

Nonfiction Reading Strategies

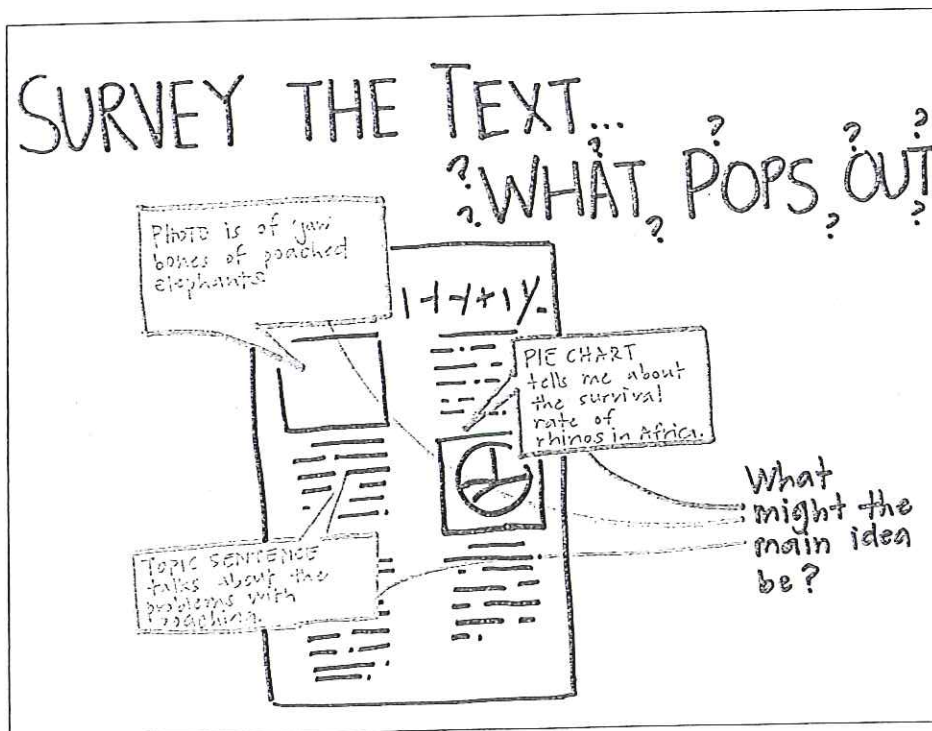
Survey the Text

Strategy Survey the text by glancing at the big things that jump out at you visually—the heading(s), title(s), and visual(s). Ask yourself, “What does it seem like this text is mostly about?” Then, go back and read the text with that main idea in mind. Check the facts you learn to see if they really do fit with the main idea statement you’ve already made. When you finish reading, revise the main idea statement based on the new information you have.

Teaching Tip You can help students synthesize a larger section of text—a whole book—by teaching them to survey the table of contents before beginning to read. You can also tweak this to focus on either main idea or main topic depending on text level.

Prompts

- Look across the page. Tell me what you see.
- If you put all the visuals together, what do you think it’s mostly about?
- What do most of the features have in common (topic or idea)?
- Check the facts to make sure that’s the main idea.
- Do you have any changes to make to your main idea statement, after reading the facts?
- Hmm. It seems like that doesn’t quite fit. Revise your thinking.
- You put all the visuals together to figure out what it’s mostly about!



Who is this for?

LEVELS

J-Z+

GENRE / TEXT TYPE

expository nonfiction

SKILLS

synthesizing,
determining
importance



Hat Tip: *The Nonfiction Now Lesson Bank, Grades 4-8: Strategies and Routines for Higher-Level Comprehension in the Content Areas* (Akhavan 2014)

1

I can't wait until this weekend! We're going to my grandparents' house and my entire family will be there. I will spend most of my time playing games with my cousins. We always have such a good time together! The day goes by so fast, and by the end we are all exhausted... but we still don't want to leave!

The main idea of this passage is:

- A. Weekends are times to travel.
- B. The writer enjoys spending time with family.
- C. The writer's grandparents live far away.
- D. The writer is sad to leave her cousins.

