

## Summarizing a Literary Work

- RL.6.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- SL.6.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.  
**a.** Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- SL.6.5** Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
- CCR.R.2** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCR.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



### Understand the Standards

Think back about a time when a friend has asked, "So what's that book about?" Your response is to give a brief account of what happens in the book. You tell about the characters and the main events, and give enough details to help your friend have an idea of what the book is about.

**Words to Know**  
summarize

What you've done is to summarize the book. You've probably given summaries like this countless times for books, stories, movies, TV programs, family vacations, holiday get-togethers, and Saturday afternoon outings with friends. Summarizing is something that's part of your life, and always will be.

**Summarize** means to give a brief account of the main ideas or events and the most important details. In school, you'll often be asked to summarize a text. First, think of what the text is mainly about. Then, state in your own words the main ideas or events and important details. Include important details only; you're summarizing, not restating the whole text. And don't include your opinion or judgment. What you think is important, of course, but it doesn't belong in a summary.



## Guided Instruction

Read the passage and answer the questions in the margin.

### Incident on Main Street

- The band marched up Main Street, the drums thundering, the sousaphones pumping out oom-pah-pahs. Jimmy Hobbs sat on his father's shoulders, beating time with his fists. It was a grand party for the town, a celebration of its 100th anniversary.
- As the band approached the intersection with Second Street, Mr. George Weston, the town's former mayor, came riding a horse down the cross street. No one had ever seen him ride a horse before, and no one could imagine why he was trying it now. Somehow, though, he'd gotten himself on a horse and was flapping and holding on for dear life, as the horse pounded at full gallop down Second Street.
- Unless someone stopped, it seemed certain that the band and the horse would collide. It was likewise certain that Mr. Weston wasn't going to stop, no matter how badly he wanted to. So it was up to the band, but there was no certainty it could stop either. No one in the band could even see up Second Street, their view being blocked by the crowd.
- Only at the last moment, as the first drums entered the intersection, did anyone in the band become aware that disaster was pending. The first drummers tried to stop, but the rest of the band kept marching. The drummers were piled upon by more drummers from behind. Those second drummers were rammed by the trombones, and the whole mass pressed forward. Soon the intersection was crammed with band uniforms all out of order.
- Meanwhile, the horse and Mr. Weston came on. The musicians pushed and shoved, their instruments clashing. Then somehow, in the final seconds, a thin corridor opened through the band. The horse and Mr. Weston sliced through the opening, emerged on the other side, and disappeared down the street.

### Guided Questions

Where does this story take place?

What is the main idea of paragraph 2?

What are two important details that should be included in a summary of paragraph 2?

Complete the following activities based on "Incident on Main Street"

- What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

- List two important details that should be included in a summary of paragraph 3.

(1)

(2)

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 4?

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4. What is an important detail to include from paragraph 4?

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5. Which detail would you not include in a summary of paragraph 5?

- A The horse and Mr. Weston kept coming.
- B The instruments clashed.
- C A corridor opened through the crowd of musicians.
- D Mr. Weston rode through the corridor.

6. What is the main idea of this story?

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7. Marching bands have a rich history in the United States. In a group of five students, research the history of marching bands. This activity will have two sessions. During the first session, discuss why marching bands in general are so popular. Then make a list of five questions that others may specifically ask about marching bands. For example, types of questions may include, "When did the first marching band perform?" and "What types of instruments are in a marching band?" Each student will research the answer to his or her assigned question. Each student must also include one piece of multimedia (image, visual clip, or graph) in his or her research. During the next session, appoint a group historian, or someone to compile and summarize all the research. With your group members, discuss your findings and answers to your assigned questions. After the group has prepared the research on the history of marching bands, the entire group will present this information to the class.

8. On a separate sheet of paper, write a summary of the story.

"Incident on Main Street"  
(4 pts)

Main idea:

Detail

Detail

Detail



**On Your Own**

You can use what you've learned about summarizing literary texts to summarize any kind of text: literary or informational, short or long. Summaries do not necessarily have to be entirely in words. Sometimes, a chart or diagram is as effective—or even more effective. In the exercises that follow, read each passage, looking for main ideas and important details. For each passage, complete the graphic organizer and answer the question.

**Theodore Roosevelt**

Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th president of the United States, was an enthusiastic hunter and sportsman. He was also our most committed conservationist president. He knew that America's vast natural resources were not unlimited and would disappear forever if steps were not taken to preserve some of them. During his presidency, he worked with Congress and members of his administration to protect more than 170 million acres of land. He greatly expanded the size of the national forests and added many new national parks and national monuments.

- 1 Complete this graphic organizer with information from "Theodore Roosevelt."

<b>Main Idea:</b> President Roosevelt was a committed conservationist president.		
<b>Important detail:</b>  He recognized that America's resources were not unlimited.	<b>Important detail:</b>	<b>Important detail:</b>



- 2 Why is it an important detail that President Roosevelt knew America's resources were limited?

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### Tarantulas

If you don't like spiders, the tarantula will make your hair stand on end. Tarantulas are the largest of all the spiders and truly frightening to look at. A tarantula's body can be three inches long, and each leg can be up to five inches long, for an overall span of 10 inches or more. Moreover, they have fearsome-looking fangs that inject poisonous venom into their prey. In reality, though, tarantulas aren't really dangerous to people. They can deliver a painful bite, but their poison isn't very strong, weaker in fact than that of a bee.



- 3 Summarize "Tarantulas" with the following graphic organizer.

↓ Don't forget this! ↓

Main Idea: _____		
Important detail:	Important detail:	Important detail:

- 4 Is it an important detail that a tarantula will make your hair stand on end? Why or why not? (2)

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### Hester's Campaign

Hester had always wanted to serve as class president, but whenever there was an election, she only got one vote, her own. She decided she wasn't going to be ignored this time, so she planned a campaign like no one had ever run before. She made posters and splashed them all over school. She spoke up in class whenever she could to make sure everyone knew she had great ideas. When election day rolled around, she was confident her hard work would pay off, and it did. She didn't win the election, but she could boast that she came in a strong second.

- 5 Use the following graphic organizer to summarize the main idea and important details in "Hester's Campaign."

<b>Main Idea:</b>		
<b>Important detail:</b>	<b>Important detail:</b>	<b>Important detail:</b>

- 6 Work with a partner. Think of another detail you could add to "Hester's Campaign" that would support the main idea.

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