

### Summarizing and Synthesizing Informational Text

**Purpose:** \*\*To introduce students to a framework for choosing information to include in a summary

\*\*To compare and contrast pieces of information to synthesize that information

**Introduction:** When you take notes or write a report, you often have to combine information from several sources. Putting ideas together to come up with an original idea is called synthesizing. This is especially important when you read articles on the same topic for history or science class.

**STEP 1: Model:** Present a three-column chart labeled with “Topic”, “Fascinating Facts”, and “My Thoughts”. Read an informational piece like “Iceman: Mummy from the Stone Age” from Discovery Channel.com. Think aloud and take notes on chart paper using the labeled columns. Be sure to include a couple thoughts in the third column.

**Guided Practice:** Read another article together (“The Iceman Ate-eth Meat” by Jessa Netting) and elicit suggestions from the students for items to be placed on a second piece of labeled chart paper.

**Individual Practice:** Students read a third short article on the same topic (“Iceman of the Alps” by Richard Boudreaux). They fill in their own chart with information gleaned from the article. Using group share, a third chart of information is created.

**Low Ability:** Students may choose to read independently or with a partner. Even if they identify the same ideas, each should fill out a chart.

**STEP 2: Model:** Use colored markers to underline contrasting ideas from one article to the next in one color, and circle the ideas that are similar in another color. Sketch a simple outline to organize and rank the thoughts. Craft a statement of generalization or realization from the topic sections of the charts. Then elaborate with information that you compare and contrast from the “fascinating facts”. Finally, turn to the “thoughts” column for the concluding remarks to finish a summary that synthesizes the information.

**Guided Practice:** Handout another information piece on a new topic (“A Hill Reveals Its Secrets” by R. Anthony Kugler). Handout a blank chart with the three columns labeled. Read the article aloud pausing at the end of pre-identified sections of the article. Pause each time you know there is information they should include. When finished with the article, verify that their notes and ideas are adequate and fairly accurate. They may work in pairs to write a summary of the article as directed in Step 1.

**Individual Practice:** Hand out two more short articles on the same topic (“D.H. Lawrence at Tarquinia” by R. Anthony Kugler and “Protecting the Past” by R. Anthony Kugler). They read each and complete a chart for each one. Then they write a paragraph summarizing and synthesizing those articles.

**Low Ability:** These students read one of the articles and take notes. Notes are checked before they summarize. They use the information in the columns as a framework for writing the summary. Essentially they expand their notes into sentences.

**Middle Ability:** These students read both articles and synthesize information from both in their summary.

**High Ability:** These students read the two articles and synthesize the information from all three articles in their summary of the information on that topic.