

ReadWriteThink Lesson Plan: GIST: A Summarizing Strategy for Use in Any Content Area

Author :Che-Mai Gray, Marysville, Washington

Grade Band 6-8

Estimated Lesson Time : Five to seven 30-minute sessions

Overview

In this series of lessons, students read newspaper articles obtained from newspaper websites. Students then identify journalism's "5Ws and H" (who, what, where, when, why, and how) and complete a template with the corresponding information they have found in the article. Finally, students use their notes to write a 20-word summary called a GIST. Once students have mastered writing a GIST using newspaper articles, the strategy is then applied to content area texts to support comprehension and summarizing skills.

From Theory to Practice; Rhoder, C. (2002). Mindful reading: Strategy training that facilitates transfer. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 45, 498–512.

All students benefit from strategy instruction. Too many strategies taught in a short amount of time do not lead to transfer or independent performance of the strategy because students are not able to practice before applying them to content. Therefore, students should learn one or two strategies to allow for transfer.

Students need to learn a reading strategy out of context of the content area in order to effectively assimilate the strategy. Once students no longer need scaffolding using the strategy, application to content area is possible.

The model for strategy instruction is direct instruction, practice using curriculum-free materials, and application to curriculum.

Student Objectives

Students will

- learn and practice the GIST summarizing strategy
- apply the GIST strategy to content area-reading assignments

Resources

GIST Template

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: Reading Lesson Plans website provides a description of the GIST strategy. It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with this strategy before beginning the lesson.

2. Preview and obtain a list of Internet addresses for newspaper websites appropriate for your students' needs.

You may suggest local newspaper websites combined with some national and international sites. For example, students in the U.S. state of Washington were

provided with Internet addresses for HeraldNet, The Seattle Times, Bogota Daily, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and Times Online.

3. Familiarize students with how to locate newspaper websites on the Internet and how to use website search tools.

4. Prepare samples of news articles and copies of the blank GIST Template document for use with an overhead projector.

5. The GIST Template may be printed and distributed to students. You may also offer students the option of accessing and filling out the GIST Template online while researching information on the newspaper websites. You will need to bookmark the electronic GIST Template document on the computers students will be using. Skilled users may easily switch between a newspaper webpage and the template.

Instruction and Activities

Session 1. Introduction and Modelling

First, discuss with students what a GIST is and why it is a useful strategy. Often, one or two students will have heard the term before and the class will deduce that it means the process of summarizing information.

Next, model the GIST process using a high-interest newspaper article. Stories that have recently been in the news are the most engaging. You may wish to use an overhead projector to allow the whole class to read and discuss sample articles together.

Have students read the article along with you, and using the overhead projector, together fill in the "5Ws and H"—who, what, where, when, why, and how—on the GIST Template. Then ask students to try writing their own summaries, or GISTs, while you write your own.

Next, share your GIST with the class and ask students to share theirs.

Session 2. Review and Assessment of Progress

Begin by reviewing what a GIST is and the purpose it serves. Then, provide students with an article and have them read along while it is read aloud. Have students work with partners to fill in the 5Ws and H and write GISTs about the article.

While they work, you may wish to display the article using the overhead projector and informally assess student process by walking around the room to observe students and offer assistance.

Finally, share your GIST and ask students to share what they have written.

[NOTE: If students need additional time to master the concept, repeat Session 2 with a new article before moving on to Session 3.]

Session 3. Introduction to Computer Research

Introduce students to using computers to access information they will use to complete the GIST Template.

Give students a specific website article to begin with so everyone is using the same material. If you choose to have students access and complete the GIST Template on the computer, review the process of how to open the online GIST Template and move between the two website screens.

Allow students to familiarize themselves with the activities, and monitor and help them as necessary.

Session 4. Independent Student Research

Tell students that they are now on their own and that they are to work independently to research information and complete the template. Have each student choose a news article using the list of newspaper websites. Tell students that the article must be at least five paragraphs long and must not be an editorial or opinion piece.

Then, allow students to work on their own. Instruct each student to print both the article and the completed GIST Template, staple them together, and turn them in. Assess their work to see if students are ready to move on to applying the strategy to class texts.

[NOTE: If students are not yet ready to move on to the next step, repeat Session 4, helping those that need further instruction. It is very important that this strategy is mastered before it is applied to a content area.]

Session 5. Application of GIST Strategy to Content Areas

Tell students that they will now apply the GIST strategy to classroom work. First, discuss how the GIST would be most helpful. Write students' suggestions on the board. Then, give students a content area selection to be read. Examples might include a fiction excerpt from a novel or short story or a section from a content area text. One positive aspect of this strategy is that it is applicable to any area. Students may complete the GIST either on the computer or on paper.

Extensions

Students may also provide responses to the articles to support further learning. For example, they can write about how the article makes them think and feel. Students can also write about possible solutions to a problem or situation that the article may pose.

Students may use any of the following website activities to further their knowledge of the subject matter, and may research additional resources on their own.

ReadWriteThink lesson, "Research Building Blocks: Notes, Quotes, and Fact Fragments": Students can use this lesson to apply and practice finding the 5Ws and H in this fact-finding activity.

NationalGeographic.com: Students who have mastered the GIST technique could begin exploring science- and social studies-related articles and complete GISTs on those articles. This site also has numerous student-friendly, educational games for students to complete that support middle-level content areas.

Student Assessment/Reflections

Teacher observation and anecdotal notes:

Observe students in class during their research and writing time, and assess students' progress from answers elicited during class sharing and discussions.

Assess students' application of the GIST strategy in appropriate situations and for use during content area assignments.

Assessment of written student responses. GISTs are teacher-scored on a 1-4 scale (as per Washington state WASL grading scale):

Grade 4: Assigned to a GIST that goes above and beyond giving the reader a clear vision of the article and is written in a higher-level manner

Grade 3: Average grade given to a GIST that addresses the 5Ws and H in sentence form and accurately reflects the article read

Grade 2: Represents a GIST that either addresses the 5Ws and H or is a semi-accurate summary written in sentence form

Grade 1: Representative of not understanding the assignment and using single words rather than complete sentences

Students could assess themselves and their peers by sharing articles and GISTs. Students read the article first and then read the GIST to see if it accurately reflects the article.

IRA/NCTE Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfilment. Among these texts are fiction and non-fiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

GIST Template

Name _____

Article Title _____

Article Source _____

1. Read the article.

2. Fill out the 5Ws and H.

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why:

How:

3. Write a 20-word GIST.

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____