

# Generating “Get the Gist” Statements

JANUARY 2021 PUBLIC WEBINAR

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- Review the contribution of generating “gist” statements to students’ comprehension of texts.
- Learn the steps to teaching students how to generate a “gist” statement.
- Plan to teach students how to monitor their understanding of content area texts by generating “gist” statements.

## Objectives

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## What Is a “Gist”?

Essential  
Point

Sentence

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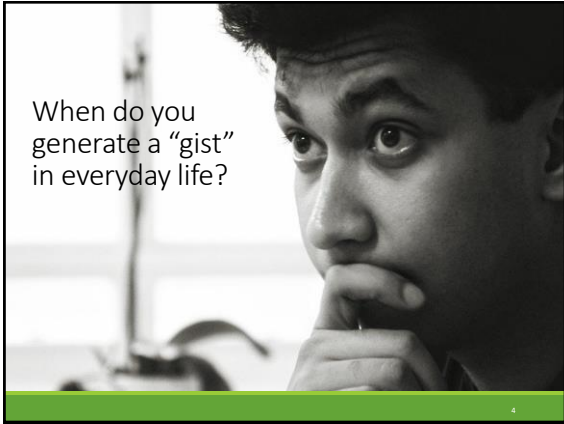
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### Importance of Getting the Gist While Reading

- 
 The ability to write a gist statement is linked to reading comprehension performance. *(Boardman et al., 2015)*
- 
 Adolescents who struggle with reading can successfully learn to generate a statement about the text. *(Wexler, Reed et al., 2017)*
- 
 Meta-analytic review of studies on "gist" instruction indicates a statistically significant positive effect. *(Stevens, Park, & Vaughn, 2019)*

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**ASSIGNING VS. TEACHING GIST GENERATION**

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## Get the Gist

- 1.Name the who or the what.
- 2.Tell the most important thing about the who or what.
- 3.Say it in about 10 words.

*(Boardman et al., 2015)*

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## Poll 1: How difficult is it for middle school students to get the gist of a text?

PART OF CCSS IN GRADE 3

1	2	3	4	5
Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat easy	Very easy

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## Why Getting the Gist Is Difficult

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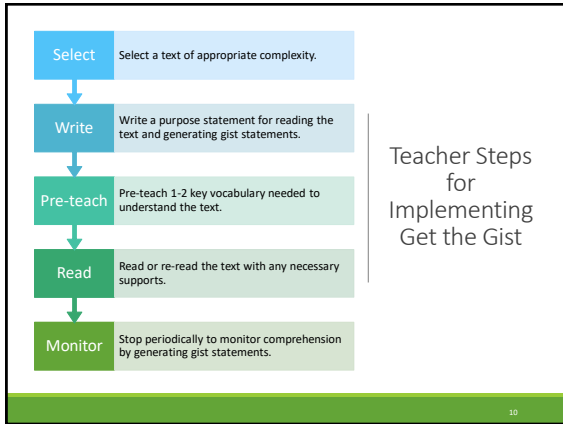
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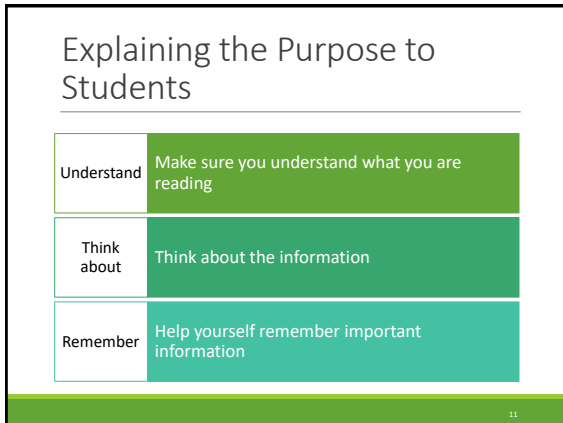
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**Natural selection has helped the Bajau people hold their breath while diving**  
 by Nicola Davis, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.25.15  
 Word Count: 877  
 Level: 10-12

**Read or Re-read the Text**

Image: A Bajau diver hunting fish on the reef. Photo by Melissa Stern.

