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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 – newspaper and magazine articles, short stories, poems and so on. A documentary, a movie and a TV show also tell a story that has a main idea. The main idea tells what something is mostly about.

★ Write the name of a documentary or movie you watched recently.

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★ Write three important things that happened in the documentary or movie.

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★ Write a sentence that tells what the documentary or movie was mostly about.

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You just wrote about main idea!



Take turns telling each other about articles, books or short stories you have read. State your main ideas in one sentence.



## HOW DO YOU FIND THE MAIN IDEA?

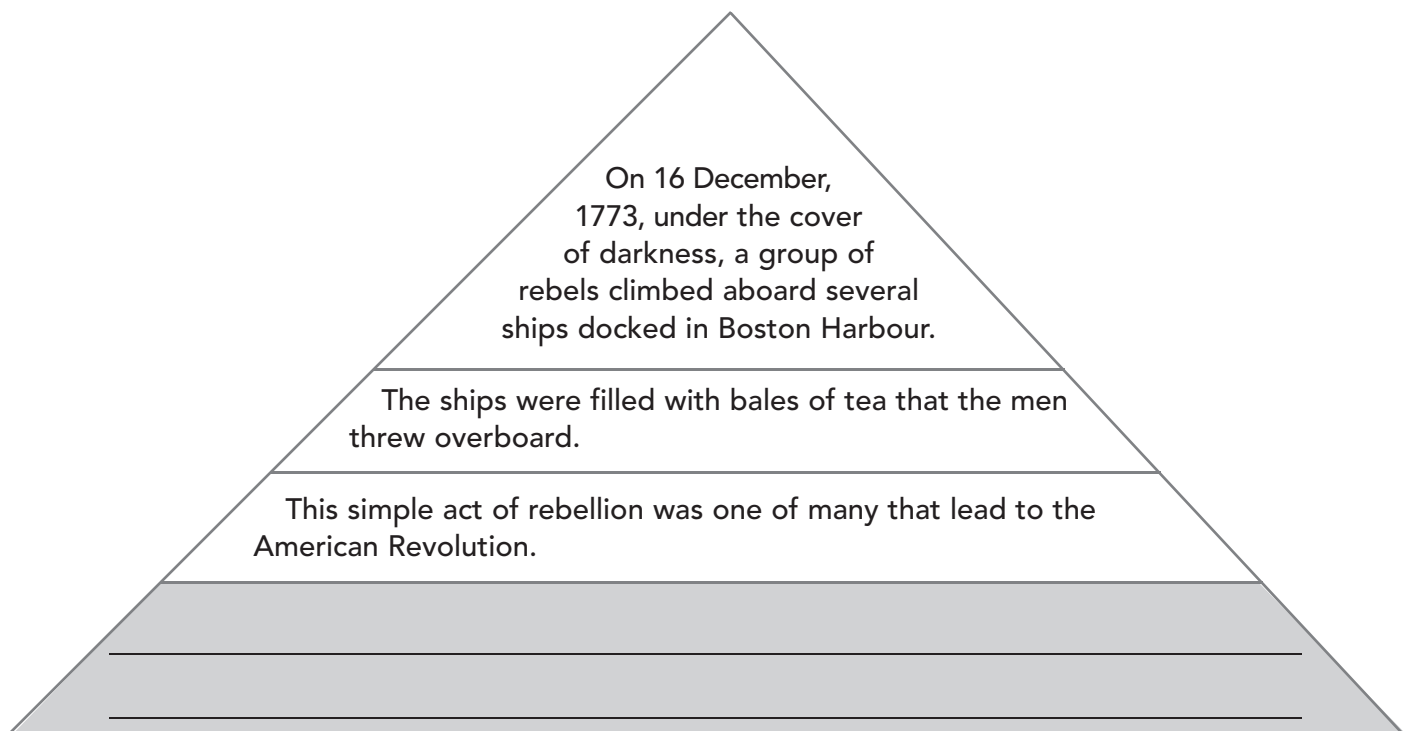
You can find the main idea of most reading passages in the first or last sentence of the passage. Read the passage below.

Colonists in America were angry when the British put a tax on tea. On 16 December 1773, under the cover of darkness, a group of rebels climbed aboard several ships docked in Boston Harbour. The ships were filled with bales of tea that the men threw overboard. This simple act of rebellion was one of many that lead to the American Revolution.

Think about the most important idea in the passage.

Let's find the main idea.

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



Look at the empty part at the bottom of the pyramid. Write the main idea here. You'll find the main idea in the first sentence of the passage. This sentence tells what the passage is mostly about.

You just found the main idea!