2

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brothers who were inventors, even from a young age when they built kites and bicycles. Many people credit the Wright Brothers with designing and building the first successful airplane. In 1903, their first flight only lasted 12 seconds, but it continues to inspire people all over the world to learn about science and math, to work hard to realize their dreams, and to use imagination to achieve success.

The main idea of this passage is:

- A. The Wright Brothers worked hard.
- B. The Wright Brothers were inventors who have inspired many people.
- C. Inventors build kites and bicycles.
- D. The first flight was in 1903.

3

I have a dog whose name is Paco. He is almost 10 years old. Paco is very loveable with a brown face and short black fur. He is one of my best friends. He plays with me, sleeps with me, and goes on walks with me. I am so glad to have him around. I love him.

The main idea of this passage is:

- A. The dog's name is Paco.
- B. Everyone should have a dog.
- C. The writer's dog is an important part of his life.
- D. The dog is cute and sweet.

4

Eric gripped the bat in his hands. His palms were sweaty but he took a deep breath as he stepped up to the plate. He had to score a run or his team would lose the game. When the pitcher threw a fastball, Eric's reflexes took over and he heard the "Crack!" of the bat hitting the ball. His heart raced with excitement as he ran to first base. He was safe!

The main idea of this passage is:

- A. Eric plays baseball.
- B. Eric scores a homerun.
- C. How to play baseball.
- D. Eric overcomes his nerves and makes it to first base.

5

Homemade pizza is delicious. First, make the dough from flour, water, and yeast. After that, begin making the tomato sauce. Next, add any vegetables you like. Then, bake it in the oven. After a short time, the kitchen begins to smell delicious. Soon, it's ready to eat!

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. Pizza is made from flour
- b. How to make homemade pizza
- c. Pizza is easy to make
- d. Pizza makes the kitchen smell delicious

6

If you are feeling sad, you can make yourself feel better by doing a few simple things. You can take a walk (or get another form of exercise), you can talk to a friend, or you can write down your feelings. Writing down the good things in your life will help too. Doing something good for someone else will also help you feel better. If you still feel a little sad, act happy. It works like magic to make you feel better!

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. Sometimes people feel sad
- b. You should do good things for others
- c. We're not always happy
- d. There are many ways to make yourself feel better

7

Did you know that giraffes are the tallest animals in the world? They are unique in other ways, too. For one thing, they sleep only about 20 minutes each day, and usually not more than five minutes at a time. (They have to remain alert for predators.) Also, every giraffe's coat is unique, and varies in color from white to nearly black, depending on what they eat and where they live.

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. Giraffes don't sleep very much.
- b. Giraffes are unique animals.
- c. There are many animals in the world.
- d. No animal is taller than a giraffe.

8

Hurricanes are large, intense storms that begin over the ocean, where they gather heat and energy from the water. Hurricanes move slowly toward land, usually moving 10-20 miles per hour for more than one week. The most dangerous part of the hurricane is the storm surge, when it reaches land and causes flooding. Wind and waves also contribute to the damage caused by these surges.

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. Hurricanes are dangerous storms.
- b. Hurricanes begin over the ocean.
- c. One type of storm is called a hurricane.
- d. Hurricanes are different from other storms.

1

I can't wait until this weekend! We're going to my grandparents' house and my entire family will be there. I will spend most of my time playing games with my cousins. We always have such a good time together! The day goes by so fast, and by the end we are all exhausted... but we still don't want to leave!

What is the main idea of this passage?

2

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brothers who were inventors, even from a young age when they built kites and bicycles. Many people credit the Wright Brothers with designing and building the first successful airplane. In 1903, their first flight only lasted 12 seconds, but it continues to inspire people all over the world to learn about science and math, to work hard to realize their dreams, and to use imagination to achieve success.

What is the main idea of this passage?

3

I have a dog whose name is Paco. He is almost 10 years old. Paco is very loveable with a brown face and short black fur. He is one of my best friends. He plays with me, sleeps with me, and goes on walks with me. I am so glad to have him around. I love him.

