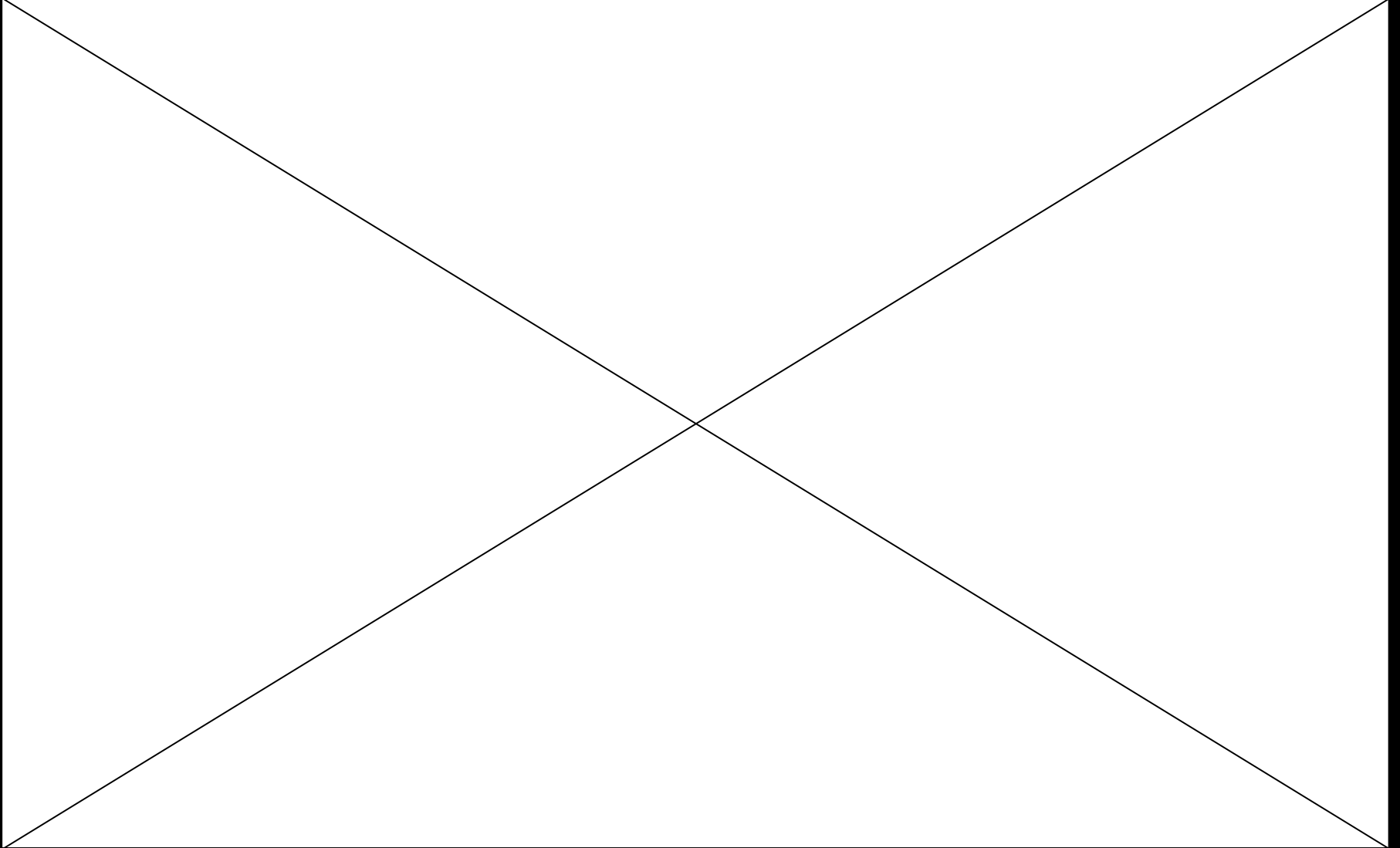


Finding the



Main Idea

Identify the Main Idea



How many times have you been asked, "**What's the main idea of this paragraph?**" in your Science, Social Studies, or LA classes?

And how many times have you wanted to say, "**I have no clue!**"?



Finding the main idea is an important reading strategy and comprehension skill to master.

Knowing the main idea of the entire selection helps you to **remember important details** in what you are reading. The main idea also gives you a **purpose for reading** and helps to **summarize** text.

Tips to Finding the Main Idea:

1. Look at the **title**.
2. Look at the **text features** for clues.
3. Look for **key words** that are used repeatedly.
4. Check the **first or last sentence** where the main idea might be stated.
5. Ask yourself, “what is the paragraph **mostly about?**” or “**what’s the point?**”

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5. Ask yourself, “what is the paragraph **mostly about?**” or “**what’s the point?**”

Be careful not to confuse the topic of a passage for the main idea.

Topic: Who or what the passage is about.

Main idea: The most important point the author is trying to make about the topic. Sometimes it is stated, but sometimes it is implied.