## PART THREE: Check Your Understanding

**Remember:** The main idea identifies the topic and states the most important idea about it.

- ★ As you read, think about what the paragraph is mostly about.
- ★ Look at the first and the last sentences of the paragraph. The main idea of a paragraph is often found here.
- ★ If the main idea is not in one sentence, think about all the ideas you have read about. Ask yourself, ‘Which idea is most important in the paragraph?’

**Read this story about a young woman travelling on her own. As you read, ask yourself, ‘What is the story mostly about?’ Then answer the questions.**

### On Her Way

Miranda stepped on to the bus, pausing for a moment to wave good-bye to her father. She was leaving for the summer – three months away from home and on her own for the first time. Her father smiled as he waved back to her, but his watery eyes told another story. Dad would miss her greatly. They’d become so close since Mum died. But Miranda couldn’t pass up the opportunity to travel with other volunteers from her youth group. Together, they would work to rebuild a small town that had been destroyed by bushfires. As Miranda took her seat on the bus, she felt the rumble of the bus’s engine beneath her feet. It was time to go. Never had Miranda felt so excited, yet so nervous at the same time.



3. What is the story mostly about?
- Ⓐ A young girl is excited and nervous about leaving home for the summer.
  - Ⓑ Youth-group volunteers go off to help rebuild a town.
  - Ⓒ A father is going to miss his daughter while she is away from home for three months.
  - Ⓓ A small town has been destroyed by bushfire.
4. 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

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

3. What is the story mostly about?

- A young girl is excited and nervous about leaving home for the summer.  
*This answer is correct because it identifies the topic (Miranda is leaving home for the summer) and states the most important idea about it (She is both excited and nervous).*
- Ⓑ Youth-group volunteers go off to help rebuild a small town.  
*This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story. It does not state the most important idea about the topic.*
- Ⓒ A father is going to miss his daughter while she is away from home for three months.  
*This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story. The story is mostly about Miranda, not her father. This answer does not state the most important idea about the topic.*
- Ⓓ A small town has been destroyed by bushfire.  
*This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story. The story is mostly about Miranda's feelings on the day she is leaving home, not about the small village to which she is travelling.*

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

- Ⓐ in the first sentence of the paragraph  
*This answer is not correct. The first sentence, 'Miranda stepped on to the bus, pausing for a moment to wave good-bye to her father', does not state the main idea of the story.*
- in the last sentence of the paragraph  
*This answer is correct because the last sentence, 'Never had Miranda felt so excited, yet so nervous at the same time', tells about the most important idea.*
- Ⓒ in the middle of the paragraph  
*This answer is not correct because the middle of the paragraph tells about Miranda's father's feelings, not what Miranda is feeling.*
- Ⓓ by thinking about which idea is most important in the paragraph  
*This answer is not correct because the main idea is in the last sentence of the paragraph.*

<p><b>Finding Main Idea</b></p> <p>1. The main idea of the story is found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ in the first paragraph.</li> <li>Ⓑ in the middle of the story.</li> <li>Ⓒ in the last paragraph.</li> <li>Ⓓ by thinking about the most important idea in the story.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recalling Facts and Details</b></p> <p>4. The pouch fell out of Coyote’s mouth because he</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ chewed through the sinew.</li> <li>Ⓑ was tired and hungry.</li> <li>Ⓒ was too proud of himself.</li> <li>Ⓓ was honourable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finding Main Idea</b></p> <p>2. Which of these best explains the main idea of paragraph 2?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ Coyote must carry a deerskin pouch along a certain path.</li> <li>Ⓑ Coyote must be strong and follow the Creator Spirit’s directions.</li> <li>Ⓒ Coyote must be respectful of the Creator Spirit.</li> <li>Ⓓ Coyote must be strong on the trail.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding Sequence</b></p> <p>5. The boxes show some of the things that happened in the story.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 150px;">The pouch fell from Coyote’s mouth.</div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 100px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 150px;">A ball of mica rolled from the pouch.</div> </div> <p>What belongs in the empty box?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ The moon rode on the wrong path in the sky.</li> <li>Ⓑ Coyote ate the pouch and its contents.</li> <li>Ⓒ Pieces of mica flew up and became the stars.</li> <li>Ⓓ Coyote closed the pouch and picked it up.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recalling Facts and Details</b></p> <p>3. How did the People and other animals regard Coyote?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ They did not think much of him.</li> <li>Ⓑ They admired him.</li> <li>Ⓒ They held him in high regard.</li> <li>Ⓓ They were proud of him.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding Sequence</b></p> <p>6. After he hung his head in shame, Coyote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓐ tried to regain the trust of the People.</li> <li>Ⓑ blamed the Creator Spirit.</li> <li>Ⓒ sang an apology to the moon.</li> <li>Ⓓ apologised to the other animals.</li> </ul>