What is the main idea of this passage?

4

Eric gripped the bat in his hands. His palms were sweaty but he took a deep breath as he stepped up to the plate. He had to score a run or his team would lose the game. When the pitcher threw a fastball, Eric's reflexes took over and he heard the "Crack!" of the bat hitting the ball. His heart raced with excitement as he ran to first base. He was safe!

What is the main idea of this passage?

5

Homemade pizza is delicious. First, make the dough from flour, water, and yeast. After that, begin making the tomato sauce. Next, add any vegetables you like. Then, bake it in the oven. After a short time, the kitchen begins to smell delicious. Soon, it's ready to eat!

What is the main idea of this passage?

6

If you are feeling sad, you can make yourself feel better by doing a few simple things. You can take a walk (or get another form of exercise), you can talk to a friend, or you can write down your feelings. Writing down the good things in your life will help too. Doing something good for someone else will also help you feel better. If you still feel a little sad, act happy. It works like magic to make you feel better!

What is the main idea of this passage?

7

Did you know that giraffes are the tallest animals in the world? They are unique in other ways, too. For one thing, they sleep only about 20 minutes each day, and usually not more than five minutes at a time. (They have to remain alert for predators.) Also, every giraffe's coat is unique, and varies in color from white to nearly black, depending on what they eat and where they live.

What is the main idea of this passage?

8

Hurricanes are large, intense storms that begin over the ocean, where they gather heat and energy from the water. Hurricanes move slowly toward land, usually moving 10-20 miles per hour for more than one week. The most dangerous part of the hurricane is the storm surge, when it reaches land and causes flooding. Wind and waves also contribute to the damage caused by these surges.

What is the main idea of this passage?

8.7 Paraphrase Chunks, Then Put It Together

Who is this for?

LEVELS

L-Z+

GENRE / TEXT TYPE
nonfiction (article)

SKILLS

determining
importance,
paraphrasing,
synthesizing

Strategy Stop after every paragraph or short section. Think, "How can I say what I learned in my own words?" Jot a note in the margin. At the end of the article, read back over your margin notes and think, "So, what's this whole article mostly about?"

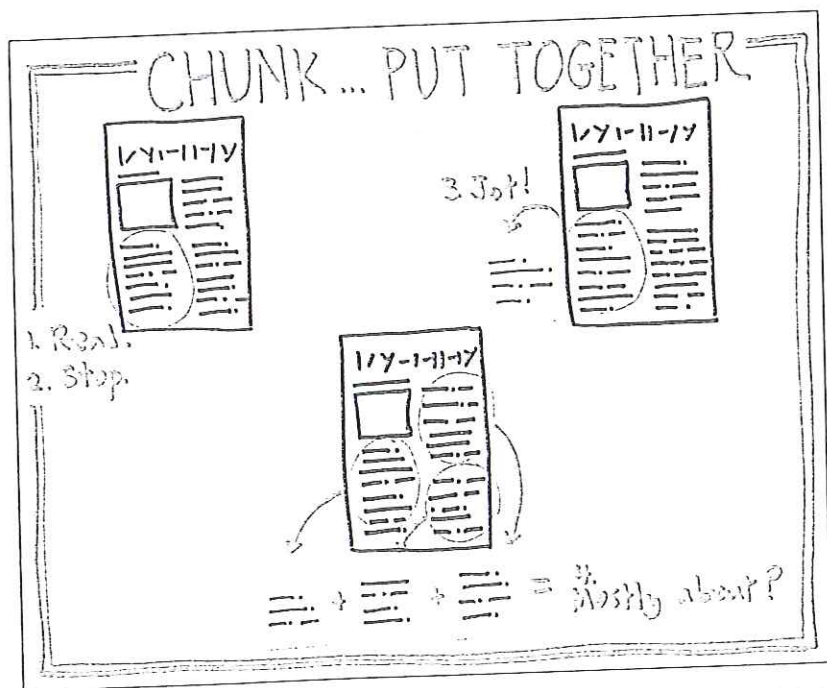
Teaching Tip Part of the challenge for many readers as they move to expository nonfiction from reading stories is that the pace of their reading needs to slow down. Strategies like this one that ask readers to stop and chunk the information as they go helps to slow them down and monitor their comprehension before moving on. It also supports their ability to synthesize the information, as they are stopping throughout the text to pull together smaller amounts of information rather than reading the entire text before stopping to think about main ideas.

