

STUDENT BOOK E

# FOCUS on

UNDERSTANDING MAIN  
IDEA AND DETAILS

**HAWKER BROWNLOW**  
EDUCATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

# To the Student

In *FOCUS on Understanding Main Idea and Details, Book E*, you will read passages and answer questions. You will practise using the reading strategy called Understanding Main Idea and Details. You will learn about the strategy on the Learn About pages. You will see a sample passage, sample questions and sample answer choices on the Lesson Preview pages. Then you will practise using the strategy in twenty lessons.

Each lesson has a passage and five questions. After you finish reading the passage, answer the five questions. For the first four questions, fill in the correct answers on the Answer Form on page 53. Or, you may fill in the correct answers directly on the page. For the fifth question, write the answer on the lines provided on the page. Fill in the circle on the Answer Form to show that you have completed the fifth question.

Use the Tracking Chart on page 47 to show when you have finished each lesson and to show the number of questions that you answered correctly. After each group of five lessons, you will complete a self-assessment to see how you are doing.

So . . . FOCUS and enjoy!

## Acknowledgments

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Photo Credit: page 14, Tourism NT  
(www.travelnt.com)

Originally published by

 **CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES®, INC.**

Republished in Australia by

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© 2006 Curriculum Associates, Inc.

© 2007 Hawker Brownlow Education

Printed in Australia

Code: CA10155

ISBN: 1 74101 955 9

0407

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# Table of Contents

Learn About Understanding Main Idea and Details .....	2
Lesson Preview .....	4
Lesson 1      The Shade Seller .....	6
Lesson 2      Alice in Metland .....	8
Lesson 3      Errol Flynn .....	10
Lesson 4      Help! .....	12
Lesson 5      At Kakadu.....	14
Lesson 6      A New Home .....	16
Lesson 7      Sharing Our Roots.....	18
Lesson 8      Sadako and the Paper Cranes .....	20
Lesson 9      Fruit + Air = Brown.....	22
Lesson 10      A Day of Fun.....	24
Lesson 11      World's Largest Lizard.....	26
Lesson 12      A Visit to the Past.....	28
Lesson 13      Norman Lindsay .....	30
Lesson 14      Australian Women Writers.....	32
Lesson 15      ANZAC Day.....	34
Lesson 16      Oona Saves the Day.....	36
Lesson 17      Australian Megafauna.....	38
Lesson 18      Bringing Home the Woman, the Dog and the Tent .....	40
Lesson 19      A Woman with a Purpose.....	42
Lesson 20      We Need to Recycle.....	44
Tracking Chart .....	47
Self-Assessment 1, Lessons 1–5 .....	48
Self-Assessment 2, Lessons 6–10 .....	49
Self-Assessment 3, Lessons 11–15 .....	50
Self-Assessment 4, Lessons 16–20 .....	51
Self-Assessment 5, Lessons 1–20 .....	52
Answer Form .....	53

# Learn About

## ***Understanding Main Idea and Details***

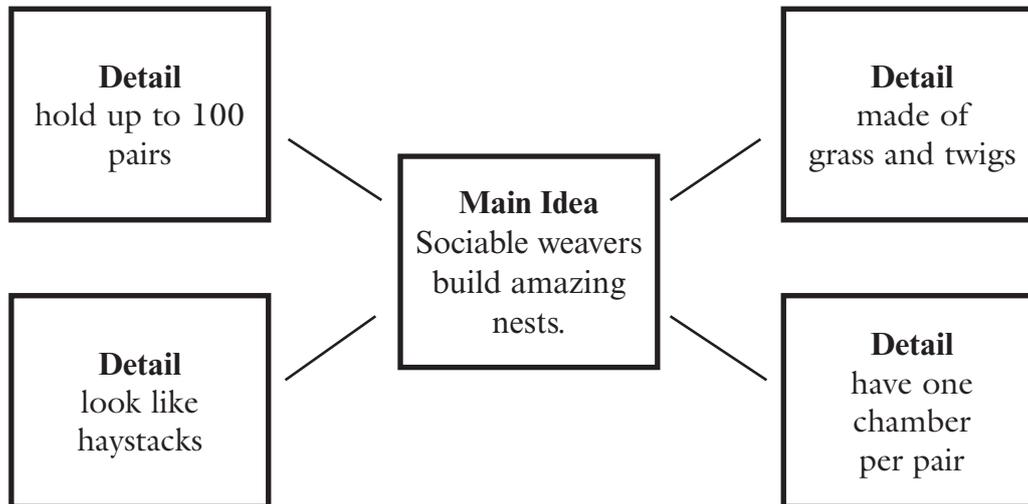
The **main idea** is the most important idea in a passage or piece of writing. The main idea tells what the passage is *mostly about*. Every passage has a main idea. Every paragraph in a passage also has a main idea.

