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Strategy One FINDING MAIN IDEA

PART ONE: Think About Main Idea

WHAT IS MAIN IDEA?

Everything you read has a main idea – books, short stories and so on. A movie or television show tells a story that has a main idea. The main idea tells what something is mostly about.

★ Write the name of a TV show you watched recently.

★ Write three important things that happened in the show.

★ Write a sentence that tells what the TV show was mostly about.

You just wrote about main idea!



Tell your partner about a poem, story or article you have read. Take turns telling about the main idea of the poem, story or article. Tell your main idea in one sentence.



HOW DO YOU FIND THE MAIN IDEA?

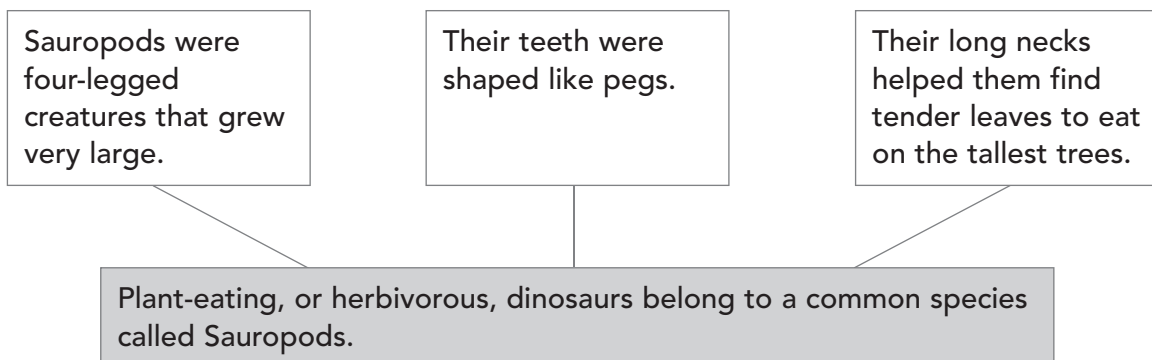
You can find the main idea of most reading passages in the first or last sentence of the passage. Read the passage below.

Plant-eating, or herbivorous, dinosaurs belong to a common species called Sauropods. Sauropods were four-legged creatures that grew very large. Their teeth were shaped like pegs. Their long necks helped them find tender leaves to eat on the tallest trees.

Think about the most important idea in the passage.

Let's find the main idea.

Look at the web below. The sentences in the small rectangles tell about the main idea, but they do not tell the most important idea in the passage.



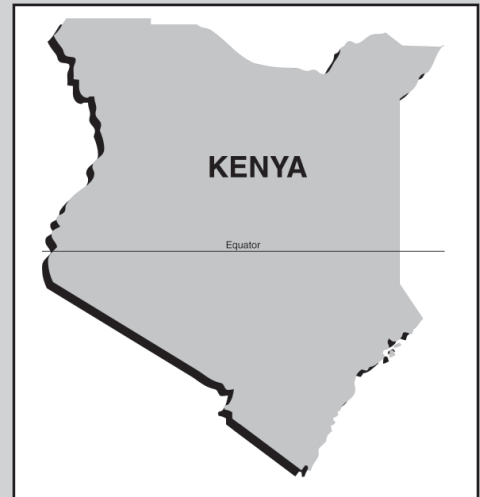
The sentence in the large rectangle is the most important idea. This sentence tells what the passage is mostly about. The main idea is found in the first sentence of the passage.

You just found the main idea!

Read this paragraph about a country in Africa. As you read, think about what the paragraph is mostly about. Then answer the questions.

Kenya

Hot and cold, dry and rainy, flat and mountainous. Can all these words describe the same place? They can if the place is Kenya. Kenya is located in the central section of eastern Africa. Although the equator splits the country in two, not all of Kenya is hot. This is because the altitude varies in parts of the country. Snow can be found on the peaks of Kenya's mountains, while desert sand covers the northern part of the country. Western Kenya is very rainy. This region sometimes receives over 170 centimetres of rain a year!