Prompts

- Stop there. Jot a note.
- What's most important in what you just read?
- Say it in your own words.
- Don't write the same thing the author wrote; think and try to say it on your own.
- Look back across your notes.
- What is the *whole* article about?
- That main idea statement takes into account most of the information you just read!
- It seems like slowing down to think is helping you to think about main ideas as you go.



Hat Tip: *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*, second edition (Harvey and Goudvis 2007)



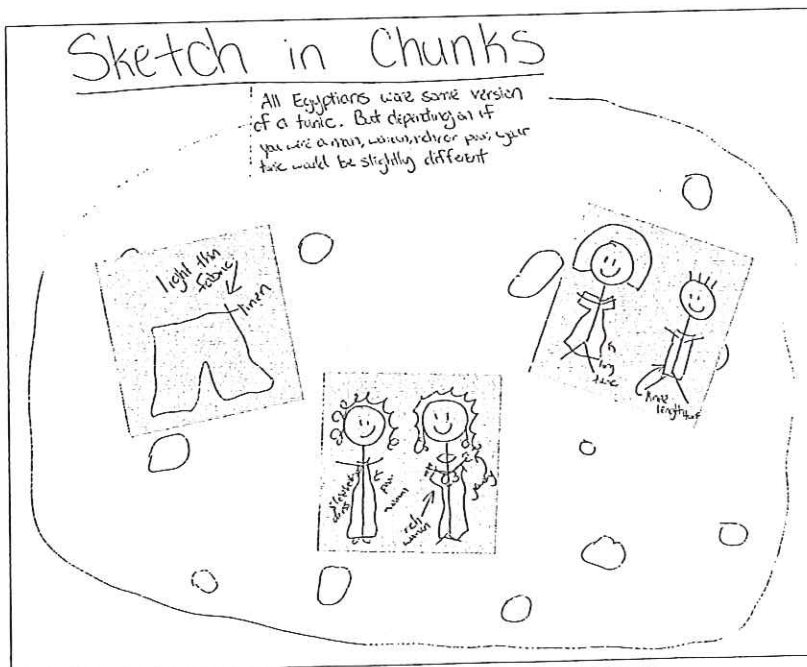
Sketch in Chunks

Strategy Stop after every paragraph or short section. Think, "What am I picturing?" Draw a quick sketch. At the end of the article, look back over your sketches and ask yourself, "So, what's this whole article mostly about?"

Lesson Language (Read aloud the first paragraph of "Coral Reefs in Trouble" [Time for Kids 2012].) *I'm picturing a collection of coral reefs and maybe a speech bubble that says "Oh no!" I'm going to draw a line and read the next paragraph and sketch. (Read next paragraph aloud.) I'm going to draw some coral and black out or scribble most of it to show that just 8 percent is healthy and the rest is dead. Then I'm going to draw a line and read the next paragraph to see what I picture. (Read aloud next paragraph.) I learned that pollution, overfishing, and higher temperatures are harming the reefs. So I'm going to sketch an old plastic bottle, a fishing pole, and a thermometer with a high temperature. Now, as I look back across my sketches, I might say, "This whole article is about the causes and crisis of endangered coral reefs."*

Prompts

- Stop there.
- What are you picturing?
- Stop and sketch what you see in your mind.
- Look back at your sketches—what's the article mostly about?
- Decide how much you'll read next before sketching again.
- I can see why you drew that sketch—it matches the information on the page.



Who is this for?

