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Strategy One FINDING MAIN IDEA

PART ONE: Think About Main Idea

WHAT IS MAIN IDEA?

Everything you read has a topic – reports, newspaper articles, encyclopedia entries and so on. Many TV shows also have a topic, such as a science program or history documentary. The main idea of a newspaper article or a documentary tells the most important idea about the topic.

★ Write the name of a science program, documentary or similar show you watched recently.

★ Write three important things that happened in the show.

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

You just wrote about main idea!



Take turns telling each other about newspaper or magazine articles you have read. Tell the topic of each article, then state the main idea of the article. State 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.

When most people think about advances in technology, they think about high-speed computers or mobile phones. We often forget that ancient people made important advances as well. They discovered fire, invented the wheel and created the first calendars. The advances of our ancestors laid the foundation for the innovations to come.

Think about the topic of the passage.

The topic of the passage is advances in technology.

Now think about the most important idea about the topic.

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

When most people think about advances in technology, they think about high-speed computers or mobile phones.	We often forget that ancient people made important advances as well.	They discovered fire, invented the wheel and created the first calendars.
<hr/> <hr/>		

Look at the empty part at the bottom of the chart. Write the main idea here. You'll find the main idea in the last sentence of the passage. This sentence tells the most important idea about the topic.

You just found the main idea!

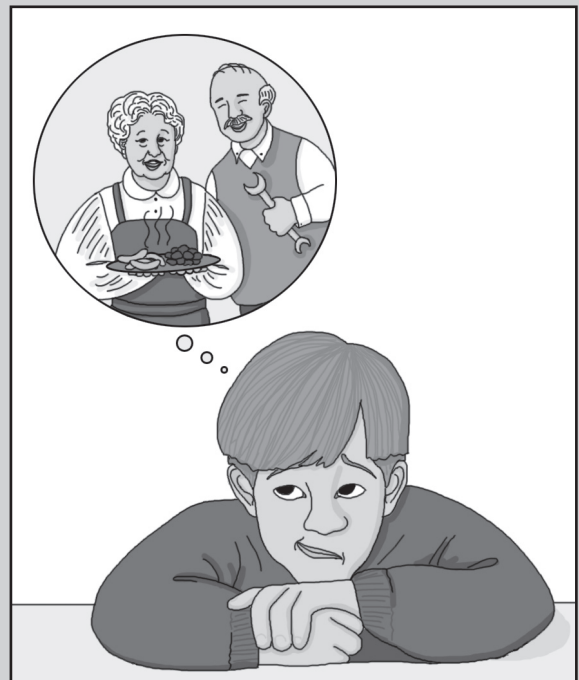
PART THREE: Check Your Understanding

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 boy’s summer holiday. As you read, ask yourself, ‘What is the story mostly about?’ Then answer the questions.

Al was not looking forward to his summer holiday. Even though all the girls in his class had squealed, ‘Oh you’re going to *Eu-rrrope* this summer! That is so exciting,’ Al knew better. He knew that he was not going to be spending the summer relaxing at nice cafés. Nor would he be touring the attractions in France or Italy. He was going to be spending time in Poland visiting his grandparents. Al knew he would be paraded in front of numerous relatives, none of whom he’d ever met. Everyone would sit around jabbering in a language he did not understand, while listening to polka music. His mother would kick him under the table if he didn’t eat his grandmother’s cooking. And his grandfather, who for some reason unknown to Al thought all boys were mechanical geniuses, would hand him a wrench and tell him to fix the tractor. Al expected to come back hungry, black-and-blue and greasy.



3. What is the story mostly about?

- Ⓐ A boy’s grandparents live in Poland.
- Ⓑ All the girls in a boy’s class think a trip to Europe is exciting.
- Ⓒ A boy is going away for the summer.
- Ⓓ A boy dreads his upcoming summer holiday.

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 boy's grandparents live in Poland.
This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story. It does not state the most important idea.
- Ⓑ All the girls in a boy's class think a trip to Europe is exciting.
This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story. The story is mostly about Al, not the girls in his class. This answer does not state the most important idea about the topic.
- Ⓒ A boy is going away for the summer.
This answer is not correct because it tells about only one idea in the story (Al is going away for the summer). It does not identify the most important idea in the story (He is dreading his summer holiday).
- A boy dreads his upcoming summer holiday.
This answer is correct because it identifies the topic (Al is going away for the summer) and states the most important idea about it (He is dreading his summer holiday).

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, 'Al was not looking forward to his summer holiday', tells about the most important idea.
- Ⓑ in the last sentence of the paragraph
This answer is not correct because the last sentence, 'Al expected to come back hungry, black-and-blue and greasy', does not state the most important idea of the story.
- Ⓒ in the middle of the paragraph
This answer is not correct because the middle of the paragraph gives the reasons why Al is not looking forward to his summer holiday. These details support the main idea, but do not state the main idea.
- Ⓓ by thinking about which idea is most important in the paragraph
This answer is not correct because the main idea is stated in the first sentence of the story.

<p>Finding Main Idea</p> <p>1. Another appropriate title for this article is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ ‘The First Tuesday in November’. Ⓑ ‘Horse Racing Around the World’. Ⓒ ‘Phar Lap’. Ⓓ ‘World’s Youngest Jockeys’. 	<p>Recalling Facts and Details</p> <p>4. In what year did Phar Lap win the Melbourne Cup?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ 1926 Ⓑ 1929 Ⓒ 1930 Ⓓ 1932
<p>Finding Main Idea</p> <p>2. The story mostly describes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ Phar Lap. Ⓑ P. St Albans. Ⓒ the increase in prize money. Ⓓ the history of the Melbourne Cup. 	<p>Understanding Sequence</p> <p>5. The sentences below describe several events that take place in the story.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phar Lap wins the Melbourne Cup. 2. Archer walks 885 km to compete in the race. 3. The winning horse is ridden by a 13 year old boy. 4. Phar Lap dies. <p>What is the correct order of the sentences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ 1, 2, 4, 3 Ⓑ 4, 3, 2, 1 Ⓒ 2, 4, 1, 3 Ⓓ 2, 3, 1, 4
<p>Recalling Facts and Details</p> <p>3. When was the first Melbourne Cup run?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ 1876 Ⓑ 1861 Ⓒ 1929 Ⓓ 1930 	<p>Understanding Sequence</p> <p>6. After Brisers ran and won the Melbourne Cup,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ the prize money increased significantly. Ⓑ Archer made the long trek to Melbourne. Ⓒ it was found that Briser’s jockey had been absent from school that day. Ⓓ Phar Lap died.