

Writing a Strong Summary on a Story

Essential Questions

How do we summarize a short story?

Why is it important to summarize a short story?

One Effective Strategy for Summarizing a Short Story

There are the five elements of a story:

- Character
- Setting
- Conflict
- Resolution
- Plot

Writing a summary of a short story, we need to cover these elements and make explicit in our own words what happened relative to these five elements of a story.

The following process is a great strategy to do this:

1. Write a few sentences – in your own words – stating the main message or gist of the story.
2. Write a few sentences about the setting of the story in the context of the story.
3. Write a few sentences about the main characters in the context of the story.
4. Write a few sentences about the conflict of the story in the context of the story.
5. Write several sentences to summarize the sequence of events using transitions effectively:

First, ... Then, ... Next, Finally, ...

6. Write a few sentences about how the conflict was resolved.
7. Write a few sentences restating the message or gist of the story that began the summary, but this time doing it in a slightly different way with the aim of bringing closure to the summary.

When we use a structured outline to summarize in this way, for each short story we read, this way of thinking soon becomes a habit of mind.

This strategy aims to grow a learner's ability to readily make explicit in their own words what happened in a short story, while intentionally covering the essential literary elements of a story.