The Bajau people in Southeast Asia are known for their amazing ability to hold their breath for long periods of time while diving to hunt fish. Scientists have finally figured out how they do it. The secret is evolution.

The Bajau people are able to dive up to 200 feet underwater with no conventional diving aids. Instead, they rely on weights, handmade wooden goggles and a single breath of air.

While the Bajau people's talents have long been known, the reason for their amazing skill was unclear. The skill could be the result of practice. It could also be the result of adaptations which have their roots in the Bajau people's DNA. DNA is found in the cells of our bodies.

Sequences of DNA, called genes, tell our bodies how to grow and operate. DNA contains the instructions for how each part of the body works. Because DNA is passed from parent to child, it can tell scientists how a species or group within a species changes over time.

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# Model Generating a Gist Statement: Step 1

Practice Passage: *Natural Selection*

1. Name the who or the what.

Clues:

- What is an important fact (person, place, thing)?
- What fact is mentioned frequently?
- What fact links ideas?
- What fact is emphasized in the text features (e.g., bolding, captions, subheadings)?

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## Natural selection has helped the Bajau people hold their breath while diving

By Heidi Davis, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.25.18  
Word Count: 477  
Level: 1000L



Image 1. A Bajau diver hunting for sea urchins. Photo by National Geographic

The Bajau people in Southeast Asia are known for their amazing ability to hold their breath for long periods of time while diving to hunt fish. Scientists have finally figured out how they do it. The secret is evolution.

The Bajau people are able to dive up to 200 feet underwater with no conventional diving aids. Instead they rely on weights, hand-made wooden goggles and a single breath of air.

While the Bajau people's talents have long been known, the reasons for their amazing skill was unclear. The skill could be the result of practice. It could also be the result of adaptations which have their roots in the Bajau people's DNA. DNA is found in the cells of our bodies.

Sequences of DNA, called genes, tell our bodies how to grow and operate. DNA contains the instructions for how each part of the body works. Sometimes DNA is passed from parent to child, it can tell animals how a species or group within a species changes over time.

Clues:

- What is an important fact (person, place, thing)?
- What fact is mentioned frequently?
- What fact links ideas?
- What fact is emphasized in the text features (e.g., bolding, captions, subheadings)?

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# Model Generating a Gist Statement: Step 2

Practice Passage: *Natural Selection*

1. Name the who or the what.

2. Tell the most important thing about the who or what.

Clues:

- What is something the who/what has, is, or does?
- What ideas are repeated in different ways or linked?
- What ideas are emphasized in the text features (e.g., bolding, captions, subheadings)?

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**Natural selection has helped the Bajau people hold their breath while diving**

By Heidi Chao, The Curator, updated by Newsela staff on 01-26-18  
 Word Count 817  
 Level 1000



**Clues:**

- What is something the who/what has, is, or does?
- What ideas are repeated in different ways or linked?
- What ideas are emphasized in the text features (e.g., bolding, captions, subheadings)?

Image 1: A Bajau diver holding a net at the reef. Photo by Helmut Kern

The Bajau people in Southeast Asia are known for their amazing ability to hold their breath for long periods of time while diving to hunt fish. Scientists have finally figured out how they do it. The secret is evolution.

The Bajau people are able to dive up to 100 feet underwater with no conventional diving aids. Instead, they rely on weights, hand-made wooden goggles and a single breath of air.

While the Bajau people's talents have long been known, the reasons for their amazing skill were unclear. The skill could be the result of practice. It could also be the result of adaptations which have their roots in the Bajau people's DNA. DNA is found in the cells of our bodies.

Sequences of DNA, called genes, tell our bodies how to grow and operate. DNA contains the instructions for how each part of the body works. Because DNA is passed from parent to child, it can tell scientists how a species or group within a species changes over time.

