

SUMMARIZING AND DETERMINING A THEME IN POETRY

**RL.4.2. Determine a theme of a story, drama,
or poem from details in the text; summarize
the text.**

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SUMMARIZING AND DISCOVERING A THEME IN POETRY

TEACHER NOTES

RL.4.2, Lessons 1–3

UNIT OVERVIEW

In this unit, students learn how to summarize a poem and determine its theme, using discussion and inductive reasoning to form their interpretations. You guide students through the poem using a variety of strategies, such as read-alouds, theme-scheme questions, and comprehension questions. These tools help students create a summary and interpret the poem's theme.

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students create a summary of the poem by determining its most important details. According to the research, students learn how to summarize by asking and answering questions about the text and deconstructing its structure. You guide students toward understanding the key details in the poem by modeling the comprehension strategies and conferring with students.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students categorize the words and images in the poem into provided topics. Students discuss how the words and images of the poem are significant and identify a lesson in the poem. According to research, students need to narrow down a text's significant details to derive thematic material. You ask students theme-scheme questions to help them organize the words and imagery, and you encourage students to internalize those questions through repetition.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, students identify the poem's theme by using imagery from the poem to visualize and connect details to the overall theme. Through drawing and discussion, students are able to construct a theme statement. You model asking and answering questions about the imagery and encourage students to think of examples of how the theme is demonstrated in the poem.

| Research Findings | Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities |
|--|---|
| Reading strategies, such as questioning and thinking aloud, provide a framework for students to summarize while they read. (Taylor, 1986) | Lesson 1 uses reading strategies and questions to break down the thinking process into comprehensible parts and help students understand key details. |
| Questions help students focus on significant information. When students develop and internalize questions, they are able to extract and organize important plot components. (Williams et al., 2002) | All lessons use a questioning process to determine the poem's theme. Students ask questions of the text and of peers to help them interpret what they read. |

| | |
|---|--|
| When readers create images related to a text, they form unique interpretations, clarify their thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance their understanding. (Miller, 2002) | In Lesson 3, students clarify their thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance their understanding of theme by creating images related to the poem. |
| Effective teachers serve as guides and facilitators, not as authorities; they do not impose their interpretations of the text on their students. (Williams et al., 2002) | In all lessons, you model strategies, scaffold skills, and facilitate peer-to-peer discussions to allow students to develop their own interpretations of the text. |
| Inductive learning is when teachers help students discover the relationships between the big ideas and key details in a text instead of giving students this information. (Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012) | In Lessons 2 and 3, students determine the relationships between the poem's words and images and between the words and images and the theme of the poem. |

