

Gisting

Description

A technique to help students to read text for main ideas by summarizing selected sections into 20 clear, concise words.

Purpose

This activity helps students to focus on the main ideas in a text or informational piece of reading. Students summarize information and answer key questions about the reading. This activity helps students decide what is important and what is not important in an article or textbook selection. It can also help them to use concise and precise sentences as well as help develop their vocabulary. But importantly it helps students to learn the content and main ideas in the readings.

Connection to Inquiry and Standards:

Students must communicate information with the relevant and important details or ideas. Students select the information, which gives the best explanation for the text. It also addresses the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Standards (1.2) Read and understands essential content of informational texts and analyze text for information.

Materials

Selected reading, Paper (you can make a template of 4 rows of 5 lines for a total of 20 words to help guide the students.) Short nonfiction passages of no more than 10 paragraphs.

Procedure

Select 4-5 paragraphs from an article or text. Place the selection or article on an overhead. Read the textbook selection or article aloud to the students. After the article is read explain how to get the gist of the article. Even though the entire article has been read they are to pretend they only know the information in the first paragraph. Later the students know the information in the first and second paragraphs. Still later they are to pretend they know the information in the first, second and third paragraphs. And still later the information in all four paragraphs.

Gisting involves the following:

Have the students draw 20 blanks on their paper. Cover the article so only the first paragraph is visible. Read the paragraph aloud. Point out the focus of the article or textbook selection. Students and teachers are to summarize the first paragraph in no more than or no less than 20 words. The students are to decide what is important to keep and what is not important to keep. Practice asking key questions to start examining the information. Always begin the first sentence of the gist with who/ and or what in the article or textbook selection. Note information that is repeated. Identify a main idea. After the paragraph is "gisted" or summarized the teacher reads the second paragraph, while students follow along. The students draw 20 more blanks on their paper and summarize the first and second paragraphs. The same process is continued with the third and fourth paragraphs. Students should summarize all four paragraphs in 20 words.

Resources

Cooper, David. (1993). Literacy helping Children Construct Meaning. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Name _____

Gisting for: _____

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 1 & 2

Paragraph 1, 2, & 3
