Lesson 8
Determining the Central Message

Learning Target
Use the key details and events of a story to figure out the central message, or lesson, that the author wants to share with readers.

Read
Many stories have a central message, or lesson, the author wants to share. The story teaches the lesson through the characters, the events that happen, and what the characters learn.

As you read, looking for the key details will help you to find the central message and understand what you read.

Look at the cartoon. Think about a lesson the boy learns by the end.

Don't let go of me!

I can do it!
Think  The events in the cartoon tell about a problem the boy has and what he does. Complete the chart by adding the key details. Use those details to figure out the central message of the cartoon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Detail</th>
<th>Key Detail</th>
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What Is the Central Message?

Talk  Using the key details in the chart, talk about the central message of the cartoon.

Academic Talk
Use these phrases to talk about the text.
- central message  key details
The Girl and the Apples
by Tala Rutzel

1. One fall afternoon, a girl went to a farm to pick apples. She was in a hurry, so she picked carelessly both ripe apples and unripe ones. When she finished, her wagon was filled with a small mountain of apples.

2. The girl asked the farmer, "Quick, tell me how long you think it will take me to get back home.”

3. The farmer thought carefully. Then he said, "Be patient. If you go slowly, you will be back soon. If you go fast, you will not get back until night. It's your choice.”

4. The girl thought, "How can that be? How can it take so long if I go fast?”

5. The girl wanted to get back home as soon as possible, so she rushed her horse and wagon onto the road. She made her horse walk very fast.

6. And suddenly ... bump! Off fell some apples.

7. Every time she hit a bump, more apples rolled off her wagon. Then she had to stop and put them back on the wagon. Because of all the delays, it was night before she got home.

Close Reader Habits

Underline key details that help you figure out the central message.
Explore

How can key details help you figure out what lesson the girl in the story learns?

1. Complete the chart by writing some key details about what the characters say and do. Then write the central message, or lesson.

   Key Details (the Girl)

   Key Details (the Farmer)

   What Is the Central Message?

2. Think about the message of the story. Talk about what the girl learned.

Write

3. Short Response  What is another lesson the girl might learn from what happened? Use the space provided on page 14 to write your answer.

   What might the girl think about the farmer's advice by the end of the story?
Write  Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 13.

The Girl and the Apples

3 Short Response  What is another lesson the girl might learn from what happened?

HINT What might the girl think about the farmer’s advice by the end of the story?

Don’t forget to check your writing.
Tools for Instruction

From Retelling to Summarizing

To retell a story, students recall details or events in order. Summarizing also requires students to recall, but it involves greater understanding of the importance of particular events or details. To summarize, students tie together key events and details to form concise statements. Provide practice with this skill by modeling how to consolidate and categorize—for example, replacing *pencils, paper, notebooks, folders* with the general term *school supplies*. This skill is central to summarizing, and helps students learn how to eliminate unimportant information and capture the main idea from what remains.

**Step by Step** 30–45 minutes

1. **Introduce and explain summarizing.**
   - Introduce summarizing by connecting it to retelling, a skill students have already learned to do. Say, *When you retell a story, you tell details and events in the order they happened.*
   - Demonstrate a retelling by recounting the details from a classroom activity that took place earlier in the day.

   *This morning I had you all sit on the rug for our morning meeting. We sat in a circle, and we talked about today’s weather, and Josh asked a question about snowflakes. Then we talked about the book that we were going to read during story time, and Marissa and Evan shared stories that were related to the topic of the book.*

   - Then say, *You can use what you know about retelling to summarize. When you summarize, you tell about the details, just like with retelling. But you make it much shorter by only telling the most important details.*
   - Use the same information from the retelling to summarize.

   *This morning we gathered for our morning meeting. We talked about today’s weather and about the book that we were going to read later on at story time.*

2. **Model summarizing text.**
   - Say, *Summarizing is a good way to remember what you read. Let’s summarize a story together.* Then read aloud a story, such as *A Bargain for Frances*, by Russell Hoban.
   - As you read, pause occasionally to model how you summarize.

   *Frances is on her way to Thelma’s, and she is taking her dolls. She sings a silly song along the way. These are interesting details, but I’m not sure I need to remember them all. Since they’re all about Frances going to Thelma’s, I can summarize these two pages like this: Frances is going to play at Thelma’s.*

   - Record and display summary statements as you generate them.

**Support English Learners** Summarizing requires that students understand how ideas and details are connected, which requires some background knowledge. Try to select texts that match students’ background knowledge, and fill in gaps as needed.
Provide guided practice with summarizing text.
- Continue reading, and pause to engage students in summarizing with you. Focus attention on specific summarizing skills, such as combining related information.

  Thelma offers to sell Frances her cups and saucers, sugar bowl, cream pitcher, and teapot. This is a long list to remember! When readers summarize, they think about how lists like this are related. Think about how these things Thelma is selling are alike. What is a name we can give them? (tea set) So how can we summarize this page? (Thelma offers to sell Frances her tea set.)

- Continue to record summary statements.
- When you have finished reading, read the summary statements in order for a summary of the entire story.

