



# Finding Key Words for a Summary

Select key content words in expository text and then use those words for oral and written summaries.

**MATERIALS:** Short article to project, individual copies, highlighters for each student

## PROCEDURE:

1. Choose a short, high interest passage. Project the text on the screen and give copies to individual students.
2. Preview the topic with the students and make connections to any prior knowledge they may have about the material. Debrief any text features such as bold print, captions, numbers, or graphics and ask students to think about why they are there and how they might help them learn the content of the text.
3. Read the passage with the students—you can do a choral reading, or read it to them and have them “jump in” for words or phrases you leave out (this promotes active engagement). After the first paragraph, ask them to tell their partners what that paragraph is mostly about. Next, ask them to write the “gist” or 1-3 words that would remind them what the paragraph is mostly about.
4. Show them how to select key content words in each line of text. Use “think aloud” strategies to make your reasons for choices of words clear (model). For example, “*I’m going to pick this word because it tells why....*”, or “*I don’t need to pick this word because it says the same thing as....*” You can also show the students how you don’t need to pick most of the small words such as **a, an, the, is, are**, etc.
5. Once students begin to see how to pick the words, ask them to help you pick words (guided practice).
6. As you work with each paragraph, have students write the “gist” and list the key words for that paragraph on a separate sheet of paper as their notes. Do the same on a piece of chart paper so that students can see the key words lifted by the class.
7. After you finish selecting words for the passage, cover the passage, have the students turn over their papers, and model for them how to use the key words in sequence to orally summarize or retell the passage. Then have pairs of students practice this orally.
8. Next, use Language Experience or Shared Writing to compose with the class a summary of the material using all of their input. As you write the chart in front of the students, highlight the key words you use to write the summary as you go.
9. Once students have had extensive practice with this as a group chart activity, they can write summaries on their own after selecting the key words in a text.
10. It is also helpful to develop a bank of “mortar words” that match the structure of the topic so that students can glue the content words together in a logical description. For example, with a sequence selection students may need, “first, then, next, finally”.

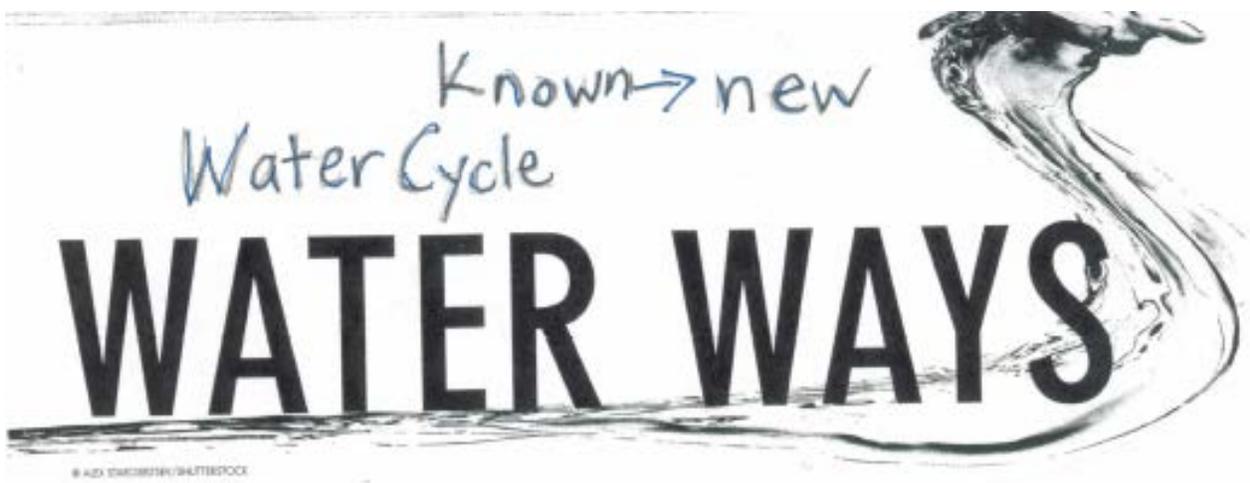
## Informational Text



Summaries are covered in the Common Core Standards under **Reading: RI 2**.

