

Lesson Plan: Evidence Detectives

Subject: English

Grade Level: 7 (Appropriate for ages 11-13)

Topic: Analyzing Textual Evidence (Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing)

Curriculum Code: EN7INF-III-11

Materials Needed

- A short, interesting article (about 300-400 words). See included sample text: "The Amazing Axolotl."
 - Pen or pencil
 - Notebook or paper
 - Highlighters (optional, in three different colors)
 - Computer or tablet with word processing software (optional)
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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing in your own words.
 2. Identify the key differences between these three ways of using evidence.
 3. Analyze a short text to find specific evidence that supports a general statement.
 4. Correctly use a direct quote, a paraphrase, and a summary to support an argument.
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Lesson Proper

I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Hook: The Detective's Case

Imagine you're a detective trying to solve a big case. You've found the main suspect, but you can't just walk into the courtroom and say, "They did it!" Why not? Because you need proof! You need to show the judge and jury the fingerprints, the security camera footage, and what the witnesses said.

Reading and writing are the same way. When you make a statement about a story or an article, like "The main character was brave," you can't just leave it at that. You have to prove it using evidence directly from the text. Today, you're going to become an "Evidence Detective." Your mission is to learn the three main tools detectives use to present their evidence: **Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing.**

Stating the Objectives

"By the end of our investigation today, you'll be able to explain what quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing are, and you'll be able to use all three to prove a point about a text we read."

II. Body (25-30 minutes)

"I Do": The Lead Detective Shows How It's Done (Modeling)

"First, let's look at our case file—this article called 'The Amazing Axolotl.' I'm going to read it aloud. As I read, listen for interesting facts."

Sample Text: The Amazing Axolotl

The axolotl (pronounced ACK-suh-LAH-tuhl) is a true wonder of the animal kingdom. Often called the "Mexican walking fish," it's not a fish at all, but a type of salamander. What makes the axolotl so unique is that it lives its entire life in its larval, or baby, form, a trait called neoteny. It keeps its feathery external gills and finned tail, never undergoing metamorphosis to live on land like other salamanders.

Perhaps its most incredible feature is its power of regeneration. If an axolotl loses a limb, it doesn't just grow back a stump; it can regrow the entire limb perfectly, complete with bones, muscle, and nerves. An axolotl can regrow entire limbs, parts of its brain, and even its spinal cord without any scarring. This remarkable ability has made it a subject of intense scientific study, as researchers hope to unlock its secrets to help with human medicine.

Unfortunately, these amazing creatures are critically endangered in the wild. Their only natural habitat is a network of lakes and canals near Mexico City. Due to pollution and habitat loss, their wild population has dwindled to dangerously low numbers, making conservation efforts extremely important.

"Okay, now I want to make a statement: **'The axolotl has an extraordinary ability to heal itself.'** I need to prove this. Here's how I'll use my three tools."

1. **Quoting:** "This is like taking a direct photograph of the evidence. I take the exact words from the text and put them in quotation marks. For example: **'An axolotl can regrow entire limbs, parts of its brain, and even its spinal cord without any scarring.'** See? I copied it word-for-word and used quotation marks."
 2. **Paraphrasing:** "This is like describing the evidence in my own words. I'm not changing the meaning, just the vocabulary and sentence structure. It's usually about the same length as the original part. I could say: **The article explains that axolotls have the unique capability to replace damaged body parts, including legs and even vital organs like the brain, leaving no scar tissue behind.** The idea is the same, but the words are mine."
 3. **Summarizing:** "This is like giving the one-sentence headline of the evidence. It's much shorter and just gives the main idea. For the whole second paragraph, I could summarize it as: **The text highlights the axolotl's amazing regenerative talent, which allows it to recover from serious injuries and is being studied by scientists.** It's short, sweet, and to the point."
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Success Criteria Check-in: "Notice how a quote uses exact words and quotation marks. A paraphrase uses my own words but keeps the original detail and length. A summary uses my own words and is much shorter, only hitting the main point."

"We Do": Detective Partners on the Case (Guided Practice)

"Now, let's work together. Our next statement to prove is: '**Axolotls are unusual because they remain in a juvenile state their whole lives.**' Let's look at the first paragraph together."

- **Find a Quote:** "Can you find a sentence in the first paragraph that we could use as a direct quote to prove this statement? ... Great! How about this one: '**What makes the axolotl so unique is that it lives its entire life in its larval, or baby, form...**'"
- **Paraphrase Together:** "Excellent. Now, how could we put that idea into our own words? What's another way to say 'lives its entire life in its larval form'? ... How about: '**The axolotl is special because it never grows out of its baby stage, unlike other salamanders.**' Does that sound right?"
- **Summarize Together:** "Perfect. Now, if we had to summarize that whole first paragraph in just one sentence, what would be the most important idea to include? ... Maybe something like: '**The axolotl is a special type of salamander that keeps its baby features, like gills, for its entire life.**'"

(This is a formative assessment point. Check for understanding before moving on.)

"You Do": The Solo Investigation (Independent Practice)

"Alright, Detective, you're ready for your own case. Your mission is to prove this statement: '**The axolotl's survival in the wild is at risk.**'"

"Look at the last paragraph of the article. On your paper, I want you to write down the following:"

1. **One direct QUOTE** from the paragraph that proves this statement.
2. **One PARAPHRASE** (in your own words) of a sentence from the paragraph.
3. **A one-sentence SUMMARY** of the entire paragraph.

"Take about 10 minutes to complete your investigation. Remember our success criteria: quotes are exact, paraphrases are in your words, and summaries are short main ideas."

III. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Closure & Recap: Presenting the Findings

"Okay, Detective, time to present your evidence. Let's hear what you found."

(Review the student's quote, paraphrase, and summary from the "You Do" activity. This is the summative assessment.)

"Excellent work. So, let's recap the tools in our detective kit. In your own words, what's the difference between:"

- Quoting and Paraphrasing?
- Paraphrasing and Summarizing?

Reinforcing Relevance: Why This Matters

"This isn't just for school reports. You use these skills all the time! When you tell a friend what a character said in a movie (quoting), when you explain the rules of a video game you just learned (paraphrasing), or when you give the quick plot of a book you read (summarizing), you're using evidence. Being good at this makes your arguments stronger and proves that you know what you're talking about. You've officially earned your Evidence Detective badge!"

Differentiation and Adaptability

- **For learners needing more support (Scaffolding):**
 - Use a shorter text or highlight the exact sentences they should work with.
 - Provide sentence starters like: "The author wrote...", "In other words...", "The main point is that..."
 - Focus on mastering one skill (e.g., quoting) before moving to the next.
- **For learners seeking a challenge (Extension):**
 - Use a longer, more complex article on a topic of their choice.
 - Ask them to create their own argument about the text and then find three different pieces of evidence to support it.
 - Challenge them to write a complete paragraph that correctly integrates one quote, one paraphrase, and a concluding summary sentence to support a single, clear point.
- **For a classroom or training context:**
 - The "We Do" section can be a "Think-Pair-Share" activity.
 - The "You Do" section can be done in small groups, with each group tackling a different argument about the text.
 - Use a text relevant to the group (e.g., a company mission statement for a corporate training, a historical document for a social studies class).