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## Model Generating a Gist Statement: Step 3

**Practice Passage: Natural Selection**

1. Name the who or the what.
2. Tell the most important thing about the who or what.
3. Say it in about 10 words.

**Clues:**

- What is in your own words?
- What can be said more clearly and concisely?
- What will make it a complete sentence?

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**Clues:**

- What is in your own words?
- What can be said more clearly and concisely?
- What will make it a complete sentence?

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### Poll 2: Evaluate the Gist Statement

Main Idea Rubric	0	1
1. Statement names a who or what.	No	Yes
2. The who/what identified is the key who/what of the passage.	No	Yes
3. Statement includes only the most important information about the who/what.	No	Yes
4. Statement is written in the students' own words.	No	Yes
5. Statement is a complete sentence of about 10 words.	No	Yes
Sum of scores	/ 5	Total possible points x 100 = %

The Bajau people's DNA gradually changed and allowed them to dive underwater longer.

**What score would you give the statement?**

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### Poll 3: Which Is a Good Gist? (Section 2 of the passage)



1. Scientists measure spleen size to understand how bodies survive without oxygen.
2. Scientists study the spleens of the Bajau and seals that dive for longer times.

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### Poll 4: Which Is a Good Gist? (Section 3 of the passage)



1. Certain versions of genes are more commonly found in Bajau people.



2. Larger spleens put more red blood cells in the circulatory system.

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Genes help humans with the diving reflex, tolerating lactose, and living at high altitudes.

2

Changes in some human genes show natural selection happening.

Poll 5: Which Is a Good Gist?  
(Section 4 of the passage)

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### Get the Gist: Guided Practice Phase



**Before reading**

- Explain the purpose for reading the text and using the strategy
- Preview the text and pre-teach key vocabulary

**During reading: Strategies to support understanding the text**

**During and after reading: Stop periodically to generate main ideas**

- Name the who or what
- Tell the most important thing about the who or what.
- Say it in about 10 words.

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Differentiation:  
Scaffolds for  
"Get the Gist"

Break the text into smaller sections at first, but gradually increase the length and complexity.

Pre-identify important ideas.

Provide sentence frames.

- North America is \_\_\_\_\_
- The plants and animals of \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ those who remembered him.

Teach students sentence writing skills.

Regularly share students' main ideas and provide positive or corrective feedback.

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## Teach Students to Monitor Their Own Work

Main Idea Rubric		
	0	1
1. Statement names a who or what.	No	Yes
2. The who/what identified is the key who/what of the passage.	No	Yes
3. Statement includes only the most important information about the who/what.	No	Yes
4. Statement is written in the students' own words.	No	Yes
5. Statement is a complete sentence of about 10 words.	No	Yes

Sum of scores \_\_\_\_\_ / 5 Total possible points x 100 = \_\_\_\_\_ %

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Planning for Implementation

Provide sufficient modeling and guiding practice before having students carry out the strategy independently.

Integrate "Get the Gist" with other literacy supports.

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## Questions?

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# Main Idea Graphic Organizer

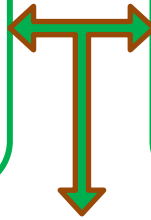
Passage title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject**

**Important Detail**

**Hint:** **Who** or **what** is the focus of the information?

**Hint:** The most important detail about what the **subject has, is, or did.**



**Main Idea Statement**

**Hint:** A main idea statement is **complete** (subject and most important detail) and **concise** (about 10 words long).

**Main Idea Rubric**

	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Statement names a who or what.	No	Yes
2. The who/what identified is the key who/what of the passage.	No	Yes
3. Statement includes only the most important information about the who/what.	No	Yes
4. Statement is written in the students' own words.	No	Yes
5. Statement is a complete sentence of about 10 words.	No	Yes

Sum of scores \_\_\_\_\_ / 5 Total possible points x 100 = \_\_\_\_\_ %

# Natural selection has helped the Bajau people hold their breath while diving

By Nicola Davis, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.25.18

Word Count 877

Level 1060L



Image 1. A Bajau diver hunting fish on the reef. Photo by: Melissa Ilardo

The Bajau people in Southeast Asia are known for their amazing ability to hold their breath for long periods of time while diving to hunt fish. Scientists have finally figured out how they do it. The secret is evolution.

