

INTRODUCTION

What is the **FOCUS** series?

FOCUS is a reading-strategy practice series. Each student book in the series provides brief instruction and concentrated practice for students in one targeted Reading Strategy. *FOCUS* also allows students the opportunity for self-assessment of their performance. It allows teachers the opportunity to identify and assess a student's level of mastery.

6 Reading Strategies featured in the *FOCUS* series:

- Understanding Main Idea and Details
- Understanding Sequence
- Recognising Cause and Effect
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Making Predictions
- Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences

The *FOCUS* series spans 8 reading levels (1.0–8.9). The reading passages in each book are designed so that the book can be used by all students performing at that reading level. The reading passages in each book progress from low to high along that reading level range.

Book	Reading Level
Book A	1.0–1.9
Book B	2.0–2.9
Book C	3.0–3.9
Book D	4.0–4.9
Book E	5.0–5.9
Book F	6.0–6.9
Book G	7.0–7.9
Book H	8.0–8.9

What is Understanding Main Idea and Details, the Reading Strategy featured in this *FOCUS* book?

The main idea is the most important idea in a passage. The main idea tells what the passage is mostly about. Everything in the passage relates somehow to the main idea. Every passage has a main idea, and each paragraph in a passage also has a main idea. Details are pieces of information in the passage that tell about or explain the main idea. Details tell who, what, when, where, why or how about a person, place or thing. Details can tell about the order in which things happen, or they can explain how to do something.

What is in each student book?

There are 48 student books in the *FOCUS* series. There is one student book for each of the 6 Reading Strategies, at each of the 8 reading levels. Each student book contains:

- *To the Student*
This introduces the program and should be read and discussed with students to make sure they understand what they are to do in the book.
- *Table of Contents*
- *Learn About (Modelled Practice)*
These two pages provide basic instruction and modelling in the understanding and application of the Reading Strategy. The Learn About should be read and discussed with students to make sure they understand the Reading Strategy. Additional tips for helping students understand and use the Reading Strategy are included in the Reading Strategy Tips for the Teacher on pages 12–13 of this teacher guide.
- *Lesson Preview (Guided Practice)*
These two pages include a sample reading passage and two selected-response questions with explanations of why each of the eight answer choices is correct or not correct. The Lesson Preview should be read, worked through, and discussed with students to make sure they understand how to answer strategy-based questions.
- *20 Lessons (Independent Practice)*
Each two-page lesson contains one reading passage, four strategy-based selected-response questions and one strategy-based constructed-response writing question.

Reading Passages: The reading passages progress across the reading level. The passage genres include:

—**Fiction:** personal narrative, realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy fiction, mystery, folktale, fable, legend

—**Nonfiction:** report, article, interview, letter, postcard, book report, movie review, diary entry, journal entry, biography, textbook lesson, directions, instructions, recipe, invitation, announcement, experiment

Selected-response questions: In each lesson, students apply the Reading Strategy to a reading passage and then choose the correct answers for four selected-response (multiple-choice) strategy-based questions. You should model how to answer these kinds of questions using information on the Lesson Preview pages.

Constructed-response writing questions: In each lesson, students apply the Reading Strategy to a reading passage and then write a short response to a strategy-based question. You should model how to answer these kinds of questions by using one of the sample answers provided on pages 28–29 of this teacher guide.

- *Tracking Chart*
Students use this chart for noting their completion of and performance in each lesson.
- *Self-Assessments*
These five forms allow students the opportunity for self-assessment of their performance.
- *Answer Form*
Students may use this form to record their answers to the eighty selected-response questions and to indicate that they have answered each of the twenty constructed-response writing questions.

What is in each teacher guide?

There are 48 teacher guides in the *FOCUS* series, one for each student book. Each teacher guide contains:

- suggested instructions for using the *FOCUS* series effectively in the classroom
- Reading Strategy Tips for the Teacher, a facsimile of the Learn About on pages 2–3 of the student book, with tips for additional discussion related to understanding and using the Reading Strategy
- four reproducibles: three Teacher Assessments to be used for individual student assessment in the Reading Strategy and one Class or Group Performance Graph to be used for class or group assessment in the Reading Strategy
- summary of research that supports the *FOCUS* series
- a completed Answer Form for the eighty selected-response questions in the student book
- Answers for the eighty selected-response questions, plus sample answers for the twenty constructed-response writing questions in the student book

How should I use the Reading Strategy Tips for the Teacher?

These pages contain a facsimile of the Learn About on pages 2–3 of the student book, along with extended information about the Reading Strategy, which you can use as a basis for in-depth discussion to make sure students understand the strategy and how to use it for better reading comprehension.

Where do students record their answers?

Students should fill in their answers to the selected-response questions on the Answer Form on page 53 of the student book. If students use the Answer Form, they may detach it from the book. Alternatively, students may fill in the correct answers directly on the student book page.

