Reading Focus

Objectives

Students will

- summarize to keep track of important plot events
- analyze details to understand characters, setting, and plot
- keep track of story events

Preteach

Build Background

- Remind students that when they tell a friend about a movie, they often relate the most important events. This is called summarizing. Students might even recall more information about the movie when they summarize it.
- Ask students what words or phrases they might use to help the listener understand the order of events. ***Possible responses:*** *first, then, after that, finally*

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

Summarize

For each tip, have a student read the sentence from "The Three Little Pigs" summary that utilizes that tip. Point out that this summary identifies the main characters—the three pigs and the wolf—in the first two sentences.

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 8–9

Reading Skills

- Summarize to enhance comprehension of text.
- Analyze story details.
- Track story events.

Reading Focus

by **Kylene Beers**

What Reading Skills Help You Understand Plot and Setting?

Do you ever find yourself confused by a story you are reading? For example, you may suddenly wonder what is happening, or maybe you have forgotten who one of the characters is or why a character is in an unexpected place. Using these reading skills can help you keep the story straight.

Summarizing

To keep track of the plot, stop from time to time and **summarize,** or retell in your own words the most important events of the story.

Here is an example of a summary of the traditional story "The Three Little Pigs."

> "The Three Little Pigs" is a folk tale in which three pigs build houses—one straw, one wood, and one brick. A hungry wolf blows down the houses of straw and wood, but the pigs run to safety in the brick house, which the wolf cannot blow down. When the wolf tries to climb down the chimney he lands in a pot of soup.

Summarizing Tips A good summary should

1. state the title and author
2. identify the main character
3. describe the setting
4. relate the main events
5. use time-order words like *first, then,* and *when*
6. keep events in the right order
7. explain how the story ends

Analyzing Details

When you read a short story, analyzing details helps you understand the plot, get to know the characters, and **visualize,** or picture, the setting.

Look especially for these details as you read the stories in this collection.

characters' actions
conflicts and problems
order of events
→ **plot**

location of the events
time period of the story
customs of the time
→ **setting**

In this example, the story details tell us about a conflict the story's main character is facing.

> Im skared. Lots of people who work here and the nurses and the people who gave me the tests came to bring me candy and wish me luck. I hope I have luck.
>
> from "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes

Resources

Collection 1 Resources, Reading Focus Skill Builder, p. 5

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentations with activities

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Help students learn the academic terms in the Reading Focus by breaking the words into word parts.

- Write the word *visualize* on the board. Underline the root *vis–*. Tell students that *visus–* means "to see." Tell students that *visualize* is a verb that means "to see." Explain that when students visualize the setting, they are seeing it in their minds, not literally seeing it. Ask students what other words they can think of with the root *vis–* that have to do with seeing. ***Possible responses***: *vision, visible, invisible, vista, visual*

Tracking Story Events

Many stories are told in **chronological** order, or the time order in which they happen. Keep track of a story's events by making a chart like this:



The chart above will work for the main events of a story, but you'll find that most stories are a bit more complicated.

"The Inn of Lost Time" is actually three stories in one. Two guests trade stories with a farmer and his wife. To keep track of story events, you'll probably want to make three separate events charts.

Main Story:



Inner Story 1:



Inner Story 2:



As you read "Flowers for Algernon," first track the story events as a whole. Then identify the events that form subplots and parallel episodes.

Main Story:



Your Turn Apply Reading Skills

As you read the following passage, keep track of the story events and look for details about the plot and setting. Afterward, summarize the most important events.

> The second day of our journey was a particularly grueling one, with several steep hills to climb. As the day was drawing to its close, we began to consider where we should spend the night. I knew that within an hour's walking was a hot-spring resort known to have several attractive inns.
>
> But Tokubei, my employer, said he was already very tired and wanted to stop. He had heard of the resort and knew the inns there were expensive. Wealthy as he was, he did not want to spend more money than he had to.
>
> While we stood talking, a smell reached our noses, a wonderful smell of freshly cooked rice. Suddenly I felt ravenous. From the way Tokubei swallowed, I knew he was feeling just as hungry.
>
> from "The Inn of Lost Time"
> by Lensey Namioka

Now go to the Skills in Action: Reading Model

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To become an expert at summarizing, visit the interactive Reading Workshops on:
go.hrw.com L8-9 Go

- Write the word *chronological* on the board. Explain that the prefix *chron–* means "time." Events that are arranged in *chronological* order are arranged in time order. Tell students that the words *first, next, then,* and *finally* are some of the words that signal time order. Have a volunteer use time-order words to describe getting ready for school in the morning. Have other students list the time-order words they hear as the volunteer speaks.

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Have students give examples of other plot patterns they know from movies (for example, flashback). Discuss as a class how these plot patterns are different from a plot that unfolds in chronological order.

Guided Practice

Analyzing Details

The last paragraph of the Analyzing Details section contains details from a story in this collection. Have students use the information in the arrows to determine whether the details are about plot or setting.

Tracking Story Events

- Tell students to preview a story before completing sequence charts to determine whether the story uses a structure, such as a story within a story. To model finding signal words for this structure, point out that if they come across a phrase such as "I remembered when," they know that this might signal a story within a story.
- Explain that as students chart story events, they should identify whether the event is part of the *conflict, climax,* or *resolution* and then use their charts.

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Possible responses: *Events—grueling journey (exposition), pair needs a place to spend the night (rising action), pair does not agree on whether to stay or press on (conflict); Details—steep hills, expensive inns, felt ravenous; Summary—The narrator and his employer are tired and looking for a place to sleep. Tokubei does not want to travel any farther. The men are trying to decide what to do when they smell cooked rice.*

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