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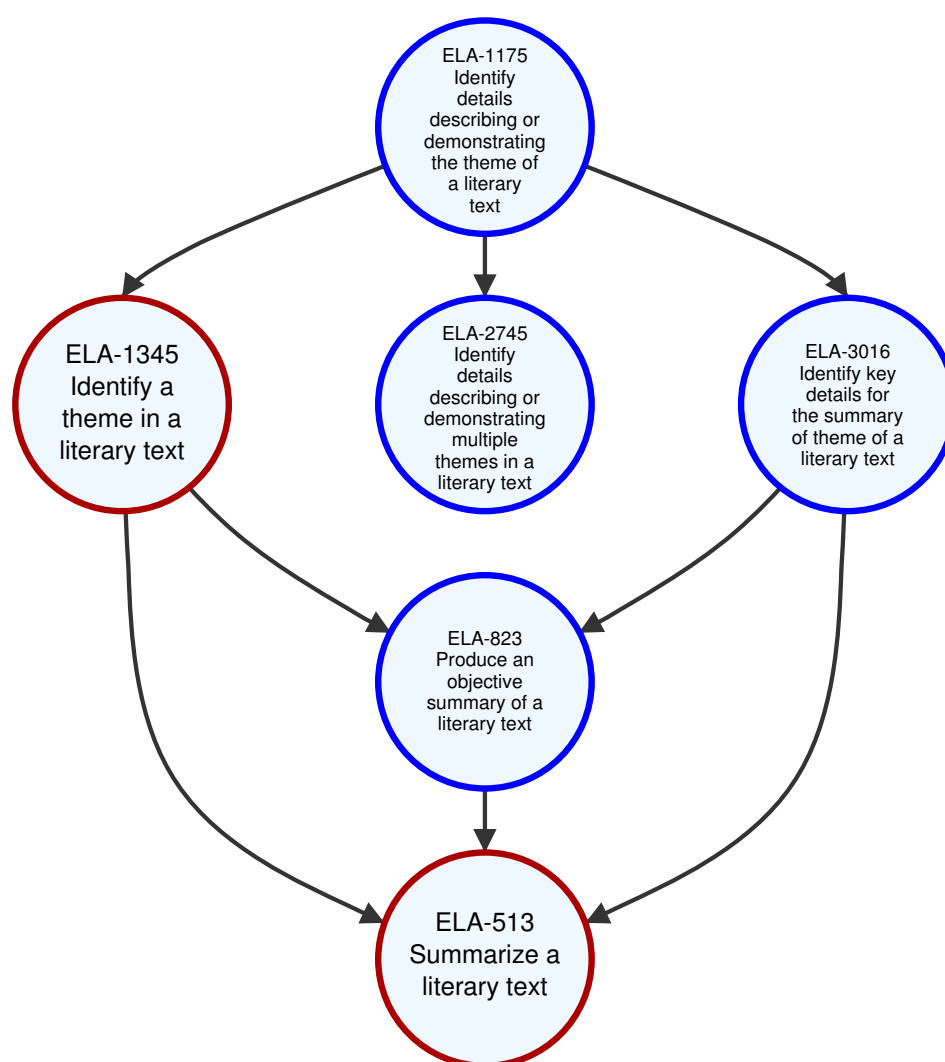
SUMMARIZING AND DISCOVERING A THEME IN POETRY

LEARNING MAP TOOL

RL.4.2

STANDARD

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.



**Learning map model for RL.4.2*

| Node ID | Node Name | Node Description |
|----------|---|---|
| ELA-513 | SUMMARIZE A LITERARY TEXT | Summarize a literary text, such as a story, poem, or drama, by including a short description of the characters, setting, character goals, events and actions, problem and solution, consequences, resolution, and possibly the lesson or moral. |
| ELA-823 | PRODUCE AN OBJECTIVE SUMMARY OF A LITERARY TEXT | Produce a summary of a story, drama, or poem that is free of personal feelings or opinions. |
| ELA-1175 | IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING THE THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT | Identify the words, phrases, and other details that describe or demonstrate the theme of a literary text. |
| ELA-1345 | IDENTIFY A THEME IN A LITERARY TEXT | Identify the theme of a story, drama, or poem. The theme should be a concise word or phrase about the larger truth of the text. |
| ELA-2745 | IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING MULTIPLE THEMES IN A LITERARY TEXT | Identify the words, phrases, and other details depicting multiple themes in a story, drama, or poem. |
| ELA-3016 | IDENTIFY KEY DETAILS FOR THE SUMMARY OF THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT | Identify which key details support the theme of a story, drama, or poem and are important enough to include in a summary. |

SUMMARIZING A POEM

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RL.4.2, Lesson 1

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students summarize a poem, focusing on its structure, word choice, and imagery.

STANDARD

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select a poem with a familiar topic, such as nature. Some examples of poems that will work well for this activity are “Snow” by Naomi Shihab Nye, “The Snake” by David Elliott, “Dust of Snow” by Robert Frost, or “September” by Helen Hunt Jackson. Arrange to display the poem for the class. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ displayed poem
 - ▶ white board or chart paper
 - ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARIZING A POEM](#)
-

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can summarize a poem by describing how the poet includes meaningful imagery and words.”

