

EMPOWERING TEACHERS

Listening/Reading Comprehension Instructional Routine:

Identify the Main Idea from Text

Preparation/Materials: large teacher copy of all stories (#1, #2, and #3), student copies of stories #2 and #3

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- *Italicized sentences are what the teacher does*
- **Bold type is what the teacher says**
- Regular type is what the student(s) say
- **Bullet (•) and bolded type are what the teacher and student(s) say in unison**
- Teacher or student slides finger under underlined letter(s) or word(s)

TEACHER EXPLAINS TASK

We are going to identify the main idea in a paragraph. The main idea is the most important information about the topic. When we know the main idea, it helps us to remember and retell what we read.

TEACHER SETS UP TASK

Sentences in a paragraph are related by a topic. The topic is who or what the paragraph is about. The sentences in the paragraph provide details or more information about the topic.

The main idea is usually one of the sentences in the paragraph. However, sometimes there is not a main idea sentence. Then we must figure out the main idea based on the details or information in the paragraph.

Suppose you heard your friends reading a paragraph about alligators. The topic would be 'alligators'. If the topic of the paragraph is about alligators and the details tell us about their size, then the main idea might be 'alligators are big reptiles.'

Listen and follow along as I read Story #1. After reading, I will find the topic and the main idea. *Point to each word as you read aloud from the large copy of the text.*

#1. The boys are making pizza. Tom rolled out the pizza dough. Jose spread sauce on top of the dough. Martin added sausage and cheese to the pizza. Now the pizza was ready to bake.

To find the topic, I ask: "Who or what is the paragraph about?"
The paragraph is about pizza. So, the topic of this paragraph is 'pizza'.

To find the main idea, I ask: "What is the most important information the author wants me to know about the topic which is 'pizza'?"

The author has written that one boy rolled out the pizza dough, another boy put sauce on top, and the third boy added sausage and cheese to the pizza.
So the most important information or the main idea is 'the boys are making pizza'.

Can I find this main idea sentence in the story?

Yes. The main idea is often the first sentence in the paragraph, but it isn't always the first sentence. There may not even be a main idea sentence in the paragraph. Then, I have to figure out the main idea based on the other information in the paragraph.

Let's try the next one together.

TEACHER AND STUDENTS PRACTICE TASK TOGETHER

Remember, the topic is who or what the paragraph is about.

What is the topic?

- The topic is who or what the paragraph is about.

The main idea of a paragraph is the most important information about the topic.

What is the main idea of a paragraph?

- The main idea is the most important information about the topic.

The other sentences in a paragraph are details about the topic.

A detail is part of the information about the topic.

What is a detail?

- A detail is part of the information about the topic.

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TEACHER AND STUDENTS PRACTICE TASK TOGETHER (continued)

The main idea can be one of the sentences in the paragraph. If there is not a main idea sentence, then we figure out the main idea based on the details or information in the paragraph.

Name one way to find the main idea?

- We look for a sentence in the paragraph to find the main idea.

Name another way to find the main idea when there is not a main idea sentence in the paragraph.

- We figure out the main idea based on the information in the paragraph.

Get ready to listen to a new story. Pass out copies of story #2.

Think about who or what the paragraph is about to find the topic.

What are we going to think about first?

- We are going to think about who or what the paragraph is about.

Next, think about the most important information the author wants you to know about the topic.

What are we going to think about next?

- We are going to think about the most important information about the topic.

Look at story #2 and follow along as I read it aloud. *Point to each word as you read aloud from the large copy of the text.*

Story #2. When Travis goes to visit his grandmother, he usually swims in her swimming pool. Sometimes he swims or floats in an inner tube down the nearby river. However, the next time he goes to visit his grandmother, they are going to swim in the ocean.

To find the topic, ask: who or what is the paragraph about?

Travis is who the paragraph is about and swimming is what the paragraph is about. Now we have to figure out which one is the topic.

Does the paragraph tell us more about Travis?

- No

Does the paragraph tell us more about swimming or where to swim?

- Yes

That's right. The sentences in the paragraph provide more information about swimming.

The topic is 'swimming'.

What is the topic?

- The topic is swimming.

To find the main idea, ask: what is the most important information about swimming?

The main idea is 'Travis swims in many places.'

What is the main idea?

