

REM 484

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

SPECIFIC SKILLS

High-interest comprehensive activities to help students identify, locate, and write main ideas

READING



High-Interest Topics

Plenty of Practice

Writing Exercises

A Color-Coding Process

Practical Applications



Remedia Publications

Name _____

Finding the Main Idea in a Sentence

In each of the following sentences, tell the main idea of the sentence in six words or less. Write your answer on the line below each sentence.



1. Arizona and New Mexico were once grouped together as the Territory of New Mexico.

2. Coronado and his men explored the southwestern United States when they were looking for the seven cities of gold.

3. Marco Polo was one of the first Europeans to visit China and returned to Europe with strange spices and exciting stories.

4. Andrew Jackson, nicknamed "Old Hickory," led men at the Battle of New Orleans before becoming President of the United States.

5. The inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell, was born in Scotland.

6. Born in New Orleans, the great jazz musician Louis Armstrong was called "Satchmo."

7. Juan Peron's wife, Eva, was such an interesting and powerful person in Argentina that books and plays have been written about her.

Steps to Finding the Main Ideas in Paragraphs

After reading each paragraph on the following pages, use these steps to help you decide which answer is the best main idea given.

STEP 1: Use a **green** colored pencil and underline each sentence in the paragraph that seems to have something to do with answer **a**.

STEP 2: Use a **red** colored pencil and underline each sentence in the paragraph that seems to have something to do with answer **b**.

STEP 3: Use a **blue** colored pencil and underline each sentence in the paragraph that has something to do with answer **c**.

NOTE: You may underline the same sentence with two or three colors if necessary.

STEP 4: Write the number of sentences underlined in **green** next to the letter **a**, the number underlined in **red** next to the letter **b**, and the number underlined in **blue** next to the letter **c**.

STEP 5: The answer with the highest number next to it is probably the correct main idea. If you are not sure or have a tie, look for the two *most important* things to learn from the paragraph and choose the main idea that includes *both* of them.

WARNING: Be sure you have a **GOOD REASON** to underline a sentence with each color **BEFORE** you underline it!

STEP 6: As you go through the exercises, look for clues to writing main ideas. Watch for some of the following clues:

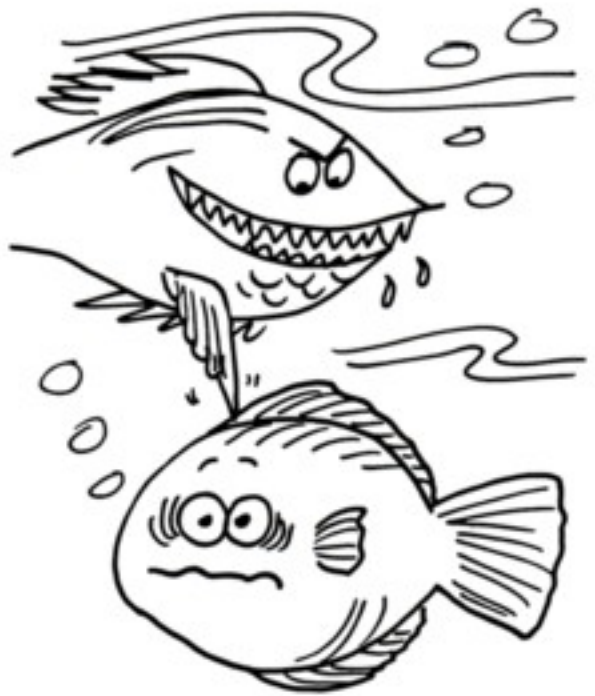
- Are unimportant details often included in main ideas?
- Does the main idea cover most of the ideas that are necessary to the paragraph?
- Is anything really important left out of the main idea?
- Are numbers or dates usually included in main ideas?

Finding the Main Idea in a Paragraph

Follow steps 1 through 6 on page 7. Then circle the letter next to the best main idea for each paragraph.

1. Flying fish leave the ocean to escape from larger fish that might eat them. They do not really fly but move along the surface of the water and vibrate their tails in the water. Then they use their wing-like fins to glide upward. Some use two fins, and others use four. Most live in warmer parts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

- a. Flying fish escape from larger fish by using their fins to glide upward in warm oceans.
- b. Flying fish do not really fly but use their fins to go out of the water.
- c. Flying fish can be found in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.



2. Flatfish have both eyes on the topside of their flat bodies. They swim along the bottom of the ocean. Small flatfish, called soles, have small eyes and a small mouth. Flounders are larger flatfish which include halibuts, turbot, dabs, flukes, and flounders. These are tasty fish which are often eaten.

- a. Soles and flounders are flatfish.
- b. Flatfish include soles and members of the flounder family which all have flat bodies with two eyes on the same side of their bodies.
- c. Flatfish like flounders are good to eat.

Name _____

Writing the Main Idea

Read each short paragraph below. Then fill in the missing words to tell the main idea.

1. Stamp collecting is educational because you learn about flags, rulers of countries, nature, and different lands. It is also a fun way to make new friends. You can trade stamps with others and join stamp clubs.



Stamp _____ is an _____
and _____ hobby.

2. If you become a stamp collector, there are some special things that you will use. You need a stamp catalog. This catalog has pictures of stamps from different countries. Then you can match stamps you buy or get in the mail to the pictures. Most stamp collectors use stamp tongs to pick up their stamps. These are similar to tweezers and keep fingerprints off of the stamps.



_____ collectors need stamps, a _____
_____, and _____
_____.

3. There are certain things to look for when buying stamps for your collection. Brightly colored stamps are more valuable than faded stamps. Stamps with most of their stickiness are more prized than ones without the gum on the back. The picture should be centered so there is a good frame around the stamp design.

There are _____ things to _____
_____ when _____
_____.

Name _____

Writing the Main Idea

Read each short paragraph below. Then fill in the missing words to tell the main idea.

1. Before the postage stamp was invented, the person who received the letter had to pay for its transportation. The letters were sealed with wax and a special print was made in the wax to identify the sender. Around 1840, the first postage stamp was introduced in England. For a penny you could send a letter anywhere in England.



Before the first _____ ,
the person who _____ the
_____ had to _____
the postage.

2. The first stamp, called the "Penny Black," cost only a penny. This was less than most people had been paying to get letters. As a result, the number of letters mailed in Great Britain (which included England) doubled in a year! Soon other countries started using postage stamps and lowering their rates.

People sent _____ once
postage _____ were introduced and the
rates were _____ .



3. One year after the "Penny Black" had been in use, a woman put an ad in a London newspaper for used stamps. She wanted to use the stamps for wallpaper in her bedroom. This woman was really the first stamp collector.

The first _____ wanted
to _____ her
_____ with the stamps.