



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 20 Word Count: 961

Book Summary

The cold, wild land of Alaska is sometimes called “The Last Frontier.” From the exciting history of gold miners to the bright future of the state’s oil fields, Alaska is a unique part of the United States. It is the largest state in the union—covering over 1.7 million square kilometers—and is home to Mount McKinley, the tallest mountain in North America. People from all over the world come to see Alaska’s beautiful landscapes and amazing wildlife.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Summarize

Objectives

- Identify the main idea and supporting details
- Use the reading strategy of summarizing to understand the text
- Differentiate between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions
- Identify and fluently read abbreviations

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Alaska: The Last Frontier* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- World map
- Main idea and details/summary, conjunctions, abbreviations worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

- Content words:

Story critical: *Arctic Circle* (n.), *aurora borealis* (n.), *economy* (n.), *individualism* (n.), *kayaks* (n.), *tundra* (n.)

Enrichment: *delicacies* (n.), *preserve* (v.), *relatively* (adv.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *Alaska* on the board. Ask students to tell what they already know about the state. Show students the cover of the book and ask them what they see.
- Show students the world map and ask a volunteer to locate the state of Alaska. Talk about its size and compare it to the size of countries and other states.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Summarize**

- Explain to students that one way to understand and remember information in a book is to write a summary, or a brief overview of the most important information in the text. Point out that a summary includes the main idea and one or two supporting details. It often answers the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
- Model summarizing the main idea and details from the first section on the board.
Think-aloud: To summarize, I decide which information is most important to the meaning of a section. To do this, I identify the main idea and important details, and then organize that information into a few sentences. When I look at the main idea and details on the board, a summary of this section might be: Alaska is called "The Last Frontier" because of its unique scenery, wildlife, climate, and natural resources. Located on the Arctic Circle between the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, Alaska has a very exciting history and a bright future ahead.
- Write the summary on the board. Have students identify the main idea and details within the summary. Discuss how you used your own words to create the summary.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Main idea and details**

- Write the following list of words on the board: *Alaska, California, Florida, and Massachusetts*. Ask students to describe what these words refer to (U.S. states). Point out that the definitions of these words help to identify a main idea. (Many different states make up the United States of America.) The words *Alaska, California, Florida, and Massachusetts* are the details that support this main idea.
- Explain that sometimes the amount of information about a topic is so large that it is grouped into sections, and each section of the book has its own main idea.
- Read page 4 aloud to students. Model identifying the main idea and details of the first section.
Think-aloud: As I read the first section, most of the sentences mention something about Alaska. This section gives information about where Alaska is located. I will underline this information. The sentences also mention information about Alaska's climate, wildlife, and resources. The sentences tell readers that some people call Alaska "The Last Frontier." I will underline this information, too. Based on what I've read, I think the main idea of the section is: Alaska is called "The Last Frontier" because of its unique scenery, wildlife, climate, and natural resources.
- Write the main idea on the board. Ask students to identify the details from the book that support this main idea (page 4: *cold, wild land; on the Arctic Circle; between Pacific and Arctic Oceans; beautiful scenery; amazing wildlife; great natural resources; huge, empty spaces; exciting history; bright future*). Write these details on the board.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on the board: *Arctic Circle, aurora borealis, and tundra*.
- Give groups of students three pieces of blank paper. For each word, have them write or draw what they know about the word. Create a definition for each word using students' prior knowledge.
- Review or explain that the glossary contains a list of vocabulary words and their definitions.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Alaska: The Last Frontier

- Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have students locate the glossary at the back of the book. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *Arctic Circle* in the glossary. Have students compare the definition with their prior knowledge of the phrase. Then have them follow along on page 4 as you read the sentence in which the phrase *Arctic Circle* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words.
- Invite students to review the photograph on the cover. Have them create a short paragraph about Alaska, utilizing all three vocabulary words. Repeat the activity after reading the book to check for student understanding of the vocabulary.