Share the title of the poem with the class. **Ask** students to predict what the poem is about and to share about that topic. For example, if students guess that the poem is about nature, ask students what they know about nature and if they have an example of nature. **Collect** responses on the board or chart paper.

Display the poem. Before you read the poem, ask students to list out the things they notice about what the poem looks like. **Collect** responses on the board or chart paper. **Say**, “A poem is not like a story; some poems sound like stories, but other poems just show a scene of action or create an image of something.”

Read the poem aloud. Make sure you read the poem to the class several times and read expressively according to the poem’s punctuation and formatting. **Ask** students to share what they notice about the structure and form of the poem. **Ask**, “Does the poem have a particular shape? How many stanzas does it have?” **Remind** students that a stanza is a paragraph in a poem. Also **ask**, “Is it punctuated in a particular way?” **Record** students’ answers on the chart paper.

Read the poem again. **Say**, “When you summarize, you discuss the important elements and details in a story or poem. You will work with a partner to identify the details that describe the who, where, what, and how in the poem. Remember that to summarize, you need to provide details from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the poem to show the action in the whole poem.”

Pass out [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARIZING A POEM](#) and walk through which details go in each part of the handout. **Pair** students and **direct** them to complete parts one through four of the handout.

Release students to work and **ask** the Checking for Understanding questions.

| CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING | | |
|---|---|---|
| Determine if the student can IDENTIFY KEY DETAILS FOR THE SUMMARY OF THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-3016) : | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What happens in the beginning of the poem?▶ What happens in the middle of the poem?▶ What happens at the end of the poem? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What important words are used in the poem?▶ How does the poet or speaker feel about the important details in the poem? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Why does the speaker or poet include these details?▶ What is the lesson of the poem? |

Next, **ask** pairs to share out what details they included in their handout.

Review how to write a summary with students. **Say**, “When you write a summary, you include the most important details from the beginning, middle, and end of the poem or story.” **Direct** students to write a sentence or two in the handout to summarize what the poem is about. **Collect** the handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

SUMMARIZING A POEM

STUDENT HANDOUT

LESSON 1

Poem Title: _____

1. **WHO** is the poem about?

3. **WHAT** are the most important actions and objects in the poem?

2. **WHERE** does the poem take place?



4. **HOW** does the poem end? What lesson did you learn?



5. **SUMMARY:** Write a summary by combining the WHO, WHERE, WHAT, and HOW information.

DISCOVERING A POEM'S THEME

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RL.4.2, Lesson 2

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students group ideas, words, and images from the poem into categories to guide them toward the theme of the poem.

STANDARD

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, determine three topic words that suggest themes of the poem from Lesson 1, for example, *nature*, *seasons*, and *animals*. You can determine the words by looking at the details the majority of the class chose from the Lesson 1 handout. Students will use these words to complete the handout. Once again, arrange to display the poem. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ completed [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARIZING A POEM](#) from Lesson 1
- ▶ poem used in Lesson 1, displayed
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: THEME ORGANIZER](#)
- ▶ white board or chart paper

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can group the words and images in the poem into categories to help me identify the theme.”

Pass back [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARIZING A POEM](#). **Ask** students to share their summary. **Ask** what happens in the beginning, the middle, and the end. **Direct** students to add details that they missed.

Read the poem as a class. Next, **ask** students to come up with one word that best describes what the poem is about. **Invite** students to share, and **collect** their answers on the board.

Select one word from student responses that you will not be using on the student handout. **List** the evidence for that topic on the board. For example, if students said “colors,” write *Colors* on the board and list the colors the poet uses. **Ask** the class: “Why do you think the poet uses colors in the poem? How do you think he [or she] feels about colors? Why are colors important in this poem?” **Model** writing a sentence about why this topic is important, using the students’ ideas.

