

## Lesson Skill: Summarizing fiction

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### Strand Reading--fiction

**SOL** 4.5  
5.5  
6.5

### Materials

- None

### Lesson

1. Begin by retelling or reading aloud a story that is likely to be familiar to the students. Fairy tales and folk tales, such as *Cinderella*, work well for this activity and are readily available online.
2. Tell students that instead of retelling the story, the class is going to work together to *summarize* it. Solicit input from students about how the summary is going to be different from the retelling.
3. Lead students in determining which elements of the story must be, could be, and probably should not be included in the summary. List these on the board. Invite discussion, and indicate on the board any disagreements and the reasons students give.
4. Divide students into groups of three or four, and instruct each group to write a summary of the story. Give them a word or sentence limit, such as six sentences or 75 words. As groups work, circulate to assist as needed.
5. When groups are finished, tell them to summarize the story again, but this time, the word or sentence limit is *half* what it was before. Tell them to start over instead of just cutting words or sentences out of their first summary.
6. When groups are finished, review the activity with the class. Ask students to identify some of the things they left out of the shorter summary, as well as the elements that they kept in both summaries. Have some groups read their summaries, and have the class discuss the similarities and differences between them.
7. Use this discussion as a springboard to discuss and list the necessary elements in an effective summary of narrative text.
8. If time allows, have the groups use the elements from the class list to write a summary of a different well-known story.