick' the guests into being very still to give the cobra time to slither out from under the table, it was Mrs Wynnes who displayed superior personal control when she was able to remain calm even as the cobra slithered over her foot. The conflict is resolved when a woman demonstrates perfect control during a life or death situation and calmly saves the lives of her guests at her dinner party.

Sample Compare-Contrast Summary for *Amazing Animal Homes*, Kids World

	Compare-Contrast
<p>Step 1: Determine the Underlying Text Structure</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): What are we reading about? <i>Reading about some animals and the homes they make.</i> Are we reading about things that are similar? <i>Yes. Nests. Homes.. All the animals make homes..</i> Are we reading about things that are different? <i>Yes. The kinds of animals were different. And the kinds of homes.</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Use the Structure of the Text to Get the Main Idea</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): Which animals (things) are being compared? <i>Baya Weavers, Burrowing Owls, Bagworm Moths, and Potter Wasps.</i> How are they being compared? <i>Their homes - the kind of homes animals make. Nests, burrows.</i> How are the animals the same? <i>They all make homes. They are all animals.</i> How are they different? <i>What is different is the way they're built. The materials and the reason. They are also different kinds of animals.</i></p> <p>MAIN IDEA STEM _____ (thing 1) _____ and _____ (thing 2) _____ are being compared by/using/on _____ (how 1) _____ and _____ (how 2) _____ .</p> <p>MAIN IDEA SENTENCE <i>Baya Weavers, Burrowing Owls, Bagworm Moths, and Potter Wasps are being compared by the type of home they build, the material they use, and the purpose of their home.</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Generate the Summary by Adding Key Strategic Details (A strategic (key) detail aligns to the structure and supports the main idea. The text structure and the main idea statement help students focus on the key details they need when generating a summary.)</p>	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What types of homes does each animal make? <i>Baya Weaver - nest. Burrowing Owls - burrows. Bagworm Moths make a case. Potter Wasps make a little pot.</i> What are some details that relate to the type of home? <i>The Baya Weaver's nest has a funnel. The Burrowing Owls burrow is underground. The Bagworm Moth makes a case for itself, Potter Wasps make a pot to lay their egg in.</i> What are some materials they use? <i>Leaves, mud or clay, the earth, sticks.</i> What is the purpose for each home? <i>Protection, raise young, lay eggs, nursery.</i></p> <p>SUMMARY STEM _____ (thing 1) _____ and _____ (thing 2) _____ are being compared by/using/on _____ (how 1) _____ and _____ (how 2) _____ . _____ (thing 1) _____ is/has/uses _____ (detail 1) _____ for _____ (how 1) _____. _____ (thing 2) _____ is/has/uses _____ (detail 1) _____ for _____ (how 1) _____.</p> <p>SUMMARY <i>Baya Weavers, Burrowing Owls, Bagworm Moths, and Potter Wasps are being compared by the type of home they build, the material they use, and the purpose of their home. Baya Weavers use leaves to build nests with long funnels. Burrowing Owls find or dig burrows in the ground. Bagworm Moths use sticks or leaves to make 'cases', and Potter Wasps use clay and saliva to make a nest that looks like a clay pot. Baya Weavers, Burrowing Owls and Bagworm Moths live in their homes and use them for protection and raising young, whereas a Potter Wasp lays a single egg in the clay pot which then becomes a home for the larva.</i></p>

Sample Problem-Solution Summary for Last Stop on Market Street, Matt De La Pena

	Problem-Solution
Step 1: Determine the Underlying Text Structure	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Are we reading about something disrupting a character or person's life? <i>Yes. The rain. And they don't have a car.</i> Does there seem to be a problem that needs solving? <i>Yes, CJ doesn't like going to the soup kitchen every Sunday after church.</i></p>
Step 2: Use the Structure of the Text to Get the Main Idea	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): What were some of the problems we read about? <i>CJ complains about waiting for the bus in the rain. He wishes he had things like a car and a music player.</i> What seems to be the main problem? <i>CJ feels sorry for himself.</i> What were some of the solutions? <i>CJ learned to listen. And look for a straw. And see the rainbow in the dirty street.</i> What was the main solution? <i>His nana teaches him about the things around him. She teaches him to appreciate the things he has.</i></p> <p>MAIN IDEA STEM The problem is <i>CJ feels sorry for himself.</i> The solution is <i>CJ's nana teaches him to appreciate what he has.</i></p> <p>MAIN IDEA SENTENCE <i>The problem is that CJ feels sorry for himself. The solution is that after his nana teaches him to see, hear, experience and appreciate the things around him.</i></p>
Step 3: Generate the Summary by Adding Key Strategic Details (A strategic (key) detail aligns to the structure and supports the main idea. The text structure and the main idea statement help students focus on the key details they need when generating a summary.)	<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): What are some important things/supporting details about the cause of the problem? What caused the problem? (initial incident) The problem is <i>that CJ feels sorry for himself.</i> It was caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>CJ asks why they don't have a car. He also asks why they have to go to the soup kitchen after church when his friends don't need to go.</i> <i>He also wants a music player to listen to. He isn't able to see or appreciate the things around him.</i> What are some important things/supporting details about the solution? What solved the problem? (climax) The solution is <i>CJ's nana teaches him to appreciate what he has.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>His nana - and the people they encounter on the way to the soup kitchen - help him to see things differently.</i> <i>He is able to appreciate things more.</i> What was learned? What are some important things/supporting details about the lesson? The lesson is <i>He finds 'beautiful' all around him.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>He learns to listen and see things differently.</i> <i>His nana teaches him to pay attention to the people and things around him.</i> <i>CJ learns to see beauty around him and is glad they went.</i> <i>He sees the rainbow and becomes a better witness for what's beautiful.</i> </p> <p>SUMMARY STEM The problem is _____ (main problem) _____. It was brought about by/caused by _____ (Detail 1 about the problem) _____. The solution is _____ (main solution) _____. The problem was solved/overcome by _____ (Detail 1 about the solution) _____. The lesson is _____, and was _____ (Detail 1 about the lesson) _____.</p> <p>SUMMARY <i>The problem is that CJ feels sorry for himself. He feels this way because his other friends can ride in cars to go home after church and he has to ride the bus in the rain to the soup kitchen. His nana and the people on the bus with him teach him to see and experience beauty in the things around him. After seeing a rainbow and understanding what it means to 'witness beautiful', CJ no longer feels sorry for himself and is glad they went.</i></p>

Summarizing Planning Document

Summary of:	Grade:	Subject:
	Type of Summary:	
Step 1: Determine the Underlying Text Structure	QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING TEXT STRUCTURE): Key words or phrases:	
Step 2: Use the Structure of the Text to Get the Main Idea	QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO GET THE MAIN IDEA): MAIN IDEA STEM MAIN IDEA SENTENCE	
Step 3: Generate the Summary by Adding Key Strategic Details <small>(A strategic (key) detail aligns to the structure and supports the main idea. The text structure and the main idea statement help students focus on the key details they need when generating a summary.)</small>	QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (TO ALIGN STRATEGIC DETAILS WITH THE MAIN IDEA): SUMMARY STEM SUMMARY	