**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 the order in which events happen or they can explain how to do something.

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

Sociable weavers are small birds that build amazing nests. These birds make their home in Africa's Kalahari Desert. What makes these birds so sociable is that they like living in large groups. One of their nests may hold up to 100 pairs. The nest looks like an enormous haystack perched in a tree. Many pairs cooperate to build the nest out of grass and twigs. The bottom of the nest has an opening for each pair of birds. Each opening leads to a separate private chamber. There a pair sleeps, breeds, and escapes from the harsh midday sun.





The main idea of the passage is that sociable weavers build amazing nests. It is stated in the first sentence. A main idea may be stated anywhere in a passage. Or it may not be directly stated at all. If the main idea is not directly stated, ask yourself questions like these: What is this passage mostly about? What is the most important idea?

The details in the passage about sociable weavers give more information about the amazing nests. One detail tells that a nest can hold 100 pairs. Another detail tells that a nest looks like a haystack. Another tells that a nest is made of grass and twigs. Another tells that a nest has one chamber for each pair of birds.

The passage about sociable weavers 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.

# Lesson

# Preview

*Read this sample passage about a young inventor. As you read, think about the main idea of the passage. Also think about what the details tell about the main idea*

## *The Determined Inventor*

Ralph Samuelson lived in a mountainous area with lots of snow. Like many other residents, he liked to ski. Unlike others, he had a dream. He didn't see why he shouldn't be able to do his favourite sport in summer as well as in winter. With determination, he set out to invent the sport of water-skiing.

In the summer of 1922, Ralph told friends he was going to try skiing on a local lake. Crowds of young people gathered to laugh and jeer. They didn't believe he could do it. Ralph put on his snow skis and took hold of a rope attached to a motor boat that his brother was driving. Promptly, Ralph sank.

Ralph refused to stop trying. He kept



experimenting with different ideas. Instead of snow skis, he tried boards from a barrel. When that didn't work, he used pine boards with the tips curled up. When the pine boards cracked, he strengthened them with metal. At first, he used boat rope, but that was too heavy, so he started using a lighter type of rope. Ralph tried many different ways of getting started. He finally settled on squatting in the water with the tips of his skis poking out of the water.

Finally, on 2 July, 1922, Ralph Samuelson was successful. The young people of the town were at the lake to cheer him on. They had come to respect his determination to keep experimenting until he succeeded.

### 1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- Ⓐ Ralph Samuelson didn't see why he couldn't ski in summer as well as in winter.
- Ⓑ On 2 July, 1922, Ralph Samuelson succeeded at water skiing.
- Ⓒ Determination helped Ralph Samuelson invent water-skiing.
- Ⓓ Water-skiing is a popular warm-weather sport.

### 2. Which of these details tells about Ralph Samuelson's first attempt to ski on water?

- Ⓐ He used pine boards with the tips curled up.
- Ⓑ His brother drove the motor boat.
- Ⓒ The young people of the town cheered him on.
- Ⓓ He kept experimenting with different ideas.

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

**1. What is the main idea of the passage?**

- Ⓐ Ralph Samuelson didn't see why he couldn't ski in summer as well as in winter.

*This answer is not correct because it is not what the whole passage is mostly about. It is an important piece of information in the first paragraph, but it is not the main idea of the whole passage.*

- Ⓑ On 2 July, 1922, Ralph Samuelson succeeded at water skiing.

*This answer is not correct because it is a detail about one of Ralph Samuelson's many attempts to ski on water. The whole passage is not about the first time he was successful.*

- Determination helped Ralph Samuelson invent water-skiing.

*This answer is correct because the whole passage does tell about Ralph Samuelson's determination to succeed at water-skiing.*

- Ⓓ Water-skiing is a popular warm-weather sport.

*This answer is not correct because the information is not mentioned anywhere in the passage. It may be true, but it is not stated in this passage.*

**2. Which of these details tells about Ralph Samuelson's first attempt to ski on water?**

- Ⓐ He used pine boards with the tips curled up.

*This answer is not correct because it is a detail that tells about something that Samuelson tried after his first attempt. The second paragraph of the passage says that he used his snow skis on his first attempt.*

- His brother drove the motor boat.

*This answer is correct because it is a detail that tells something about Samuelson's first attempt to ski on water. This detail is found in the second paragraph of the passage.*

- Ⓒ The young people of the town cheered him on.

*This answer is not correct because at Samuelson's first attempt, crowds of young people laughed and jeered. They cheered him on during his successful attempt, which was long after his first attempt.*

- Ⓓ He kept experimenting with different ideas.

*This answer is not correct because it is not a detail. It is the main idea of the third paragraph, which is mostly about Samuelson's experiments with different ideas.*