

Student Notes on How to Break Down a News Article

This lesson focuses on how to read and summarize informational or nonfiction text. You can watch the entire lesson in the video, “Lesson on How to Break Down a News Article” located in the sidebar of your teacher’s website.

1. First read through the article one time. Read to enjoy.
2. Next, number each paragraph. Now you have the article mapped out and you can easily locate info throughout the article.
3. Highlight words you don’t know or words you think the audience may not know. Look them up and write down the definition that best matches the context.
4. Examine how the article is organized. Notice that the paragraphs are very short. That is typical of a news article (formatted like news reporting- short clips of information.) This does not mean that there isn’t a lot of information.
5. Many times the author groups paragraphs together by a common theme or central idea. You are going to look for these central ideas.
6. Read through the article a second time. As you are reading, notice which paragraphs are about the same central idea and write a post-it with the information. You should have several post-its notes completed for your article. (The teacher’s 2½ page model article had 25 paragraphs that were summarized into 7 post-its.)
7. Here is the format to follow for each post-it note: Upper right hand corner is the paragraph #s. Box to the right is the central idea. Below bullet the supporting details- short phrases, not entire sentences. You may not use all these details in your speech, but you’ll decide that later. Right now you are just summarizing.
8. Continue summarizing on the post-its through the rest of the article.
9. Now you have mapped out your article with post its and can easily read and find information to write the summary.
10. The last thing you want to do is look for quotes that you might use for your presentation. You need to use at least one quote in your speech. Quotes give the author a voice and help the audience understand the author’s perspective.
11. At the end of your article, put a post-it with the paragraph # of possible quotes. Do not write out the entire quotes- some of them can be too long for a post-it. You will write the entire quote out later on the organizer after your summary.
12. Now you need to write the summary of the article on the organizer.
13. First you will describe the news event in one sentence
14. Next write in the article information.
15. Then determine 2 central ideas and explain them. Now that the article has been mapped out on post-its, look through your post-its and choose 2 that you think are important central ideas for your audience to know.
16. From these 2 post-its, you can write a summary. Write one RRSSSC paragraph for each central idea plus the supporting details.
17. On the bottom of the page, write out the entire quotes that you may use in your speech.

So easy and efficient- 2 central ideas from article 1, 2 central ideas from article 2, 2 central ideas from your video and you have 6 central ideas from which to come up with your triad, the three talking points for your presentation.

This lesson showed you an easy, efficient way to analyze, organize, and summarize informational text. If you’d like to review the steps again, the video of this lesson is available on your teacher’s website.