Apollo 13

The movie Apollo 13 was a blockbuster for the summer of 1995. It is an exciting story about space exploration. In the movie, the astronauts get in trouble while they are trying to return to Earth. People in the audience are on the edge of their seats waiting to see what happens. What makes it even more exciting is that it is a true story.



Answer

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Most teenagers and young adults do not know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. It is a big decision. There are a number of things you can do to narrow the choices. For example you can take an interest test, do some research on your own about a career, try volunteer work in the field in which you are interested, or "job-shadow", in which you spend a day with a person who is working in a field that interests you. These are just a few helpful ideas as you begin to choose a career.

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The United States seems to be in love with the idea of going out to eat. Because of this, a real variety of restaurants has come about specializing in all kinds of foods. McDonald's is the king of a subgroup of restaurants called fast-food restaurants. Chances are, no matter where you live, there is a McDonald's restaurant near you. There are even McDonald's in the Soviet Union. Now McDonald's is trying something new. It is called McDonald's Express and there is a test site in Peabody, Massachusetts. It is part of a Mobil gas station. This allows you to fill up with gas and fill up on food at the same time. What will they think of next?

Answer

*The United States seems to be in love with the idea of going out to eat. Because of this, a real variety of restaurants has come about specializing in all kinds of foods. **McDonald's is the king of a subgroup of restaurants called fast-food restaurants.** Chances are, no matter where you live, there is a McDonald's restaurant near you. There are even McDonald's in the Soviet Union. Now McDonald's is trying something new. It is called McDonald's Express and there is a test site in Peabody, Massachusetts. It is part of a Mobil gas station. This allows you to fill up with gas and fill up on food at the same time. What will they think of next?*

Implied Main Ideas

Sometimes a main idea in a selection is implied – only suggested by the supporting details and not clearly stated in one sentence.

To figure out an implied main idea, you must look at the supporting details and use them as clues.

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“The others are complaining that you don’t leave any coffee for anyone else.”

Look at this cartoon.

You can figure out the implied main idea here by looking at the details.

What clues are found in the details?

- His coworkers are complaining he doesn't leave any coffee for anyone else to drink.
- The man is on such a caffeine high that he is flying.

Main idea: The man is drinking too much coffee.

Main Idea Practice

1. Read the paragraph.
2. Record the main idea on your white board.

Text 1:

What is a mortgage? A mortgage is a particular kind of a loan. When someone takes out a mortgage, they get money to buy a house. They must pay the money back, plus interest. Usually people make a mortgage payment once each month. The house is collateral on the loan. That means that, if the payments aren't made, the bank can take the house. In fact, the bank holds the deed to the house until the mortgage is paid.



Answer

Main Idea: a definition of the word mortgage

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Text 2:

It can be played by one person, or by three or more people. A single player would hold one end of the rope in each hand. Then he or she would turn the rope so that it goes over his or her head. Each time the rope approaches the feet, he or she would jump over. For three or more players, two people would each hold one end of a long rope. They would turn the rope so that it touches the ground at the bottom, and goes above the players' heads at the top. The other people would take turns jumping.

Answer

Main Idea: how to jump rope (implied main idea)

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Text 3:

Can you tell when a storm is coming? There are some people who are very good at predicting when a storm is on its way. They may feel sore in their joints. Some say they can smell it. There are several ways to know if a storm is approaching. You can listen to weather reports. The reporters use equipment that can watch weather from a distance. Often, the wind will start to blow. Trees may start to sway, and small branches and leaves start to fall. The sky will get dark, and you may see clouds become dark grey or black and thick. If you see a lightning streak or hear thunder, it's a good idea to go inside!

Answer

Main Idea: There are several ways to know if a storm is on its way

Can you tell when a storm is coming? There are some people who are very good at predicting when a storm is on its way. They may feel sore in their joints. Some say they can smell it. **There are several ways to know if a storm is approaching.** You can listen to weather reports. The reporters use equipment that can watch weather from a distance. Often, the wind will start to blow. Trees may start to sway, and small branches and leaves start to fall. The sky will get dark, and you may see clouds become dark grey or black and thick. If you see a lightning streak or hear thunder, it's a good idea to go inside!

Text 4:

The Panama Canal is a manmade waterway. It is in the country of Panama. It connects the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. The Panama Canal allows ships to cross from one ocean to the other. It was built by the United States. Now, it belongs to the country of Panama.



Answer

Main Idea: What is the Panama Canal?

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Text 5:

"What difference does it make!" I yelled with fervor. Yet again, my sister corrected my pronunciation of a word. I screamed, "It doesn't matter how you pronounce it!" Boy, she frustrates me. My sister is a little smart alek sometimes. Ever since she won the third grade spelling bee, you'd think she's become the spelling and pronunciation police! She corrects everything I say.

Answer

Main Idea: The sister is a little smart alek.

"What difference does it make!" I yelled with fervor. Yet again, my sister corrected my pronunciation of a word. I screamed, "It doesn't matter how you pronounce it!" Boy, she frustrates me. **My sister is a little smart alek sometimes.** Ever since she won the third grade spelling bee, you'd think she's become the spelling and pronunciation police! She corrects everything I say.

Main Idea Song II