- Travis swims in many places.

Is this main idea sentence in the paragraph?

- No.

That's right. The sentence, 'Travis swims in many places' is not in the paragraph.

We had to figure out the main idea based on the other information in the paragraph.

So, how did you figure out the main idea?

- We had to figure out the main idea based on the other information in the paragraph.

Each sentence tells us about one of the places to go swimming. The main idea tells us about swimming in many places.

STUDENTS PRACTICE TASK

We are going to identify the topic and the main idea in another paragraph. Remember, the main idea is the most important information about the topic.

What is the topic in a paragraph?

The topic is who or what the paragraph is about.

What is the main idea in a paragraph?

The main idea is the most important information about the topic.

The main idea can be one of the sentences in the story. If it is not there, we have to figure out the main idea based on the details or information in the paragraph.

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STUDENTS PRACTICE TASK (continued)

Name one way to find the main idea.

Look for a sentence in the story that tells us the most important information about the topic.

Name another way to find the main idea when it is not a sentence in the paragraph.

Figure out the main idea based on the information in the story.

Get ready to listen to a new story. Pass out copies of story #3.

What are you going to think about first to find the topic?

I am going to think about who or what the story is about.

Yes, think about who or what the story is about to find the topic.

What are you going to think about next to find the main idea?

I am going to think about the most important information about the topic.

Yes, think about the most important information the author wants you to know about the topic.

Find story #3 and follow along as I read it aloud. Point to each word as you read aloud from the large copy of the text.

Story #3. We usually see water as a liquid. We drink and swim in liquid water. Sometimes the water gets very cold and turns to ice. When water becomes hard and frozen solid, it is ice. Ice cubes are a solid form of water. When the ice cubes melt, the water becomes a liquid again. Sometimes the water becomes very hot and turns to a gas. When water becomes a gas it disappears into the air. The clouds in the sky are made of this gas or water vapor. Water can be a liquid, solid, or gas.

To find the topic, ask who or what is the paragraph about.

What is the topic or what is the paragraph about?

It is about water.

To find the main idea, ask what is the most important information about water.

What information did we learn about water?

We learned that water can be a liquid, a solid, or a gas.

Yes, this sentence tells the most important information about the topic in this paragraph.

Could this be the main idea sentence?

Yes.

Is this sentence in the story?

Yes.

Where is this sentence in the story?

It is the last sentence.

That's right. You did a great job of finding the main idea.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

When students consistently identify the topic and main idea, provide individual turns using other explicit passages.

SCAFFOLDING SUGGESTION FOR ERRORS

Verify that students are correctly identifying the topic and main idea. If students are experiencing difficulty with this concept, use fewer sentences in a paragraph and provide a chart that has a column for topic and a column for the most important information about that topic to find the main idea.

Adaptations using this Instructional Routine:

- Provide copies of a paragraph from familiar, decodable text. Ask students to answer the two questions on the graphic organizer attached to this routine.
- Have students listen to a simple recorded text. Ask students to identify the topic and main idea after listening.

For further independent practice with identifying the main idea, refer to the following Kindergarten and First Grade FCRR Student Center Activities at

http://www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/pdf/GK-1/Archive/C_Final.pdf

- C.026 (do not use the summarizing part of this activity)
- C.027
- C.028
- C.029

- 1. The boys are making pizza. Tom rolled out the pizza dough. Jose spread sauce on top of the dough. Martin added sausage and cheese to the pizza. Now the pizza was ready to bake.**
- 2. When Travis goes to visit his grandmother, he usually swims in her swimming pool. Sometimes he swims or floats in an inner tube down the nearby river. However, the next time he goes to visit his grandmother, there are going to swim in the ocean.**
- 3. We usually see water as a liquid. We drink and swim in liquid water. Sometimes the water gets very cold and turns to ice. When water becomes hard and frozen solid, it is ice. Ice cubes are a solid form of water. When the ice cubes melt, the water becomes a liquid again. Sometimes the water becomes very hot and turns to a gas. When water becomes a gas it disappears into the air. The clouds in the sky are made of this gas or water vapor. Water can take the form of a liquid, solid or gas.**

Who or what is the paragraph about?

**Tell the most important thing about
the who and what.**

**Tell the main idea of the paragraph
in 10 words or less.**