LEVELS

L-Z+

GENRE / TEXT TYPE

nonfiction (article)

SKILLS

synthesizing,
determining
importance,
visualizing



Hat Tip: Reading Nonfiction: Notice & Note Stances, Signposts, and Questions (Beers and Probst 2016)

Nonfiction: Main Topic(s) and Idea(s)

229

Differentiation for Paragraphs

8.5 Boxes and Bullets

Who is this for?

LEVELS
J–Z+

GENRE / TEXT TYPE
expository nonfiction

SKILLS
synthesizing,
determining
importance

Strategy Draw a box and several bullets beneath it on a sticky note or in a notebook. As you read, think about the information you just read. Ask yourself, “Does this sentence say what this part is mostly about (box), or is this a detail (bullet)?” Write or mentally place the information you read on the graphic organizer as you learn it.

Teaching Tip This is another strategy that you can modify the language to be about topics and details (below level M) or about main idea and details (at around level M–Z+).

Lesson Language *Nonfiction expository texts have an architecture—a way they are built. When authors are trying to teach you something new, it’s common that they will have big topics and ideas, and then give you more information by giving you details that fit with those big topics and ideas. Sometimes the main idea comes first, and then they follow it with the details. Other times, you’ll need to read all the details and then you’ll come to the main idea in the conclusion. Sometimes the main idea is stuck somewhere in the middle. As you read, it helps your understanding if you can organize the information, figuring out which of the sentences are “bullets”—or supporting details or facts—and which of the sentences are “boxes”—or main ideas or topics.*

Prompts

- Say back the information you just read.
- Do you think that information is the main idea, or a detail?
- How do you know if it’s a main idea or detail?
- Check to see if the other information on the page is a part of that sentence.
- Check to see if that sentence supports the other information on the page.

Day of the Dead	
Name <u>Ellie</u>	Date <u>10-8</u>
Boxes and Bullets	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> Main Idea: Day of the Dead celebrates the people who have died </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"> Supporting Details </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> . They tell stories about their family history. </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> . They wear shells to wake the dead. </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> . They visit their family graves </div>	



Hat Tip: *Navigating Nonfiction in Expository Text: Determining Importance and Synthesizing* (Calkins and Tolan 2010c)

R

RESTATE THE QUESTION

Restate or reword the question and turn it into a statement.

A

ANSWER THE QUESTION

What is being asked?

Answer all parts of the question.

C

CITE THE SOURCE

Tell where you found examples and details in the text.

In paragraph 2... The text states ... The author says...

E

EXPLAIN

your response. Give evidence from the text to support your answer. Add your thoughts.

For example... This shows... This means... I believe...

DON'T FORGET!

Be S.O.R.E.

you use a complete
sentence!

✓ **S = STATE THE
QUESTION IN THE
RESPONSE.**

☆ **U = USE EXAMPLES
FROM THE TEXT OR FROM
YOUR LIFE.**

😊 **R = REFER TO A
PERSONAL LIFE
EXPERIENCE**

~~1.~~ ~~2.~~ **E = IS EVERY
PART OF THE QUESTION
ANSWERED?**

NO STINKY
ANSWERS in 3rd
Grade - ONLY
S.U.R.E. ANSWERS!

DON'T FORGET!

Be S.O.R.E.

you use a complete
sentence!

✓ **S = STATE THE
QUESTION IN THE
RESPONSE.**

☆ **U = USE EXAMPLES
FROM THE TEXT OR FROM
YOUR LIFE.**

😊 **R = REFER TO A
PERSONAL LIFE
EXPERIENCE**

~~1.~~ ~~2.~~ **E = IS EVERY
PART OF THE QUESTION
ANSWERED?**

NO STINKY
ANSWERS in 3rd
Grade - ONLY
S.U.R.E. ANSWERS!

SURE

DREAM

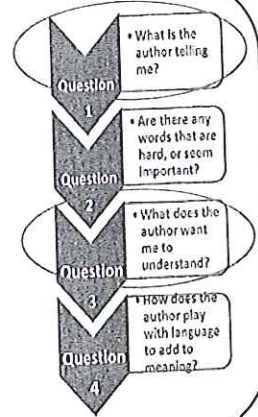
Deconstruct the text & divide up into BME



Read carefully

"What is the author telling me?"

