

1. Let's practice finding the main idea of passages and stories.

Every passage or paragraph has a **main idea**. The main idea is the most important idea in a passage or story. A main idea may be stated clearly or suggested through supporting details.


Some paragraphs and stories have one sentence that gives the main idea. This sentence is called the **topic sentence**. The topic sentence gives the reader an idea of what that paragraph or story will be about.

2. Sometimes a passage does not have a topic sentence or a clearly stated main idea. When the main idea is not clearly stated, the supporting details of a paragraph or passage suggest the main idea. All of the details in the passage should support or center around the same, single idea.

When the main idea of a passage is not clearly stated, we say the main idea is implied or the passage has an **implied main idea**.

Poems and stories often have implied main ideas, and you must carefully read the details to find the main ideas. The main idea of a story often involves a lesson learned.

3. Now, read a passage and practice finding the main idea.

BARKER

BOOKSTORE


This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

Come and see what the **Barker Bookstore** has to offer for readers of all ages.

We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!


The bookstore also has a small café. Here, you can buy coffee and juices, as well as baked goods and sandwiches. Enjoy your snack at one of our café tables. Eat and talk with your friends or sip a delicious drink while you read.

With so much to offer, after you visit us for our grand opening, you'll return to the **Barker Bookstore** again and again.



4. Let's find the main idea of this passage.

Read the first part again.




This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

Come and see what the **Barker Bookstore** has to offer for readers of all ages.

We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!

The bookstore also has a small café. Here, you can buy coffee and juices, as well as baked goods and sandwiches. Enjoy your snack at one of our café tables. Eat and talk with your friends or sip a delicious drink while you read.

With so much to offer, after you visit us for our grand opening, you'll return to the **Barker Bookstore** again and again.




What is this section mostly about?

The first two sentences tell you a new bookstore is opening soon. These sentences encourage readers to visit the bookstore. The rest of the sentences in the section give details about everything at the bookstore. This section is mostly about what the Barker Bookstore has to offer to readers. The main idea of the section is **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

5. Now, let's read the second part of the passage.

BARKER



BOOKSTORE


This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

Come and see what the **Barker Bookstore** has to offer for readers of all ages.

We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!

The bookstore also has a small café. Here, you can buy coffee and juices, as well as baked goods and sandwiches. Enjoy your snack at one of our café tables. Eat and talk with your friends or sip a delicious drink while you read.

With so much to offer, after you visit us for our grand opening, you'll return to the **Barker Bookstore** again and again.



What is the second section mostly about?

The **second section** gives details about the bookstore's café. At the end of the second section, the passage says again that the Barker Bookstore has much to offer. These details support the idea that **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

6. The **speaker's message** is often very close to the main idea of a piece of writing. The speaker can be the narrator of a story or the voice of the writer in a nonfiction passage. The **speaker's message** is what the speaker is trying to tell the reader.

In the passage "Bookstore Grand Opening," the speaker's message matches the main idea. The speaker wants to tell you that **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

7. Author's Purpose

An author always has a **purpose**, or reason, for writing. An author will have one of these purposes:

- to inform, or give readers information
- to persuade readers to do or agree with something
- to express his or her own thoughts or feelings
- to entertain readers by telling a story


Knowing the author's purpose can help you when you read. A writer whose purpose is to inform will give you plenty of facts about a topic. You can learn from those facts as you read.

8. Read the passage about the bookstore again.

What is the purpose of this passage?

The **purpose** of a passage is related to the main idea. The main idea of this passage is the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers. If that is the main idea of the passage, the author's purpose is probably **to persuade readers to visit the Barker Bookstore**.

BARKER



BOOKSTORE


This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

Come and see what the **Barker Bookstore** has to offer for readers of all ages.

We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!

The bookstore also has a small café. Here, you can buy coffee and juices, as well as baked goods and sandwiches. Enjoy your snack at one of our café tables. Eat and talk with your friends or sip a delicious drink while you read.

With so much to offer, after you visit us for our grand opening, you'll return to the **Barker Bookstore** again and again.



Now, try to work through the next problems step by step.

1. Now, let's practice finding the main idea.

Read the passage below.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about **how fights start between friends?**

- A** no
- B** yes

2. Let's look at the choices again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about people who say mean things?

- A yes
- B no

3. Let's look at the choices again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about **taking a time-out to think before you react?**

- A** yes
- B** no

4. Now, let's identify the speaker's message.

Read the passage again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is the speaker's message in this passage?

- A. Friends who spread rumors are not really your friends.
- B. You should take a minute to cool down before reacting in anger.
- C. People who say something mean should have to take a time-out.
- D. Often, mean comments arise from misunderstandings.

Is the speaker's message that "Friends who spread rumors are not really your friends"?

- A yes
- B no

5. Let's read the choices again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is the speaker's message in this passage?

- A. Friends who spread rumors are not really your friends.
- B. You should take a minute to cool down before reacting in anger.
- C. People who say something mean should have to take a time-out.
- D. Often, mean comments arise from misunderstandings.

Is the speaker's message that "You should take a minute to cool down before reacting in anger"?

- A yes
- B no

6. Here's another selection to read.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in this selection?

- A. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.
- B. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland.
- C. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are no longer considered endangered.
- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence A** belong in the selection?

- A** no
- B** yes

7. Read the selection again.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in this selection?

- A. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.
- B. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland.
- C. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are no longer considered endangered.
- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence B** belong in the selection?