Students should write their answers to the constructed-response questions directly on the lines provided in the student book. Students who use the Answer Form for the selected-response questions should fill in the circle on the Answer Form to show that they have answered the constructed-response question, which is the fifth question in each lesson.

READING STRATEGY TIPS FOR THE TEACHER

A main idea is a sentence that sums up what the author says about the topic, or subject, of the passage. It is the main point the author makes about the topic of the passage. It is what the passage is mostly about. Everything in the passage relates in some way to the main idea.

Details support or explain the main idea by providing additional information or giving examples. A detail may be important, but it is not a main idea. It is not what the passage is mostly about; it is what the passage is partly about.

In the Learn About paragraph, “You can look at the river from the Victorian side of the river” is not the main idea of the paragraph because everything in the paragraph is not about looking at the river from the Victorian side of the river. That is what part of the paragraph is about. It is a detail telling about one way to look at the Murray River.

A whole passage has a main idea, and each individual paragraph in the passage also has a main idea. The paragraph main ideas are usually details for the passage main idea. The details for each paragraph main idea are in the paragraph itself. Sometimes a long report or article is divided into sections indicated by boldface headings. Then there is a passage main idea, section main ideas, and paragraph main ideas. The paragraphs under a section are the details of the section main idea. An outline clearly reflects this kind of main idea-and-details hierarchy.

Learn About

Understanding Main Idea and Details

The **main idea** is the most important idea in a passage, or piece of writing. The main idea tells what the passage is *mostly about*. Every passage has a main idea. Every paragraph also has a main idea.


Details are pieces of information that *tell about* a main idea. Details explain the main idea. They tell who, what, when, where, why or how. Details can describe a person, place or thing. Details can tell about the order in which events happen. Details can explain how to do something.

Read this note. Find the main idea and the details that tell about the main idea.

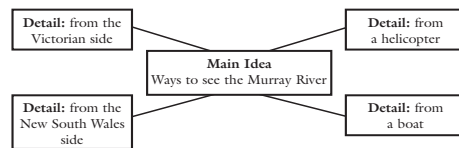
10 August, 2008

Dear Kate,

There are so many different ways to see the Murray River. You can look at the river from the Victorian side of the river. Then you can walk across a bridge to New South Wales and see it from that side. You can sail on the river on a boat, or you can fly over the river in a helicopter. I am having a great time here.



Your friend, Anna



A main idea may be stated directly in a sentence. In the Learn About paragraph, “There are so many different ways to see the Murray River” is the main idea. This main idea is stated in the first sentence of this paragraph. Sometimes the main idea is not directly stated. Then you have to use the details to figure out what the passage is mostly about. What do all the details tell something about?

The main idea of the note is that there are many ways to see the Murray River. It is stated in the first sentence. A main idea may be stated in other parts of a passage, too. Or it may not be directly stated at all. If the main idea is not stated, ask yourself questions like these: What is this passage mostly about? What is the most important idea?

The details in the passage about the Murray River describe the different ways to see the river. They tell four ways to see the river. You can see them from the Victorian side of the river. You can see it from a boat. You can see it from a helicopter.

The passage about the Murray River has one paragraph. Other passages might have more than one paragraph. Still, the whole passage has a main idea. And each paragraph in the passage also has a main idea.



The main idea is what the passage is mostly about. Details are pieces of information that tell about the main idea.

Definitions: “The explicitness with which teachers teach comprehension strategies makes a difference in learner outcomes, especially for low-achieving students (modeling and careful scaffolding is key).” (Abadiano & Turner, 2003, p. 76).

Abadiano, H. R., & Turner, J. (2003). The RAND report: Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 39(2), 74–79.

Details telling who, what, when, where, why or how are often mixed together in a passage. In the following paragraph, “Sasha loves her cat” is the main idea. The other sentences are details, giving various types of information about Sasha’s cat.

Sasha loves her cat, Annie (who). Sasha thinks of Annie as one of her best friends (what) because Annie is fun and always likes to do what Sasha is doing (why or how). Sasha got Annie a year ago (when) at an animal shelter (where), and she is very happy she did.

Here are more examples of each type of detail.

Details telling who: *Nine kids came to the party. Three of them were my cousins Sam, Alex and Michelle.*

Details telling what: *I love the summer because I can relax, play cricket, sit in the garden and read, and swim whenever I want to.*

Details telling when: *Liz likes to eat fruit. She eats it at breakfast, lunch and tea. Actually, she eats it all day long.*

Details telling where: *They hid the prizes everywhere: under the napkins, on tops of shelves, in the corners and behind the doors.*

Details telling why or how: *Frank isn’t sure how he kicked the winning goal, but he thinks it’s because he practised a lot and loves to play football.*