"What does author want me to understand?"



Explain Main Idea

Always Prove It

*Tell what the main idea is

*Give one detail that shows how you know this is the main idea

*Give another detail that shows this is the main idea

The main idea is _____

One detail that shows this is the main idea is _____

Another detail that shows this is the main idea is _____

Make Summary

Name: _____

Date: _____

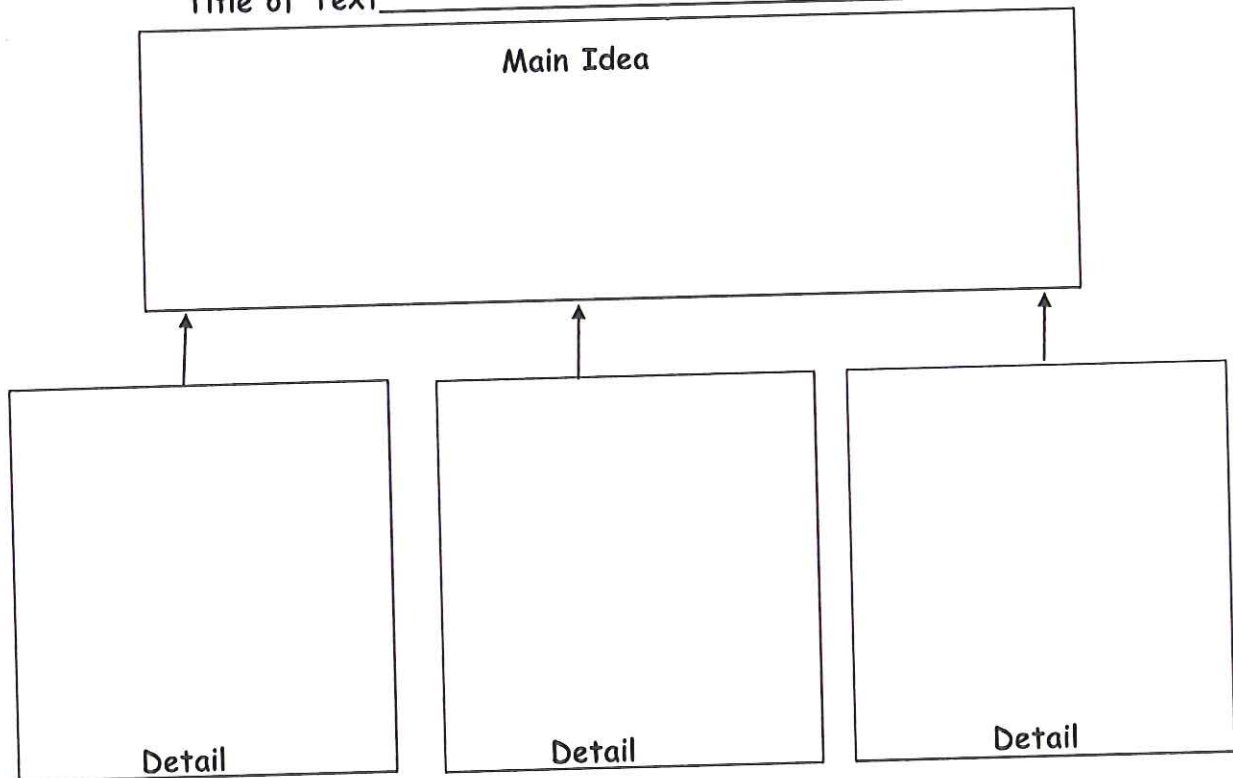
Explain Main Idea **A**lways Prove It

- *Tell what the main idea is
- *Give one detail that shows how you know this is the main idea
- *Give another detail that shows this is the main idea

While Reading, did you:

- Think about the meaning of the words *main idea* and *details*
- Find details in the text and then figure out the main idea from your list of details

Title of Text _____



The main idea is _____

One detail that shows this is the main idea is: _____

Another detail that shows this is the main idea is: _____

Dream

Name: _____ Date: _____

What is the main idea of this text/part of the text?

