

Identify a Central Idea and Write a Summary

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In this 40-minute reading lesson, you will distinguish a topic from a central idea, state a central idea supported across a short passage, and write a concise, accurate 2–3 sentence summary with at least two key details and no added opinion.

The Shared Tool Case

Invented instructional example.

The after-school makers' club at Juniper Hall used to keep scissors, rulers and tape in different drawers. Members sometimes searched for a tool during build time, then left it on a table after the club ended. The group tried one labeled case for the shared tools. A card inside listed the tools, and a short sign reminded members to return each item before leaving. At the end of each meeting, one member checked the card against the case. By the next week, the group could find the tools faster, and fewer supplies were left on tables. The club kept the case and check-in routine because the simple system made shared tools easier to find and return.

The Labels That Could Move

Invented instructional example.

At the fictional Harbor Room, a student group changed the pictures on a display each Friday. At first, they wrote the artist and title on paper labels and taped the labels under each picture. When a picture moved, its label sometimes stayed behind. The group tried a new method: each label went into a clear sleeve attached with a clip. Now members could move the whole label with the picture and replace the name without tearing the paper. At the next display change, every picture had the right label, and the students reused the same sleeves. The group kept the sleeves and clips because they made labels easier to move and reuse.

A Notice Board with a Clear Routine

Invented instructional example.

At the made-up North Field Center, volunteers posted notices for clubs, games and craft times on one large board. At first, new notices went wherever a space looked open. Some covered older dates, and visitors had to scan the whole board to find the week's activities. The volunteers tried a simple routine. They grouped notices under three headings, wrote an end date on each notice, and removed expired notices every Monday. They also placed the current week's schedule at eye level near the entrance. In the following week, visitors could find current activities without reading every older notice. The volunteers kept the routine because clear sections and regular updates made the board easier to use.

Modeled practice

Passage: The Shared Tool Case

Read “The Shared Tool Case.” With the teacher, name the topic in a word or short phrase, state the central idea in one complete sentence, and draft a 2–3 sentence summary using at least two important details. Then compare the model response. Notice how it names a topic, states a point about the whole passage, and combines that central idea with details in a concise summary without adding an opinion.

Topic: shared tools. Central idea: A labeled case and check-in routine helped the club find and return shared tools. Summary: The club once kept tools in several drawers, so members searched for supplies and sometimes left them out. Members moved the tools into a labeled case, listed them on a card and checked the case before leaving. The routine made the supplies easier to find and put away.

Guided practice

Passage: The Labels That Could Move

With a partner, read “The Labels That Could Move.” In a word or short phrase, name the topic. Then write one sentence that states the main point about how the labels helped the group update its display. Draft a 2–3 sentence summary with at least two key details. Use your own words and leave out opinions or details that do not explain the central idea. If you need more space, use a separate sheet.

Partner draft

Independent response

Passage: A Notice Board with a Clear Routine

Read “A Notice Board with a Clear Routine” on your own. Before you write, you may use the planning organizer on the next page. Write the topic in a word or short phrase. State the central idea in one complete sentence. Then write a 2–3 sentence objective summary that includes at least two key details. Use your own words; do not add an opinion or information from outside the passage. Put your finished response in the lines here. If you need more room, use a separate sheet.

Independent response

Planning organizer

Use this page to plan before writing your independent response. Take your ideas and evidence from the passage. This organizer gives you space; it does not provide the answer or choose details for you.

Topic: who or what is the passage about?

What point does the whole passage develop? (brief phrase)

Key detail 1 from the passage

Key detail 2 from the passage

Central idea: state the whole-passage point in one sentence

Objective summary: draft 2–3 sentences in your own words

Support: Before writing, you may plan on the organizer after the independent task. It has space for the topic, whole-passage point, two details, a central-idea sentence and a short summary. Use evidence from the passage. The organizer does not give the answer or choose details; write your finished response in the lines on the task page, using a separate sheet if needed.

Extension: On a separate sheet, write a new title that captures the central idea and explain which two details support it. Review your summary: remove any detail that does not support the idea. If all its details fit, choose one passage detail to leave out and explain why it is less important. Use only the passage.

The three situations in this lesson are fictional examples.