

Reading Toolkit: Grade 7 Objective 2.A.4.c

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 4. Analyze important ideas and messages in informational text

Objective c. State and support main ideas and messages

Assessment Limits:

The whole text or a portion of the text

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- Tackling the Trash
- A Lifeline for Lions

Lesson Seeds

Reading Grade 7 Objective 2.A.4.c

Activities

- Provide students with informational text/s. Explain to students that they are able to better understand an author's most significant points in written text by identifying the main idea of each paragraph. As students read their individual texts, they are instructed to underline the main ideas or supporting details of at least four different paragraphs. Classroom discussion should lead them to the following conclusions: The main idea may be stated at the beginning, middle, or end of the paragraph. It may also not be directly stated, but suggested by details.
- Provide students an informational passage from which all subheadings have been removed and replaced with numbers. Have students read each section and write a subheading that captures the main idea of that section. Share the subheadings with the entire class to determine their accuracy or appropriateness.
- Teacher will provide students with an informational passage. Before reading provide students with the topic of the text's message. As students read, they should highlight, post note, or record any information relating to the topic. Once reading is complete, discuss with students everything the author says about the topic. From this information conclude the author's message.
- Read an informational passage. After reading is complete, show students a list of statements drawn from the passage which include statements of detail, example, main idea, and message. Have students categorize the statements according to their purpose. Share the results and discuss any conflicts to ensure understanding. Take message statement/s and return to the text to find supporting details.

Clarification

Reading Grade 7 Indicator 2.A.4

To show proficiency of the skills stated in this indicator, a reader will express an understanding of the key points or thoughts in the text, which are **the important ideas and messages**. These are sometimes directly stated in the text, but for more complex texts, a reader will determine the implied, important ideas and messages by synthesizing ideas across the text(s).

In order to understand important ideas or messages in a text, a reader should **determine the author's apparent purpose for writing**. The author's purpose, either implied or directly stated, is the main reason for the text. Most authors write to inform, persuade, or to express personal ideas relative to his or her selected topic. Authors write for different audiences; an author's intended audience should be apparent through the author's choice of topic, diction, organization, and graphic aids. Knowing these features and the intended audience for a text helps a reader determine a purpose for reading, which will enhance a reader's understanding of the text as a whole.

Once a reader understands an author's or text's purpose, he or she can speculate as to **how someone might use the text**. To do so, a reader explores the application of the text to personal or content-specific use. A critical reader applies the text for personal or content specific use and to determine issues and ideas within a text or across texts and their personal and societal implications.

The ability to **distinguish between facts and opinions** is a prerequisite reading skill for **identifying and explaining an author's argument, viewpoint, or perspective**. A fact can be defined as something that can be proven true while an opinion is a belief or feeling about a subject. Authors use a combination of facts and opinions in their writing, most often using facts to support their opinions. Once a reader can identify an author's opinion on a topic, the main idea or message can be more clearly understood. An author's opinion with the evidence, details, and examples used to support the opinion become the **author's argument, viewpoint, or perspective**.

When **stating and supporting main ideas and messages**, a reader must first identify the main idea of the text. To do so, a reader must identify the topic or subject of the text, which is often evident in the title or first paragraph(s) of an informational text. Then, after reading an entire text, a reader must identify the main point that the author/text makes about the topic or subject. The author's message is the same thing as the main idea; however, a message is usually present in more complex, subjective text. A message is often more author-centered, whereas a main idea is more text-centered. If the main idea or message is not directly stated in the text, a reader must use the details and information in the text to infer the main idea or message. A reader supports the main idea or message by using details from the text that relate to it and that help him/her understand the main idea. This process can be done for the entire text or for a small portion of text.

Summarizing or paraphrasing a text or a portion of a text is an essential skill for a reader when comprehending informational text. A reader is better able to determine the important ideas and messages in text if he/she is able to summarize it. To do so, a reader must state the main idea in his/her own words and then select only details from the text that contribute to the identified main idea. Paraphrasing, when a reader restates an idea in his or her own words, is a key step to summarizing a text. This can be done for a small portion of text, such as a paragraph, as well as for a chapter or the entire text.

Authors use details and examples in their writing to clarify, highlight, or enhance their ideas. A critical reader will be able to identify **information not related, or peripheral, to the main idea of a text**. Doing so will help a reader disregard redundant as well as extraneous information when summarizing the text or identifying the main idea or message. Especially for complex text, a reader may analyze the effect this extraneous information has on the main idea or message and make decisions or draw conclusions about why an author used that information. This skill is useful as readers develop their own opinions and ideas relative to a text.