Set the Purpose



 Have students read the book to find out more about Alaska. Encourage them to underline or write on a separate piece of paper the important details in each section.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read from page 5 to the end of page 8. Encourage those who finish before others to reread the text. When students are ready, discuss the important information they identified.
- Model identifying the main idea and details.
Think-aloud: *As I read the second section, most of the sentences mentioned something about Alaska's land. I read that Alaska's coastline is longer than all of the rest of the U.S. coastline put together. I will underline this information in the book. I also read that Alaska is so big that it includes a lot of different landscapes, and that Mount McKinley is the tallest mountain in North America. The biggest city is Anchorage, which is in the southcentral part of the state. Alaska's Interior is not very populated—and is full of mountains, glaciers, and Arctic tundra. It is home to wildlife such as grizzly bears, bald eagles, whales, seals, and willow ptarmigan. I will underline all of this information, too. Based on what I've read and underlined, I think the main idea of the section is: Alaska's land is enormous, and the landscapes are varied. The state is famous for its natural beauty and is home to many types of wildlife.*
- Write the main idea on the board. Ask students to identify details that support this main idea. (Page 5: coastline longer than the rest of the U.S.; more than twice the size of Texas; southeast Alaska is rainy and has relatively warm winters. Page 6: ocean on three sides; borders Canada; southcentral Alaska lies along the Pacific coast; Anchorage is the largest city; Mount McKinley is the tallest mountain in North America. Page 7: The Interior is full of mountains, glaciers, and Arctic tundra; freezing cold; few people live in this part; "land of the midnight sun" has extreme seasons and 24 hours of daylight/darkness. Page 8: snowy mountains, giant forests, clear lakes, beautiful coastline; grizzly bears, moose, polar bears, wolves, bald eagles, caribou, whales, seals, fish, willow ptarmigan.) Write these details on the board.
- Review how to create a summary from the main idea and details. Refer back to the summary created during the Introduce the Reading Strategy section. Discuss and create the summary as a class and write it on the board. (Alaska's land is enormous—covering over 1.7 million square kilometers. Its landscapes are varied and weather can be extreme. The state is famous for its natural beauty, including snowy Mount McKinley, along with its huge forests and beautiful coastline. Alaska is home to many wild animals, such as grizzly bears, moose, bald eagles, and whales.)

 **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 9 through 12. Invite them to share the important details they underlined in the section titled "Alaska's History." Write these details on the board. Divide students into groups and have them work with their group to identify the main idea from the details in the section. Discuss their responses as a class and write a main idea on the board.

- Ask each group to use the main idea and details of the section to write a brief summary on a separate piece of paper. Have them share what they wrote.
-  Ask students to read the remainder of the book. Remind them to underline important details in the book as they read.
-  Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Discuss how stopping to review the important details helped students remember the facts and better understand the information in the book.
- Invite students to share the important details they underlined on pages 13 through 15. Write these details on the board. Divide students into small groups. Have each group work together to identify the main idea from the details and write this information on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their responses as a class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce and explain the [main-idea-and-details/summary worksheet](#) to students. Have them write a main idea and supporting details for the section titled “Alaska’s Beauty.” Remind them to also include information in the captions. If time allows, discuss their responses.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Review with students how the main idea and details from each section can be used to develop a summary. Discuss with them the benefits of summarizing information they read (to understand the main point of a larger piece of writing). Invite students to share instances of when summarizing might be helpful.
- Review the details written on the board from pages 13 through 15. Invite students to return to their small groups. Have each group work together to write a summary for the section titled “Alaska Today” on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their responses as a class.
- **Independent practice:** Have students complete their main-idea-and-details/summary worksheet by writing a summary for the section titled “Alaska’s Beauty.” If time allows, discuss their responses.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned that many Americans thought Alaska was worthless until gold was discovered in 1896. Since then, oil that has been discovered on Alaska’s northern coast has made the state very valuable to the United States. Now that you know this information, what do you think about the United States’ decision to buy Alaska from Russia in 1867? How do you think Russia feels now about selling the vast land with so many hidden assets?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions

- Explain or review that a *conjunction* is a word that links together and relates two parts of a sentence. Two different types are *coordinating* and *subordinating* conjunctions. Tell students that the simple, little conjunctions are called coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Explain that when a coordinating conjunction connects two independent clauses, it usually follows a comma. Point out that it helps to recognize coordinating conjunctions by remembering that they all have fewer than four letters. Also, students might enjoy learning the acronym **FANBOYS**: For And Nor But Or Yet So.

