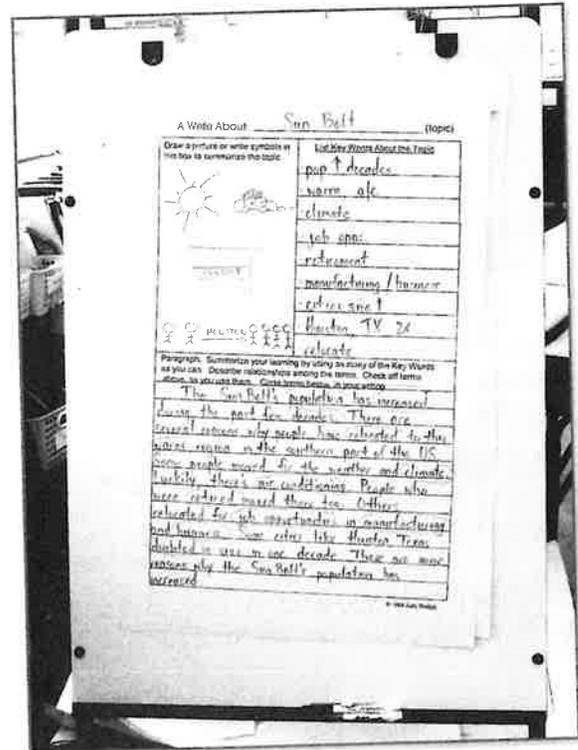


WriteAbout

Research has shown that summarization yields some of the greatest leaps in comprehension and long-term retention of information (Wormeli, 2005). A WriteAbout is a concrete tool for summarization in which students use key vocabulary terms (the language of the content area) to synthesize their understanding in a paragraph as well as represent key ideas graphically. Combining both verbal-linguistic and spatial intelligences, this assessment tool is a favorite of many students.

Debra Steinroder models a WriteAbout for her fifth-grade students using a poster-size version of a WriteAbout.



Step-by-Step

1. At the end of your lesson, provide a WriteAbout sheet to students (page 18).
(TIP: If you photocopy these pages on colored paper, they will be easy to find later when needed for studying.)
2. Model for the class how you would complete a WriteAbout. Depending upon the grade of your students, you may need to model several times. Brainstorm key words and draw a picture to represent the main idea.
3. Demonstrate how to write a summary using the key words on the list. Show students how you check off the terms as you use them and circle them in your writing.
4. Let partners talk and complete a WriteAbout together.

5. After a few practice opportunities with a partner, students should be ready to complete a WriteAbout on their own.
6. Collect this assessment and provide feedback to students. Provide a simple check or check-plus to indicate the individual's level of mastery. Share with your class what a check or check-plus means. (A check means that you understand most of the terms and ideas, but still have to master others. Please notice any circles, question marks, or questions that I have written on your paper to help guide your next steps in learning.)
7. Plan your instruction for the next day so that it fills any gaps in class understanding and/or includes flexible grouping for a follow-up tiered activity.

Applications

The WriteAbout is also a useful tool for homework. It provides an opportunity for students to synthesize the key understandings of the day's lesson.

Keep in mind, however, that this assessment is designed for a single concept within a larger unit. Don't use it, for example, to see what students have learned about the Civil War. Use it to see what they have learned about the Underground Railroad, the advantages held by the North or South, or Reconstruction after the war.

Teachers have used the WriteAbout paragraphs successfully with their "Expert Groups" in a Jigsaw review activity (See Dodge, 2005 for a more detailed

explanation about the Jigsaw Activity.) Briefly, students are assigned a Home Base Group and each is given a different subtopic, question, reading, or problem to complete. They then move into Expert Groups to work with others given the same assignment. There, each student completes his own WriteAbout. When he/she returns to the original Home Base Group, each Expert contributes his/her piece to the group's poster on the whole topic. This poster or product represents a group assessment. To check for individual understanding, follow up with several short-response questions.

TechConnect

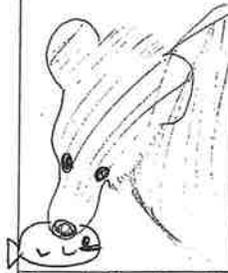
Using a software program like Kid Pix or the free paint tool that comes with Windows, students can draw the pictures, symbols, or steps. Then, using the paint tool found in either program, they can write their paragraph.

Tips for Tiering!

In addition to the ideas on page 9, consider the following.

To support struggling learners: Duplicate the WriteAbout template with the vocabulary terms already printed on it. (Provide definitions, if you feel they are necessary)

A WriteAbout: Animal Adaptations (Topic)

<p>Draw a picture or write symbols in this box to summarize the topic</p> 	<p>List Key Words About the Topic</p> <p>adaptations ✓</p> <p>survive ✓</p> <p>environment ✓</p> <p>finding food ✓</p> <p>brown bear ✓</p> <p>penguin ✓</p> <p>having shelter ✓</p> <p>packet gopher ✓</p>
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Paragraph: Summarize your learning by using the terms above. Be sure to check off terms above, as you use them. Circle terms below, in your writing.

Adaptations are a part of behavior and the ways animals survive in their environment like for finding food. Brown bears adaptation for finding food is their sharp claws, and big teeth. For a penguin it's the big flippers. Another adaptation is having shelter. A packet gopher gets shelter by using its claws to dig holes.

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Students use A WriteAbout to help them process the information they have been learning in a unit on animal adaptations. They check off the vocabulary terms and circle them in their writing as they use the key words in context. (This template is available on the CD.)