Provide repeated practice with summarizing text.
- Use additional read alouds to provide frequent practice with summarizing.
- Provide these question prompts to help students transfer summarizing to independent reading.

  - What are the most important things about ____________?
  - What’s interesting about ____________, but not so important?
  - Can you think of one word to describe ____________, ____________, and ____________?
  - What is a shorter way to tell what happened when ____________?

Connect to Writing Have students divide a sheet of paper into as many boxes as chapters in the book, or into three sections for beginning, middle, and end. As they read independently or listen to read alouds, have students draw and/or write the most important ideas, one per box.

Check for Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you observe...</th>
<th>Then try...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>difficulty distinguishing important ideas and details</td>
<td>using stories from the day to provide practice. Revisit a recent class activity. Provide two details, and have students think about which is more important. As the student demonstrates understanding, transfer the process to practicing with a story or poem.</td>
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<td>difficulty determining how ideas or events in a story can be condensed</td>
<td>using relatable examples. You might say, What’s another way to tell what’s happening when students tidy up their desks, put on their jackets, and line up by the door? (It’s time to go home.) Relate this to combining events in a story.</td>
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Sharing the Crops

Once a farmer rented some land. “How much does it cost to use this land?” the farmer asked the landowner.

The owner wanted to get the better part of the deal. So he said, “I'll take the top half of the crop, and you can take the bottom half.”

But the farmer was clever. He planted potatoes because they grow in the ground. At harvest time, he gave the owner the potato tops, which are not good for anything.

The owner knew he had been outsmarted. He said, “Next year, I want the bottom half of your crops.”

So the next year the farmer planted oats, which grow at the top of long grasses. The bottom half is useless grassy straw. That’s what the farmer gave to the owner.

This time the owner said, “Next year, I’ll take the top and the bottom. You can have the middle.”

So this time, the farmer planted corn. At the top of each corn stalk are tassels. At the bottom are woody stalks. In the middle is where the tasty sweet corn grows.

For a third time, the owner had been outsmarted. Now it was the farmer’s turn to suggest a deal. “From now on,” he said, “why don’t you take half of whatever I grow? Whatever I get, you will get the same.”

This was a fair deal at last. From that day on, the owner and the farmer shared the crops equally.
Think

1. This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

   Part A
   What is the central message of “Sharing the Crops”?
   A. It is wrong to try to cheat others.
   B. Never make a deal with a clever farmer.
   C. The best part of a crop is usually at the top.
   D. If a plan doesn’t succeed, keep trying.

   Part B
   Which sentence from the story best supports the answer you chose for Part A above?
   A. “Once a farmer rented some land.”
   B. “The owner wanted to get the better part of the deal.”
   C. “This was a fair deal at last.”
   D. “So this time, the farmer planted corn.”

Talk

2. Using key details from the text, talk to your partner about how the farmer outsmarts the landowner.

Write

3. Short Response   Explain which character in “Sharing the Crops” learns a lesson. Use one detail from the folktale to support your response. Use the space provided on page 19 to write your answer.

   HINT: Reread to look for the character who learns a lesson.
Sharing the Crops

3 Short Response Explain which character in “Sharing the Crops” learns a lesson. Use one detail from the folktale to support your response.

HINT Reread to look for the character who learns a lesson.

Check Your Writing
- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?
**Lesson 31**

**Real-Life Connections**

**Introduction** When reading, you can connect the words on the page to your own life or to the wider world. Connecting words with real-life events can make their meaning clearer.

- What do you think of when you read the word *friendly*? You might remember a time when a friendly classmate smiled at you.

  A friendly classmate smiled and said, “Hi.”

- When you think about the word *friendly*, you might also remember what friendly people and animals in your town or city have done.

  A friendly lady in town gives neighbors vegetables from her garden.

  Friendly dogs wag their tails and want to be patted.

**Guided Practice** Circle the correct words to complete each sentence. Then work with a partner to think of more ways to complete each sentence.

**HINT** To help think of more ways to complete each sentence, ask your partner questions like these.

- When were you helpful?
- What do you do when you are curious about something?

1. A helpful person might ______.
   - do chores
   - break a glass
   - trip and fall

2. If a person is curious, she might ______.
   - go to sleep
   - read a book
   - wrap a gift

3. It would be selfish to ______.
   - take all the toys
   - give presents
   - help others

4. A student could interrupt a class by ______.
   - writing a story
   - doing math
   - talking loudly
Independent Practice

For numbers 1–5, choose the correct answer to each question.

1 How might a patient person act?
   A tell a friend to hurry up
   B run to be first in line
   C refuse to wait for someone
   D teach a baby something new

2 What might a stubborn person say?
   A "I like this new food after all."
   B "I won't eat that even if it's good for me."
   C "I agree with you about that."
   D "I'll stay home because you need my help."

3 What might a generous person do?
   A help a friend with homework
   B eat candy without sharing
   C disobey his parents
   D scare a friend's dog

4 How might someone cause confusion?
   A by solving a problem
   B by telling the truth
   C by giving poor directions
   D by speaking clearly

5 What is a rude thing to do?
   A invite a friend to a party
   B talk while others are talking
   C offer to wash the dishes
   D help a neighbor plant a garden