Ready to write:

Did you:

1. Think about the meaning of the words *main idea* and *details*?
2. Find details in the text and *then* figure out the main idea from your list of details?
3. Say your answer out loud (or in your mind) so you will know how to put the words together in a way that makes sense?

Writing steps:

1. Tell what the main idea is.
2. Give one detail that shows how you know this is the main idea.
3. Give another detail that shows how you know this is the main idea.

The main idea is _____

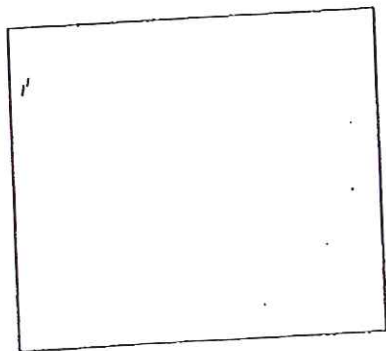
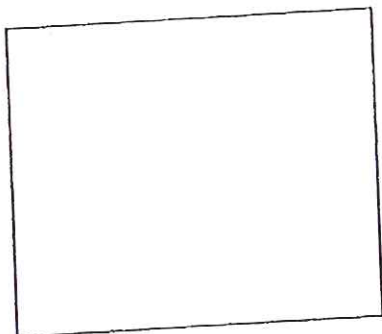
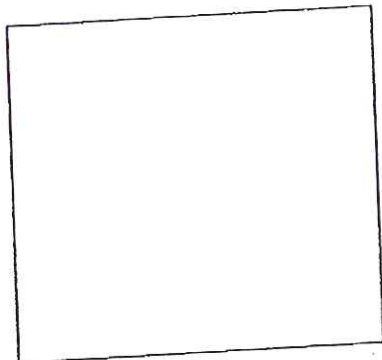
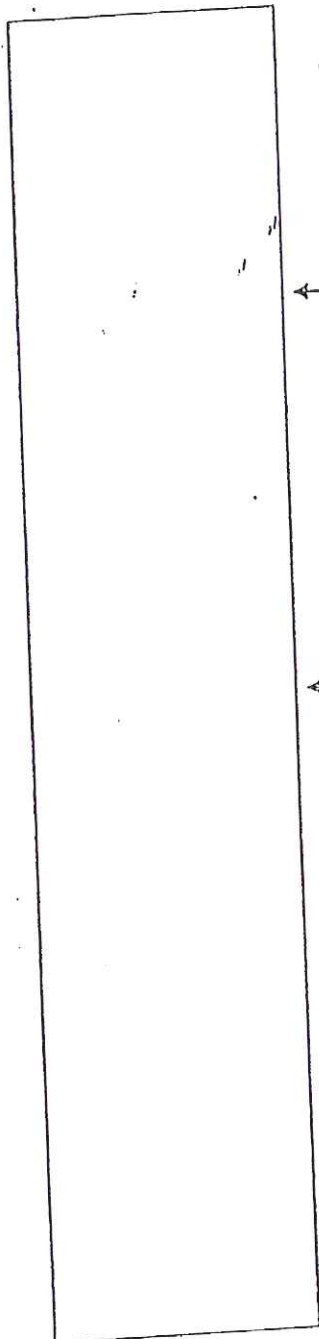
One detail that shows this is the main idea is: _____

Another detail that shows this is the main idea is: _____

Dream

Title or Heading _____

MAIN IDEA



DETAILS

Dream

BOOKMARKS FOR CLOSE INDEPENDENT READING

Question 1

- What is the author telling me?

Question 2

- Are there any words that are hard, or seem important?

Question 3

- What does the author want me to understand?

Question 4

- How does the author play with language to add to meaning?

Question 1

- What is the author telling me?