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**P**icture a drop of water. Where does it come from? Where is it going?

Intro

Earth's water is always on the **move**. It travels from the **oceans** to the **sky**. It **falls** from **clouds** and fills **streams**, rivers, bays, and **oceans**. Water flows **deep underground**.

how it moves

Water's endless journey from Earth to sky and back again is called the **hydrologic cycle**, or water cycle. (See diagram) A better name might be the water **re-cycle**. **Every drop** is used, **reused**, and used again.

cycle def.

Human beings can't **survive** without water. We **drink** it, **wash** in it, and **play** in it. At home, the average person in the **United States** uses **380 liters** (100 gallons) of water every **day**. That **doesn't include** all the water it takes to **grow our food**.

humans use

List of Key Words

*How it moves:*

- Travels-flows
- Falls-comes down
- Clouds
- Streams, rivers, bays, oceans-bodies of water

*Cycle definition*

- Hydrologic
- Re-cycle
- Reused

*Humans use of water*

- Survive-live
- Drink, wash, play
- Aver person US
- 380 liters/100 gals./day
- not including water to grow food-crops

Source:  
National Geographic "Extreme Explorer" Magazine, April 2010

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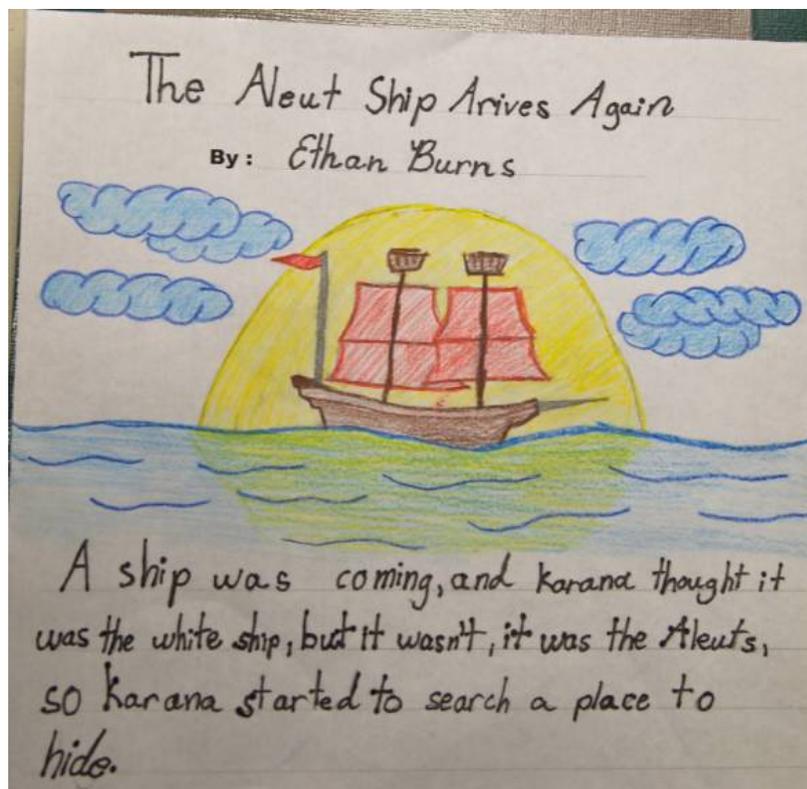
## The \$2.00 Summary

Once students are used to summarizing information using key words, they can be challenged to create short summaries that give important content with as few words as possible.

Tell the students they have to summarize a section of the text in 20 words or less. Each word costs 10 cents. You can make a "free box" of words they can use such as 1-2 letter words, "the", and be sure to include in the "free box" any important content words specific to the domain of the topic (science, social studies, math, etc.) that you want to make sure they use in their \$2 summary.

Students then work together to create these short summaries. You can "pay" them \$2.00 for the summary if they include the important information AND do it in 20 words or less WITHOUT any errors of spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.

Once students understand this procedure it can be used as a homework assignment for summarizing content area reading in science or social studies.



*\$2.00 Summary of Chapter 16, Island of the Blue Dolphins, S. O'Dell*