1. What is the paragraph mostly about?
 - Ⓐ the many different altitudes in Africa
 - Ⓑ the variety of climate and landforms in Kenya
 - Ⓒ where Kenya is located
 - Ⓓ how the equator divides Kenya
2. Where or how did you find the main idea?
 - Ⓐ in the first sentence of the paragraph
 - Ⓑ in the last sentence of the paragraph
 - Ⓒ in the middle of the paragraph
 - Ⓓ by thinking about which idea is most important in the paragraph



Discuss your answers to questions 1 and 2.
Explain why you chose your answers.

Look at the answer choices for each question. Read why each answer choice is correct or not correct.

3. What is the main idea of the article?

- Ⓐ Cairo is the largest city in Egypt.

This answer is not correct because, while the article does state that Cairo is the largest city in Egypt, the size and population of Cairo is not what the article is mostly about.

- Many places in Africa are more modern than people realise.

This answer is correct because it states the topic and tells the most important idea about it. All the other ideas in the article support this idea.

- Ⓒ The coast of Kenya has many fine beaches.

This answer is not correct because it is not the most important idea of the article. It does not tell what the article is mostly about.

- Ⓓ Nigeria has more than 50 cities with large populations.

This answer is not correct because it is not the most important idea of the article. It does not tell what the article is mostly about.

4. Where or how did you find the main idea?

- in the first sentence of the paragraph

This answer is correct because the first sentence states the topic and the most important idea about it: 'Many places in Africa are more modern than people realise'. The other sentences in the paragraph support this idea.

- Ⓑ in the last sentence of the paragraph

This answer is not correct because the last sentence of the paragraph, 'The Kenyan coast is popular with tourists, who enjoy the sandy beaches and fine restaurants', does not state the main idea of the paragraph.

- Ⓒ in the middle of the paragraph

This answer is not correct because the middle of the paragraph discusses a mine in Togo, large cities in Nigeria and students at the National University. None of these is the main idea of the paragraph.

- Ⓓ by thinking about which idea is most important in the paragraph

This answer is not correct because the main idea is found in the first sentence of the paragraph.

<p>Finding Main Idea</p> <p>1. The myth mostly describes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ how the earth was formed. Ⓑ why water animals often work together. Ⓒ where a beautiful tree with white roots is found. Ⓓ what life in the Skyworld is like. 	<p>Recalling Facts and Details</p> <p>4. As she fell to earth, the woman held in her hand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ long, white roots. Ⓑ dirt from the Skyworld. Ⓒ roots to several plants. Ⓓ earth from below the water.
<p>Finding Main Idea</p> <p>2. A good title for this myth is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ ‘The Ancient Chief’. Ⓑ ‘Tales of the Iroquois’. Ⓒ ‘Turtle and Muskrat’. Ⓓ ‘How the World Came to Be’. 	<p>Understanding Sequence</p> <p>5. Which of these happened last?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ A hole was made in the Skyworld. Ⓑ The Beaver tried to dive to the bottom of the waters. Ⓒ The woman fell through the hole made by the uprooted tree. Ⓓ The Muskrat came up with a tiny speck of earth.
<p>Recalling Facts and Details</p> <p>3. In what part of the lodge did women in the Skyworld live?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ the north side Ⓑ the south side Ⓒ the east side Ⓓ the west side 	<p>Understanding Sequence</p> <p>6. The boxes tell some of the things that happened in the myth.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 150px;">The woman fell in darkness for a long time.</div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 100px; height: 60px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"></div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 150px;">The Goose dove beneath the deep waters.</div> </div> <p>What belongs in the empty box?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ The Muskrat put dirt on the Turtle’s back. Ⓑ The Loon told the Turtle to let the woman land on his back. Ⓒ Two Swans flew up to meet the woman. Ⓓ The woman grabbed for help and pulled the roots of plants with her.