

TEACHER GUIDE **E**

# **F**OCUS on



UNDERSTANDING  
MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Reading Strategy Tips for the Teacher .....	12
Reproducibles:	
Teacher Assessment 1 .....	14
Teacher Assessment 2 .....	15
Teacher Assessment 3 .....	16
Class or Group Performance Graph .....	17
Research Summary .....	18
Answer Form .....	27
Answer Key .....	28

Originally published by

 **CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES®, INC.**

Republished in Australia by

**HAWKER BROWNLOW**

**E D U C A T I O N**

P.O. Box 8580, Heatherton

Victoria 3202, Australia

Phone: (03) 8558 2444 Fax: (03) 8558 2400

Toll Free Ph: 1800 33 4603 Fax: 1800 15 0445

Website: <http://www.hbe.com.au>

Email: [orders@hbe.com.au](mailto:orders@hbe.com.au)

© 2006 Curriculum Associates, Inc.

© 2007 Hawker Brownlow Education

Printed in Australia

Code: CA101559

ISBN: 1 74101 956 7

0407

This work is copyright. Apart from any fair dealings for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review or as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, communicated or recorded by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

# INTRODUCTION

---

---

## What is the *FOCUS* series?

## 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, “The bottom of the nest has an opening for each pair of birds” is not the main idea of the paragraph because everything in the paragraph is not about the bottom of the nest. That is what part of the paragraph is about. It is a detail telling one feature of a sociable weavers’ nest.

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. In that case, 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 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.



A main idea may be stated directly in a sentence. In the Learn About paragraph, “Sociable weavers are small birds that build amazing nests” 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 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.

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

© 2007 Hawker Brownlow Education 3 Understanding Main Idea and Details E CA10155

Details telling who, what, when, where, why, or how are often mixed together in a passage. In the following paragraph, “Fred enjoyed his last visit with his Gran” is the main idea. The other sentences are details, giving various types of information about why Fred enjoyed the visit.

*Fred enjoyed his last visit with his Gran. The two (who) spent a lot of time during that day (when) in Gran’s attic (where). They looked through old picture albums (what). Fred loved doing that because he got to remember or meet a lot of family members (why or how). Fred is looking forward to his next visit with Gran.*

Here are more examples of each type of detail.

Details telling who: *Three people witnessed the fire. Alex Johnson saw it from his porch, and Mr and Mrs Fielding saw it from the road.*

Details telling what: *Charles likes reading; he reads mysteries, science fiction and adventure stories.*

Details telling when: *Kara works in the garden in the morning before work and sometimes in the evening after she gets home.*

Details telling where: *Mud was everywhere: on the floor, on the walls, and even on the tables.*

Details telling why or how: *Dana knew she had done well in the test because she had studied, and she really knew the subject matter.*

**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.