- Ask students to turn to page 8. Write on the board the following sentence from the book: *Many animals in Alaska have thick fur or blubber to keep warm.* Explain that the conjunction *or* connects the two descriptive nouns of the sentence, *fur* and *blubber*. Write on the board, under the example: *Many animals in Alaska have thick fur to keep warm. Many animals in Alaska have thick blubber to keep warm.* Discuss how the author chose to link these two descriptive phrases instead of writing two repetitive sentences, one after another. Explain that this is an example of how coordinating conjunctions help writers make their writing more fluent, or smoothly flowing.
- Explain that a *subordinating conjunction* comes at the beginning of a subordinate (or dependent) clause. Tell students that a *subordinating conjunction* turns the clause into something that depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning. Examples of subordinating conjunctions are: *after, although, as long as, before, even if, until, whenever, and while.*
- Ask students to turn to page 4. Write the following sentence from the book on the board: *Because it has such huge, empty spaces, some people call Alaska "The Last Frontier."* Point out the conjunction *because* and the comma separating the dependent clause and the independent clause. Have a volunteer come to the board and underline the dependent clause (*Because it has such huge, empty spaces*). Have another volunteer underline the independent clause (*some people call Alaska "The Last Frontier"*). Review what makes an independent clause independent.
- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to return to page 7. Write the following sentences from the book on the board: *Summer temperatures can be above 32 degrees C, while winter temperatures can drop below -50 degrees C. The climate is freezing cold, and it can also be quite dry.* Have volunteers come up to the board and circle the conjunctions (*while* and *and*). Ask students to tell what type of conjunction *while* is (*subordinating*), and what type of conjunction *and* is (*coordinating*). Have students come to the board and underline the independent clauses. Review what makes subordinating and coordinating conjunctions different.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [conjunctions worksheet](#). Review student answers aloud.

Word Work: Abbreviations

- Review or explain that an *abbreviation* is a shortened form of a word or phrase, such as *Mr.* for *Mister*. Ask a volunteer to identify the abbreviation on page 6 (*ft*) and to tell what it stands for (*feet*). Ask why they think the author uses the abbreviation for *feet*.
- Have students turn to page 5 and find two other abbreviations (*sq* and *mi*). Ask volunteers to identify what each abbreviation is short for (*square* and *miles*). Ask students why the author might have used the abbreviations for these words.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students turn to page 7. Ask them to identify other abbreviations from the text (*F* and *C*). List them on the board. Have students use prior knowledge to identify the words these letters are short for (*Fahrenheit* and *Celsius*).
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [abbreviations worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students discuss with someone at home how to summarize a section using the main idea and details of the section.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing and Art Connection

Provide print and Internet sources for students to research Texas. Citing information from their research, have them write a report about the second-largest state in the United States. Instruct students to include these section titles: Texas's Land; Texas's History; Texas Today; and Texas's Beauty. Encourage them to add illustrations or photographs to their report. Require an error-free final copy and a front and back cover. Either bind each report separately, or bind all of the reports together to make a class book with its own front and back cover.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on informational report writing.

Social Studies Connection

Take a class trip to the school or city library. Instruct students to search for books or Internet sites about drilling for oil and how it affects the area's land and wildlife. Have them find information about drilling for oil in Alaska and what is being debated today regarding its northern tundra. Have small groups collectively prepare an oral report to share with the class. Encourage them to include a poster as a visual aid.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- identify the main idea and supporting details to better understand the text in discussion and on a worksheet
- accurately use main idea statements and supporting details to write a summary in their own words
- correctly identify the differences between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions during discussion and on a worksheet
- identify abbreviations in the text and explain what they stand for during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**