When a reader compares and contrasts textual ideas, elements, and features within and across texts, he/she is **identifying relationships between and among ideas**. Authors also organize their ideas to show a sequence of ideas or to show cause and effect. Once a reader identifies a relationship that exists among ideas in a text, he/she can think more analytically about that relationship. A critical reader will also make **connections to prior knowledge**, which are the beliefs or background a reader brings to a text.

In order to **draw conclusions about and make generalizations from informational text**, a reader should first be able to state the main idea as well as to summarize a text. When a reader draws conclusions, he/she uses information from the text—such as the text patterns or text features—that can be either stated or implied. A reader makes a judgment or a decision that is new to him or her since it is not directly stated in the text. A conclusion or generalization is dependent on the information in a text but is external to it.

An ability **to connect text to prior knowledge or experience** helps a reader identify personally with a text. A reader identifies similarities between what is being described, explained, or narrated and what he or she has experienced, heard or read about. A critical reader forms opinions about the content within a text during and after reading and is then able to develop his or her own ideas about information from a text.

As readers have more experiences with these skills and with increasingly complex texts, their cognitive abilities will increase as well. Experienced readers will be able not only to determine a main idea or message, but also to develop skills at **analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating a main idea or message** by making connections to ideas and messages expressed in other texts or to their personal experiences.

Public Release #1 - Selected Response (SR) Item

Handout(s):

- Tackling The Trash
- Tackling The Trash

Reading Grade 7 Objective 2.A.4.c

Read "Tackling the Trash" and answer the following question. In what unit of study would you most likely read "Tackling the Trash"?

- A. Famous Young Americans
- B. America's Important Rivers
- C. People Who Make a Difference
- D. Towns Along the Mississippi

Correct Answer:

C

Public Release Item #2 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

Question

Read "Tackling the Trash" and answer the following question. Explain whether or not "Tackling the Trash" is an effective title for this article. Use information from the article in your explanation. Write your answer in your answer book.

Annotated Student Responses

The title "Tackling the trash" is an effective title for this article. This is because as you look at what he picked up, they were heavy, and more kept adding up. Also, "his crew battled mosquitoes and summer storms" showing he had a lot to tackle for doing the deed of picking up trash. He also had to find a way to tackle money problems when it came to picking up the trash. This is why "tackling the trash" is an effective title for the article. He had to fight many problems to clean the shore line.

Score for Sample Student Response #1: Rubric Score 3

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The student states the title is effective because Chad "had a lot to tackle." The student effectively uses text-relevant information to clarify this understanding: "(the trash) were heavy and more kept adding up," and "his crew battled mosquitoes and summer storms." The student uses text-relevant information to address the complexities of the text by including the fact that Chad not only worked hard to pick up trash but also "had to find a way to tackle money problems when it came to picking up the trash."

Tackling the trash is a good title for this article because that's what happen. In an effort to clean a river near his home Chad fights for funding of his project. And once funding end and other went down south cleaning up rivers.

Score for Sample Student Response #2: Rubric Score 2

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a general understanding of the text. The student uses text-relevant information to partially address the demands of the question: "In an effort to clean a river near his home Chad fights for funding of his project." The student lacks the support needed for a higher score.

"Tackling the Trash" is a very good title for this story. It tells what the story is going to be about. "he decided to tackle a few miles of shoreline." This title is perfect for this story.

Score for Sample Student Response #3: Rubric Score 1

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. The student uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text: "It tells what the story is going to be about. 'He decided to tackle a few miles of shoreline.'"

I think that tackling the trash is
a good title. To me, when I
read it I just feel reading the article
and while was reading did want to
stop.

Score for Sample Student Response #4: Rubric Score 0

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response is irrelevant to the question.

Sample Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

Question

Read the article 'A Lifeline for Lions' and answer the following question.

Explain whether the title helps a reader understand an important idea of this article. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation.

Annotated Student Responses

The title "A Lifeline for lions" does help the reader understand an important idea of this article. In the text it says that to help lions they would give dogs distemper shots. By helping the lions survive they are giving them a lifeline. That is why this title helps readers understand.

Annotation: The student connects the title to an important idea in the article, that the lions were given help to survive. As support, the student states that, "to help lions they would give dogs distemper shots." However, the connection between the distemper shots and the lions' survival is not explained.

Yes I do think that this
 title explains the main idea of
 the article. This is because
 "A lifeline for lions" clearly
 showed me that the the lions
 needed help^{and the} lions did
 need a "lifeline" to help them
 survive distemper. In the article
 it says that a ~~lifeline~~ was
 set up called lifeline.

