

Helpful Hint: Summarizing Important Parts in Books

A summary tells the important parts of a book without including unimportant details. Sometimes it is hard to decide what is important to include in a summary and what can be left out! Here is a list of the parts of stories that are often very important and should be included in a summary.

| <i>BEGINNING</i> | |
|---|---|
| Part | Why It's Important |
| Meeting a main character | Readers need to know who is in the story and a little bit about that character. |
| The main character's goal | Readers need to know what the main character wants or is trying to do to understand the rest of the story. |
| Information about the setting | Readers need to know where a story takes place so they can visualize it. |
| <i>MIDDLE</i> | |
| Part | Why It's Important |
| When something big goes wrong, an argument, a mistake, or a big surprise | These events can often signal the problem in a story – by the end of the story, the problem is solved. |
| How the characters responded to the events of the plot | Characters' responses to events, especially difficult situations, can signal what they might do during the rest of the story. |
| A change in the setting | Readers need to keep track of when the setting changes as this affects the story. |
| Actions the characters take to fix a problem or get what they want | These events are probably leading up to the solution. |
| <i>THE END</i> | |
| Part | Why It's Important |
| A solution to the problem | Many stories follow the problem-solution structure |
| How the character has changed from the beginning to the end of the story. | Noticing how the characters react to the end of a story can give you clues about what the author wants you to learn from reading the book. Did the characters learn a lesson? |

Helpful Hints for Learning to Summarize

- Read the summaries on the backs or inside flaps of books. Notice how they sound and what the author included or left out. Try to make your summaries sound like these published authors.
- Summarize the story across your hand. Hold up one finger for each part. If you start to run out of fingers before you get to the end, you are probably telling too many details! Try using a starting word for each finger: “First...next....in the middle....then....finally.”
- Can you tell the important parts of a story in two or three sentences? Try using this format: “This book was about _____. First [the characters] wanted _____. Then _____ [what they did], and finally _____ [the solution.]”

Core Read Aloud Titles to Support Summarizing

| Grade | Core Read Aloud Books |
|-------|---|
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If the Shoe Fits</i> • <i>Let's Get a Pup! Said Kate</i> • <i>Thunder Cake</i> • <i>The Runaway Wok</i> |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Martina the Beautiful Cockroach</i> • <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i> • <i>Raising Dragons</i> • <i>An Angel for Solomon Singer</i> • <i>Grace for President!</i> |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hewitt Anderson's Great Big Life</i> • <i>The Story of the Three Kingdoms</i> • <i>The Memory Coat</i> • <i>Rules</i> |