Pass out [STUDENT HANDOUT: THEME ORGANIZER](#) and **explain** that the class is going to repeat the process for the following words. **Write** the three words you selected on the board and have the students label each of the boxes on the handout. **Direct** students to find a partner and work together to list all the words or images from the poem that are connected to each topic. **Tell** students that an image is a picture created by the words and details the poet or speaker uses to describe the theme. After that, pairs will write a sentence that explains why that category is important in the poem.

As students work, **walk around** and collect evidence about student thinking.

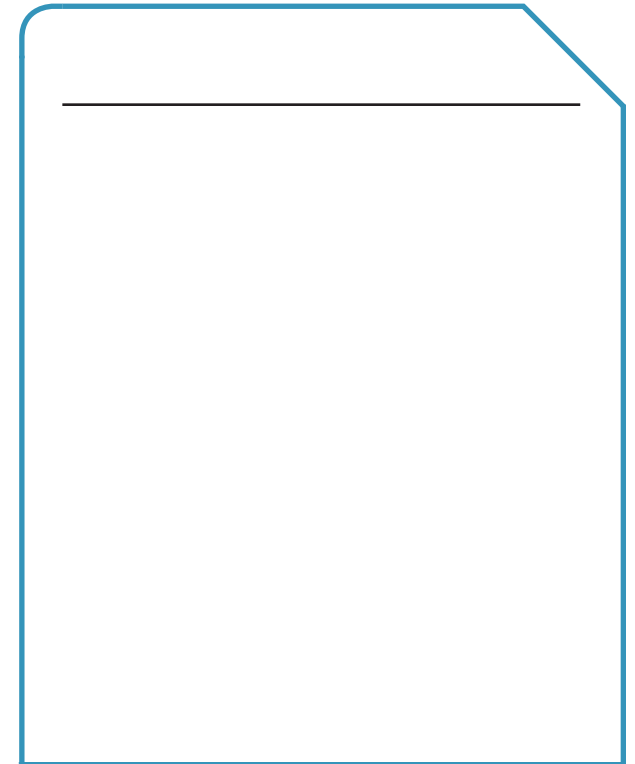
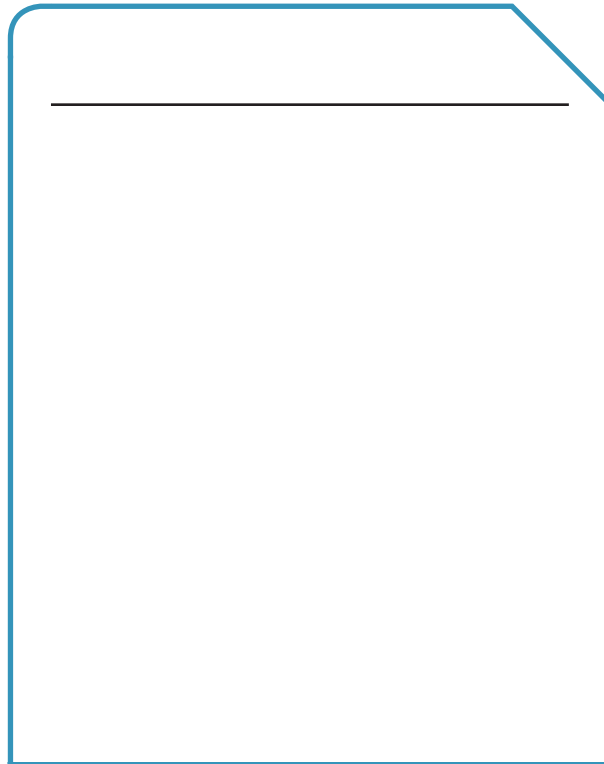

| CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING | | |
|---|---|---|
| Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING MULTIPLE THEMES IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-2745) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What category does that word or image belong in? | Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING THE THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-1175) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What evidence in the poem shows that idea? | Determine if the student can IDENTIFY A THEME IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-1345) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What is the theme of the poem? |

Ask pairs to share what words and images they placed in a certain category.