Annotation: The student states that the title helps the reader understand an important idea in the article by stating that "the lions did need ...help [to] survive distemper." Although the student understands that the lions are in need of help, an explanation of how this help was given is lacking.

I think that the title helps a reader
understand the main idea of the article. I
think that the main idea is that lions
were dying and since people helped, they aren't
anymore. In the text, they call it Project
Lifelion, and that is almost what the title
is. Since they vaccinated the dogs, the
lion population has gone up, and I
think that the lifeline they are talking
about in the title was vaccinating the
dogs.

Annotation: The student addresses the question by stating that the title does help a reader understand the main idea of the article. The student identifies the main idea, "lions were dying and since people helped, they aren't anymore," and supports this statement by explaining that the lifeline for lions is the vaccination of the dogs. The student begins to address the complexity of the text by connecting the project's title, Project Lifelion, to the title of the article, A Lifeline for Lions. This connection also illustrates how the title helps a reader.

Handouts

Tackling The Trash

By Jill Esbaum

¹In May of 1997, Chad Pregracke came home from college for summer vacation. As usual, he was disgusted by the junk that littered the riverbanks of the Mississippi near his hometown of East Moline, Illinois. But this time, instead of wondering why someone else didn't clean it up, he decided to tackle a few miles of shoreline himself.

With only a flat-bottom boat, a wheelbarrow, and a sturdy pair of gloves, he motored up and down the river. Whenever he spotted trash, he pulled to shore and picked it up. When his boat was full, he took the load to a landfill. Chad even took pictures of the junk he hauled away. "I thought it might be fun to see how much I could pick up," he says.

³Soon the riverbanks near his hometown were litter-free. And Chad was hooked. "I really enjoyed it," he says. "I could see the results day after day. It made me feel good to help my community." So he kept going, sleeping under a tarp each night.

But Chad's money was disappearing fast. Food, gasoline for his boat, landfill charges, and film costs were gobbling up his resources. He wondered if others would help support his cleanup.

⁵First Chad talked to government agencies like the National Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. While happy about his work, they didn't have much money to donate.

So Chad called area businesses. He explained about growing up beside the river, the mess it had become, and his determination to clean it up. Most companies wouldn't help either. But finally one company decided to lend a hand. Chad got his first small grant and the encouragement he needed to find others to help as well.

⁷Chad began visiting other companies in person and found that his careful record keeping paid off. People couldn't help being impressed by his enthusiasm, or by the pictures of the junk he'd already hauled away. The next year, Chad received enough money to finish his summer's work with several volunteers to help him. In two years he raised enough money to buy two more boats and hire five helpers for the next summer.

In 1998, Chad's goal was to clean 1,000 miles of shoreline. Beginning in northern Iowa, he and his crew slowly worked their way south. Their final destination was St. Louis,

**What has Chad taken out of the rivers?
Here is a partial list of what he's pulled out as of July 2001.**

- 13 air conditioners
- 8 anchors
- 348 bottles of antifreeze
- 18 duck decoys
- 3 baby pools
- 968 buckets
- 287 refrigerators
- 1,109 55-gallon steel drums
- 27 bicycles
- 40 barbeque grills
- 430 feet of steel cable
- 90 boat bumpers
- 75 water heaters
- 307 chairs
- 171 coolers
- 2 swing sets
- 49 sinks
- 72 TV sets
- 55 life jackets
- 4,870 car tires
- 28 garbage cans
- 14,240 pounds of metal
- 223 milk crates
- 46 washing machines
- 56 stoves
- 350 propane tanks
- 28 toilets

Missouri. Along the way, Chad had to receive permission from each town to pile his junk in a parking lot or field. When he finished each area, he trucked the trash to the nearest landfill.

⁹As the hot summer wore on, the work became more difficult. The farther south they traveled, the more trash littered the shore. One mile of shoreline was so full of old tires, it took more than a month to clean—one small boatload at a time. Sheltered only by tents and tarps, Chad and his crew battled mosquitoes and summer storms. By summer's end, only Chad and one helper remained on the job. When cold weather forced them to stop, they were just fifty miles from St. Louis.

Chad didn't spend the winter months catching up on sleep. He needed to raise more than \$100,000. Part of the money would go toward finishing his work near St. Louis. The rest would fund his next project, cleaning the 270-mile shoreline of the Illinois River.

¹¹Chad also traveled from town to town. He spoke at schools, churches, and town halls. He shared his story with community groups, conservation clubs, and Scout troops. He asked them to help keep the river clean.