- A** yes
- B** no

8. Read the selection once again.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in this selection?

- A. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.
- B. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland.
- C. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are no longer considered endangered.
- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence C** belong in the selection?

- A** yes
- B** no

Now, work these practice problems on your own.

1.

Making Mummies

Long ago, people in Egypt made mummies in order to preserve the bodies of the dead. In order to preserve the body, the mummy makers had to follow many steps.

1. First, they cut open the body to remove some of the organs inside. They removed the stomach, the intestines, the liver, and the lungs.
2. Next, the body was covered inside and out with salt. The salt dried out the body.
3. The salt-filled body was placed on a tilted board, called the "bed of mummification."
4. The body was left on the board for about 35 to 40 days until the body was completely dry.
5. The body was filled with more salt, along with spices. Then, the body was sewn up.
6. The body was rubbed with oil to make it waterproof.
7. Finally, the body was wrapped with strips of a material called linen.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A how mummies were made in ancient Egypt
- B why ancient Egyptians made mummies
- C why mummies are wrapped in linen strips
- D how ancient Egyptians removed organs from bodies

2.

The Loch Ness Monster

Suppose you are traveling by boat on a large, calm lake. You see graceful hills and an old castle. The sky is blue, and hardly a breeze stirs the air. It is a beautiful, perfect day on Loch Ness, a lake in the heart of Scotland.

Suddenly, you catch a glimpse of something out of the corner of your eye. You turn your head and squint your eyes. There! You see it again. It looks like the head of a dinosaur is poking up from the water. The head turns toward you and seems to nod. Then, it disappears below the water. You wait breathlessly, but you don't see it again.

Did you just catch a glimpse of the Loch Ness monster? Many people wonder whether the monster truly exists. Scientists have studied the lake for many years, but they still cannot prove the Loch Ness monster exists. Even so, people love to believe that beneath the water, a secret, dinosaur-like animal swims happily.

What is the purpose of this passage?

- A to invite people to wonder about the Loch Ness monster
- B to explain about the scientists who study the Loch Ness monster
- C to encourage people to visit Loch Ness
- D to relate a personal experience about the Loch Ness monster

3. **Who Was William Penn?**

William Penn was the founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. In the 1600s, several countries in Europe had staked claims in North America. Britain was one of those countries, and William Penn was from Britain. In 1681, King Charles II of England gave William Penn lands in North America. Charles II was born in 1630. The king asked that these lands be named for William Penn's father, so the colony was called Pennsylvania.

William Penn arrived in the colony in 1682. Penn had very strong beliefs. He believed people should be able to worship freely. He also believed colonists should treat Native Americans fairly. Penn established a government where people had a say in the laws. These ideas were very different from the ideas in Britain at that time. Penn also helped design the layout for the city of Philadelphia. William Penn set an example of what an ideal colony could be.

What is the speaker's message in this passage?

- A** William Penn had strong beliefs about fairness and religious freedom, and he founded the colony of Pennsylvania on the basis of those beliefs.
- B** William Penn was a great architect and engineer who designed several cities, including Philadelphia.
- C** William Penn's father did great things for Britain, and so the king rewarded him with land in the American colonies.
- D** Britain would not have lost its American colonies if these colonies had followed the model set out by William Penn.

4. **Who Was William Penn?**

William Penn was the founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. In the 1600s, several countries in Europe had staked claims in North America. Britain was one of those countries, and William Penn was from Britain. In 1681, King Charles II of England gave William Penn lands in North America. Charles II was born in 1630. The king asked that these lands be named for William Penn's father, so the colony was called Pennsylvania.

William Penn arrived in the colony in 1682. Penn had very strong beliefs. He believed people should be able to worship freely. He also believed colonists should treat Native Americans fairly. Penn established a government where people had a say in the laws. These ideas were very different from the ideas in Britain at that time. Penn also helped design the layout for the city of Philadelphia. William Penn set an example of what an ideal colony could be.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in the selection?

- A** William Penn arrived in the colony in 1682.
- B** Charles II was born in 1630.
- C** Penn established a government where people had a say in the laws.
- D** William Penn set an example of what an ideal colony could be like.

5. **Peter's Big Problem**

Peter had a problem. He had promised his aunt he would help her get her pool ready for the summer. Last year, Peter had enjoyed working on his aunt's pool. He thought it was fun to run the underwater vacuum cleaner and sweep away the leaves from the deck. He liked testing the water with chemicals to make sure it was good to swim in. Peter knew if he helped his aunt, he would have a good summer, swimming with his friends.

Peter's problem wasn't the pool. The problem was his friends were going to the new Game Zone arcade on the same day Peter's aunt needed help with the pool. Peter and his friends had waited all winter for the arcade to open. It had all kinds of amazing virtual-reality games such as "Space Cruisers" and "World Soccer Championships." Peter didn't know what to do.

What is the main question answered by this selection?

- A How will Peter get out of helping his aunt?
- B What is Peter's big problem?
- C What is Peter's favorite arcade game?
- D When will Peter meet his friends at the arcade?

6. **Cookies vs. Cards**

Our class is trying to decide how to raise money. Some students have suggested we have a bake sale, but others think we should sell cards. I will tell you why I think selling cards is a better way to raise money.

After reading this first paragraph, what do you think the rest of the passage will be about?

- A a list of ingredients and tips for making cookies
- B reasons why the speaker thinks selling cards is a better way to raise money
- C instructions for making cards by using a computer and classroom supplies
- D some additional ideas for ways to raise money, such as having a car wash