Collect the handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

Directions: At the top of each shape, write a word that tells what the poem is about. Then list examples of each topic from the poem. Last, write a sentence on why each topic is important in the poem.



WRITING A THEME STATEMENT

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RL.4.2, Lesson 3

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students determine the theme of the poem using the details from the poem.

STANDARD

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ the poem from previous lessons, displayed
- ▶ completed [STUDENT HANDOUT: THEME ORGANIZER](#) from Lesson 2
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: MY THEME DRAWING AND STATEMENT](#)

Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can determine the theme of the poem using the details and imagery that demonstrate it.”

Ask students to recall how they summarized the poem in Lesson 1.

Tell students that today’s lesson is determining the theme of the poem. **Say**, “When you determine a theme, you identify the lesson the poet or speaker wants you to learn from the events in the poem or story. You need to think about the words and images the poet uses to help you figure out what lesson they tell.”

Say, “In the previous lesson, we looked at how the words and images are related by putting them into categories.” **Review** the topic words from the previous lesson. Take volunteers to share examples from one of the categories.

Remind students that an image is a picture created by the words and details the poet or speaker uses to describe the theme. **Say**, “Today you are going to draw a picture of an image from the poem that shows the theme. You will also write a theme statement that uses details and words from the poem to describe the poem’s lesson or theme.”

Direct students to use their handouts from the previous lesson to choose an image from the poem. **Pass out** [STUDENT HANDOUT: MY THEME DRAWING AND STATEMENT](#) and **instruct** students to draw their picture.

While students draw, **circulate** and check for understanding.

| CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING | |
|---|--|
| Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING THE THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-1175) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What detail are you drawing?▶ Why is this detail important? | Determine if the student can IDENTIFY A THEME IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-1345) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What is the theme of the poem?▶ What lesson is the poem trying to teach readers? |

Next, **instruct** students to turn to their neighbor, describe their picture, and tell what they think the theme of the poem is. **Walk around** and **listen** to their answers, asking Checking for Understanding questions if needed. **Select** several students to share their pictures and explanations with the class.

To close the lesson, **direct** students to write their theme statement below their picture. **Remind** students that the theme is the lesson of the poem or how the poem relates to life. A theme statement is a full sentence that tells the poem’s lesson. For example, nature is not a theme statement. A theme statement about the theme of nature answers the questions “What does the poet say about nature?” and “Why is nature important in the poem?” **Encourage** students to ask themselves these questions as they write their theme statements:

- ▶ Why is this topic important to the poem?
- ▶ What can we learn from the poem?”

Ask for volunteers to read their theme statements and to provide evidence for their thinking. **Collect** the handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

MY THEME DRAWING AND STATEMENT

STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Draw a picture of the most important idea, image, or scene in the poem. Underneath the picture, write a sentence that describes what the theme of the poem is.



SUMMARIZING AND DISCOVERING A THEME IN POETRY

TEACHER'S FEEDBACK GUIDE

RL.4.2

| TARGET SKILLS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE KEY DETAILS FOR THE SUMMARY OF THEME OF A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-3016): <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What details are most important in the poem?▶ What events or actions in the poem show the lesson or theme? | Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS DESCRIBING OR DEMONSTRATING MULTIPLE THEMES IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-2745): <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What words or images best show the theme of the poem?▶ What is an important detail in the poem? | Determine if the student can IDENTIFY A THEME IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-1345): <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What is the theme of the poem?▶ What is the lesson in the poem? |
| COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS | | |
| identifies supporting ideas instead of key details | identifies events or actions but cannot connect them to the theme | identifies specific details instead of the overall theme |
| SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS | | |
| Students read the poem and circle similar words to help determine a theme. Students create a tree map to list the important ideas and explain how they are important to the theme. | Students select images significant to the poem for a collage and then describe how the images are alike. | Students make a list of all the lessons that could be learned from the poem. Then students find examples from the poem that go with each lesson and determine what they have in common with the lesson. |