People were eager to help. Someone even offered him a used houseboat for free. There was only one catch: it was resting on the muddy bottom of the Illinois River. "It was a real mess," Chad remembers. "The most totally trashed thing you've seen in your life."

¹³After a lot of repair work and elbow grease, The Miracle became the crew's floating home and headquarters—a big step up from tents and tarps.

In 2000, Chad began hosting community-wide cleanup days in cities along the Mississippi. "I want to get as many people involved as possible," he says.

A Lifeline for Lions

By Pamela S. Turner

All over the Serengeti, the lions were in trouble.

Tourists in a hot-air balloon were the first to notice. As the tourists were flying low over the savannah, they spotted a big cat lying on the ground. This lion wasn't lazing around, as lions do when they are not hunting. It was shaking and shivering.

The tourists called the park veterinarian, Dr. Melody Roelke. She watched the lion, but didn't know what was wrong.

The Serengeti is a large wildlife park in Tanzania where no hunting is allowed. The Serengeti might seem like a safe place, but wild animals face dangers other than guns. In this case, the danger was disease.

Lions began to die all over the park. After ten days, it was clear something extraordinary was going on," says Dr. Craig Packer, a biologist at the University of Minnesota. He has studied lions for 25 years. "We had no idea what it was, and we were afraid we might never know."

Usually, veterinary science focuses on the kinds of animals that are most important to people—pets and livestock. Wildlife diseases are not well understood. Dr. Packer and Dr. Roelke sent blood and tissue samples from dead lions to experts in different countries. One expert was able to solve the mystery. The lions were dying of distemper, a disease commonly found in pet dogs.

Small but Deadly

Distemper is caused by a virus. (Viruses cause many diseases, including measles, polio, and the common cold.) Sometimes an animal's body can fight off the distemper virus.

But if it can't, the virus invades the animal's nervous system. Distemper can cause fever, shaking, and finally death.

In 1994, just before the distemper outbreak, there were an estimated three thousand lions in the Serengeti. "Over ninety percent of the Serengeti's lions were infected," says Dr. Packer. About one thousand lions died." Many other animals also died — leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, and bat-eared foxes.

How could a wild lion or leopard catch a disease from a pet? Serengeti National Park is huge—larger than the state of Connecticut—but there are farms and villages all around it. In those villages and on those farms are about thirty thousand dogs.

The disease is spread like a cold from dogs to wildlife. "We think hyenas are the key," says Dr. Packer. If a hyena looks for food in a village garbage dump, it may come into contact with an infected dog. Then the hyena may take distemper back into the park.

"Hyenas move over large distances and hang out around lions' kills," Dr. Packer says. From the hyenas, the distemper probably spread to lions and other animals.

Lion Lovers Respond

When people heard about the sick and dying lions, offers of help poured in from all over the world. Major funding came from the World Society for the Protection of Animals and several companies.

"We began vaccinating dogs around the Serengeti against distemper," says Dr. Packer. "That was the beginning of Project Lifelion."

Why vaccinate dogs instead of the lions themselves? "It is a lot easier to catch and vaccinate thirty thousand dogs than three thousand lions," explains Dr. Packer. "Many lions are very shy, and live in remote areas. And vaccinating lions would do nothing for the other animals at a risk—hyenas, leopards, wild dogs, and foxes."

Healthier Pets

Project Lifelion has been vaccinating dogs around the Serengeti since 1995. Before Project Lifelion, the Tanzanian Veterinary Service took care of cattle, goats, and sheep, but not pets. With funding from Project Lifelion, the veterinarians now offer free distemper shots for dogs. They also give rabies vaccinations. Although people can't catch distemper from dogs, they can get rabies.

"Local people are happy with the program," says Dr. Packer. We're saying, 'If you have a dog, let's make it a healthy dog.' We tell them it is for the lions, and that is OK, too. They know lions bring tourists and tourism brings jobs."

A Circle of Protection

Project Lifelion aims to encircle the Serengeti with a ring of vaccinated dogs. This should prevent any future distemper outbreaks. New dogs are born or move into the area every year, so Project Lifelion will need to continue as long as lions roam the Serengeti.

The lions are now doing well — very well. Only three years after the terrible distemper outbreak of 1994, the lion population had rebounded to three thousand. Today, there are about four thousand lions. "There seem to be more lions than ever," says Dr. Packer. "The Serengeti is still a rich and robust place."

Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant¹ information to clarify or extend understanding

Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant¹ information to show understanding

Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.²

Notes:

¹ Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

² An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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