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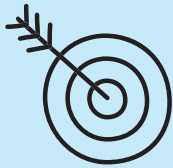
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The Book of Literacy Tasks, Grades K-8 by Nancy
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WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

You might offer this task when students (or teacher reading aloud) are reading a text that takes more than one day to read.



TARGET

Summarizing one really important point from previously read material.

My husband and I chuckle when we watch the evening news and each night it begins with a graphic “breaking news” and the newscaster’s expression making it seem like it was seconds ago that he learned of it. It’s as if to say, this is fresh! Newer than the news on your smart phone! Of course, new news continues to break all night—right up to when we go to sleep—over our Facebook Feeds or whatever. But call me old fashioned, if I hear about a world event or a favorite actor who has died or even some feel-good story about a washed-up whale who was successfully sent back to sea, I relish reading the account in the newspaper the next morning too. It helps me recall it and reflect on it. This task helps learners use the news story in a similar manner.

Your Instructional Playbook

Name It: In this task, you will write a news story to another student explaining the most important points to know from the text read the day before.

What You Might Say Next: “Check out this news story I found in our local paper. (Read it to the class.) The news tells us all sorts of things that happened, usually the day before, because it takes about one day for the reporter to write the story up and the paper to be printed and delivered or posted online before we see it. The news keeps up-to-date on our town, our country, and our world. We are going to stay up-to-date with our reading in class by writing news stories about what we read so we can reflect and others can learn.”

Typical Successes

Teaching chart of news stories that are class written on different texts.

Model/Do Together: Bring in short news stories—local newsfeeds provide a plethora of news you can download and share in class. For example, in the news today (Associated Press, 2017) is an article about seven Earth-side planets orbiting a star. It starts like this (see text, next page).

Not Quite There Yet! This student’s news story is from a classroom-level reader about a dog. It is not quite on point yet is a good example of giving this task a try.

Alert! Lost Dog Boy finds lost dog after posting picture around town. It is a good day today for a boy who loves a German shepherd. Peter’s dog was returned to him after a neighbor saw the posters Peter had put up all over town looking for the lost dog. Peter is happy again, and the neighbor feels good for doing the right thing.



For the first time, astronomers have discovered seven Earth-size planets orbiting a single nearby star—and these new worlds could hold life.

This cluster of planets is less than 40 light-years away in the constellation Aquarius, according to NASA and the Belgian-led research team who announced the discovery Wednesday.

The planets circle tightly around a dim dwarf star called Trappist-1, barely the size of Jupiter. Three are in the so-called habitable zone, the area around a star where water and, possibly life, might exist. The others are right on the doorstep.

Next, model writing a short, one-paragraph news story or newscast about this newsclip (which is actually much longer; I am using a short text here to illustrate). *Seven Earth-size planets found in a galaxy far away. They might have life on three planets.*

Practice creating short news stories with the students so they get the idea before you jump into creating news stories about books and texts students are reading in class.

Jump into creating news stories about the text read the day before to jog students' memories about what they read. It is fine to refer back to the text as needed for support, but the more you can write the news story from memory, the better. At first, work with students and do this together, then once students have worked with you a few times to write up news stories, have them write up their own news stories. The stories can be really short—the key is to have the students have fun with showing their understanding of the text.

Tweak: When students are reading their own texts and stories and are ready to write news stories on their own, they can compare with a partner to see how accurate they are in their memory or portrayal of the text and make revisions if necessary.

Release: If students had not referred to the text to write the news story, have them check what they wrote against the text for accuracy. Share thinking and possible revisions with the class. The key here is the *reflection*. You want your students to reflect on what they read, write it up, and then reflect on their writing to see how well they remember what they read.

Watch Fors and Work Arouns

The news story is not short; it is a retelling of almost all details in the text. Students can get confused about picking out important points to share and a retelling. Sometimes they think, the more detail the better. But in a news story, we don't want a retelling; the highlights are what is important. It won't help your students grow in their thinking if you take over, cross out what they don't need, and tell them to rewrite the news story. Instead, talk the students through the thinking. Ask them to identify one to three important points, circle those, and then recheck. Are these the most important ones you want to pick? Then, have the students redo the news story so they can feel the success of a short news story. Remember, students don't have to write what you think is important, they need to write what they think is important.



“Yet if we uncrumple that paper, the one with all the spelling errors and run-on sentences, what do we see? A boy writing about fishing trip with his dad, his language so vivid we can see the two of them on the lake, the trout flashing in the sunlight, the boy leaning forward earnestly his father talks.”

—Adair Lara
(1999, p. 11)

