

# **G.I.F.T.S.**

## **Stuffing the Tins with Supporting Details**

**Anne Rognstad/ English/**

**Goal:** To teach the importance of using major and minor supporting sentences to clarify main ideas.

**Rationale:** This activity is completely interactive, and it engages every student in small groups of any size. It is structured as a “game” and it works “in reverse.” It forces students to use synonyms and otherwise stretch their vocabulary.

**Approximate time:** This activity can take from ten to twenty minutes.

**Materials needed:** Festive, colorful empty tins with lids  
(Works with boxes or envelopes as well)  
Paper and pencils/pens  
Strips of paper, pre-prepared  
Tape

### **Directions:**

Have students form small groups (ideally three to four in each).

Pass out a tin to each group, along with a generous handful of paper strips. Distribute pens or pencils if needed.

A sentence is taped to the side of each tin, and covered with a colored strip which is taped on to “hide” the text. Only the people in Group A have access to the sentence on Tin A, and so on for Group B and Tin B.

Students in each group read their sentences (silently) and then cover it up again. Their job is to write enough details (complete sentences) about the sentence before them. If the details are clear enough, those in another group should be able to tell what that other team’s sentence said.

No word in the hidden sentence may be used. Synonyms, actions and other details must “point” to the main idea. All support sentences are then stuffed into the tin.

Tins are exchanged among the groups. Now the new group opens the new tin (without peeking under the color strip), puts all the evidence together and attempts to generate the original hidden sentence.

For example, hiding under the color strip on Tin A might be the sentence “My uncle Bill has a horrible driving record.”

Student sentences might include:

My aunt’s husband was arrested for speeding again.

William had his license suspended for 60 days last year.

His insurance payments are skyrocketing.

Even as a teenager he was charged with reckless endangerment and running a stop sign.

(...and so on)

**Typical results:** The students almost always guess the sentence perfectly within a word or two. They have fun while laughing and learning.

**Alternate Goals:** This could be adapted to any discipline.

For example, in the medical world, hidden under the color strip might be the name of a rare disease. Students would stuff the tin with specific symptoms which can only yield one proper diagnosis.

This would be useful as a review for a quiz or test, especially in a course that demands a lot of memorization.