Question 2

- Are there any words that are hard, or seem important?

Question 3

- What does the author want me to understand?

Question 4

- How does the author play with language to add to meaning?

When You Are
PROVIDING EVIDENCE
From a Text, Use These Phrases

- The text said...
- I know this because I read...
- The author said...
- I read that...
- The author stated that...
- It was written that....which means...
- I learned that....because the text said...
- My opinion is supported because...
- According to the text...
- In the text...
- For instance...
- An example is...
- The illustration shows...
- I know _____ because....
- I feel/think _____ because....

When You Are
PROVIDING EVIDENCE
From a Text, Use These Phrases

- The text said...
- I know this because I read...
- The author said...
- I read that...
- The author stated that...
- It was written that....which means...
- I learned that....because the text said...
- My opinion is supported because...
- According to the text...
- In the text...
- For instance...
- An example is...
- The illustration shows...
- I know _____ because....
- I feel/think _____ because....

When You Are
PROVIDING EVIDENCE
From a Text, Use These Phrases

- The text said...
- I know this because I read...
- The author said...
- I read that...
- The author stated that...
- It was written that....which means...
- I learned that....because the text said...
- My opinion is supported because...
- According to the text...
- In the text...
- For instance...
- An example is...
- The illustration shows...
- I know _____ because....
- I feel/think _____ because....

When You Are
PROVIDING EVIDENCE
From a Text, Use These Phrases

- The text said...
- I know this because I read...
- The author said...
- I read that...
- The author stated that...
- It was written that....which means...
- I learned that....because the text said...
- My opinion is supported because...
- According to the text...
- In the text...
- For instance...
- An example is...
- The illustration shows...
- I know _____ because....
- I feel/think _____ because....

SUMmarize It!

Shorter than the text

Use your own words

Main ideas only



Summarize It! created by Rachel Lynette Copyright © 2014. All rights reserved.

http://www.rachellynette.com

SUMmarize It!

Shorter than the text

Use your own words

Main ideas only



Summarize It! created by Rachel Lynette Copyright © 2014. All rights reserved.

http://www.rachellynette.com

SUMmarize It!

Shorter than the text

Use your own words

Main ideas only



Summarize It! created by Rachel Lynette Copyright © 2014. All rights reserved.

http://www.rachellynette.com

SUMmarize It!

Shorter than the text

Use your own words

Main ideas only



Summarize It! created by Rachel Lynette Copyright © 2014. All rights reserved.

http://www.rachellynette.com

8.17 Clue In to Topic Sentences

Who is this for?

LEVELS
M-Z+

GENRE / TEXT TYPE
expository nonfiction

SKILL
determining
importance

Strategy Find a sentence that seems to sum up what the whole page (or part or section) is mostly about. This may be at the beginning, end, or even hidden somewhere in the middle. When you think you've found it, check the other facts to make sure those facts support the main idea. They don't all have to, but they mostly have to. If you find that most facts don't support that sentence, try a different one.

Lesson Language *There is a sentence hidden in most sections of nonfiction books and in most articles that tells you straight out what the main idea of the text is. The weird thing is that it's called a topic sentence even though it tells you way more than the topic alone—it also tells you an idea about the topic. For example, in Jungles (Podendorf 1982), the section called "What Kinds of Animals Live in a Jungle?" starts with this topic sentence: "A jungle is a home for many kinds of animals." Then, every sentence after gives numerous examples of different animals who live in the jungle. Not all authors come right out and tell you at the beginning, but there is often a topic sentence somewhere in each section to help you out.*

Prompts

- Find the sentence that tells you what this section is mostly about.
- I agree—all the details connect back to this one sentence. You found the topic sentence!
- Which sentence seems like a main idea?
- Now read on, and check each sentence to make sure it connects with the main idea.

TOPIC SENTENCES MATTER!
* CLUE IN *

A topic sentence tells what the paragraph or section is mostly about.

All or most of the details connect back!



Hat Tip: Independent Reading Assessment: Nonfiction series (Serravallo 2013a)