

ESU TEACHING RESOURCE



CONDENSING MACHINE

OVERVIEW

This activity helps students to practice their summarising skills, and works particularly well with younger groups.



OBJECTIVES

- To identify key points in a structured narrative.
- To practise summarising information that they are given.
- To get feedback on the importance of structure for the comprehension of others.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask the students to get into groups of 4-6. Give each group one of the lists of story prompts. They are now going to write a short story.

They should start by answering the questions to fill in the key details. They should then add more details and explanations to these. Encourage them to be creative with their ideas and their vocabulary. Their finished story should be one minute long.

The Journey

You are going to write a story about someone going on a journey. Start by thinking up answers to these questions, and then add in more descriptions and details.

WHO is going on the journey?

WHERE do they start?

WHY are they travelling?

WHERE do they visit first?

WHO do they meet there?

WHERE do they finish the journey?



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Each group should now send one “messenger” to deliver their one minute story to the next group. The messenger should make sure that they are not overheard by other groups. The listening group should think about what is most important in the story, and write a shorter, 45 second version. Again, a messenger should be sent to deliver this 45 second story to the next group.

Each group now comes up with a 30 second story, which is sent to the next group. This process continues with shorter and shorter stories until each group receives a very short (one or two sentence) summary of their original one-minute story. Try to ensure all of the students take a turn as the messenger.

Groups should now compare this very short summary with their original (written) story. Each group in turn should be invited to share the following with the class:

Does the short message contain the most important points/ key ideas of the original story?
If not, what were those most important points?

Other groups should now be encouraged to offer their thoughts on why those important points were lost when they summarised the story.

Now repeat the task with each group given a new, different story prompt. Encourage the class to discuss what they learned and changed from the first run through.

For more advanced learners, ask them to write a story without giving them the story prompts. Is it more difficult? Why?

Tips

This game can be made more challenging by increasing the length of the original story, and asking students to condense it into shorter versions more quickly. For a challenge, ask students to begin with a three minute story, then summarise this in one minute, then thirty seconds, then one sentence.

