

Harvey & Daniels (2009). *Comprehension & Collaboration*.  
Heinemann, Portsmouth NH

## Synthesize Information: *Read to Get the Gist*



See this lesson in action on pages 180, 211.

→ **TIP:** Rather than writing, primary kids can turn and talk about the gist, based on the three criteria in the lesson. With older kids, show how you try not to read more than your hand can cover before you stop to bracket and jot the gist, since that is about as much information as we can digest at a time. With practice, kids can write more complete summary responses that include both the gist and their thinking.

**WHEN and WHY:** Throughout the inquiry process, kids encounter a ton of information. They simply can't (or shouldn't) remember it all. We need to teach them to stop frequently and synthesize the information before moving on or they run the risk of merely running their eyes across the page and getting lost.

**INITIATE:** Explain that it is difficult to sift important information and come up with the gist. To make this explicit, share a common story such as *The Three Bears* and summarize the events. Then share the bigger idea(s) in the story—*perhaps it's not a good idea to go wandering into people's houses when they are out*—making a distinction between merely summarizing the events and getting the gist. Share that to synthesize, you need to **1)** Think about the information, **2)** Decide what is important, and **3)** Shape it into your own thought.

**TEACH/MODEL:** Reading for the gist requires us to think about the information and pull it together, or synthesize it, into a big idea. Model with an article on the overhead or whiteboard, showing how you read for the gist. Begin by previewing the article, first paying attention to the title, subheads, visuals, captions, and so on to get an idea of the article's focus. Share what you think the title suggests about the big ideas. Now, read and stop frequently, shaping the words and ideas into your own thought and capturing the gist. Bracket a paragraph and jot the gist in the margin next to it.

### WOMEN OF THE NEGRO LEAGUES

Famous pitcher Satchel Paige was on the mound one day in 1953. A nervous second baseman stepped to the plate. Paige wound up, hurled the ball, and the batter cracked a base hit into center field.

This was no ordinary hit. The second baseman was no ordinary ball player. She was Toni Stone. Stone described the base hit off Paige as "the happiest moment in my life."

Three women played side by side with men in the Negro Leagues. Many white women played professional baseball, but they played in an all-women league. Toni Stone, Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, and Connie Morgan were African American women who played in the men's league. (They weren't allowed to play in the women's league. It was open only to white women.)

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Not allowed in white leagues  
African American women  
played in mens league

A women nailed a single  
off of Satchel Paige

**GUIDED PRACTICE:** After modeling, read a paragraph and have kids bracket and jot the gist on their own copies. Move about, looking to see how it's going. Have them turn and talk about what they noticed as they synthesized the article.

**COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE:** Have students practice with articles they are reading in their inquiry circles. Confer with them as they are working together in their small groups.