The Bajau people are able to dive up to 200 feet underwater with no conventional diving aids. Instead they rely on weights, handmade wooden goggles and a single breath of air.

While the Bajau people's talents have long been known, the reason for their amazing skill was unclear. The skill could be the result of practice. It could also be the result of adaptations which have their roots in the Bajau people's DNA. DNA is found in the cells of our bodies.

Sequences of DNA, called genes, tell our bodies how to grow and operate. DNA contains the instructions for how each part of the body works. Because DNA is passed from parent to child, it can tell scientists how a species or group within a species changes over time.

The Bajau people have undergone natural selection, the process by which organisms that are better suited to their environment survive, while others do not. Natural selection has resulted in certain versions of genes becoming widespread among the Bajau people.

### **Measuring Spleens Of Bajau People**

Many of the adaptations are linked to biological changes, including having a larger spleen. These changes help the Bajau to hold their breath underwater for many minutes at a time.

Dr. Melissa Ilardo is an author of the study about the Bajau people. She worked at the University of Copenhagen at the time of the research. She said that the Bajau people have a lot to teach us about how the human body reacts to a lack of oxygen, which is an important medical issue.



Doctors could use the research to figure out new ways to help patients. Some people are more at risk than others when they experience a lack of oxygen. This can happen, for instance, during surgery. Understanding how the Bajau people can survive for longer periods of time without oxygen is very useful information for doctors.

Writing in the journal *Cell*, the scientists reveal how they solved the mystery following a clue from previous research. Certain species of seals can dive for longer amounts of time. It turns out that these seals have larger-than-expected spleens. The spleen is an organ which, among its purposes, can store oxygen-carrying red blood cells.

Ultrasound devices use sound waves to create images of the inside of the body. The team of scientists used an ultrasound device to measure the spleen in 43 Bajau people. They also measured 33 people from a neighboring group of farming people, the Saluan.

### **Large Spleen Helps With Underwater Diving**

Professor Eske Willerslev is a co-author of the study from the University of Cambridge. The Bajau people's spleens were about 50 percent larger than the Saluan people's spleens, which is a very extreme difference, he said.

The team notes the trend held regardless of whether the Bajau individual was themselves a diver. It even held when factors such as age, sex and height were taken into account.

DNA tests revealed that certain versions of genes are more commonly found in Bajau people than would be expected. Many of these genes seem linked to biological changes that could help individuals handle low-oxygen conditions.

Among them is a form of a gene linked to an increased spleen size. This is important for diving. People, like other mammals, experience something called the "diving reflex" when our heads are underwater. The diving reflex causes the spleen to get shorter and tighter. A large spleen means even more oxygen-carrying red blood cells can be pumped into the circulatory system during this process, allowing individuals to stay underwater for longer.

### **Genes Did Not Develop By Accident**

Another gene commonly found in Bajau people is linked to a different feature of the diving reflex. It sends less blood to the hands and feet, leaving more for organs such as the brain, heart and lungs.

Further analysis by the team also discovered that these helpful genetic traits are not the result of chance. They are evolutionary adaptations arising from natural selection.

Stephen Stearns is a scientist at Yale University who was not involved in the research. He said the study adds to evidence for recent natural selection on certain genes in human populations. Previous examples include genes for lactose tolerance that cropped up with the beginning of domestication of dairy animals. Another example would be genes for adaptation to high altitude among people who live in Tibet and Native Americans in the Andes mountains in South America.

"What we lack at this point, and badly need, are samples large enough to allow us to infer when the selection [in the Bajau] started to happen," he said. "We know that the Bajau have been leading this lifestyle for at least a thousand years, but we do not know when they started it – perhaps much earlier."