

Main Idea

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Almost everything that you read will have a **subject, main idea** and **details**. It may help to imagine these characteristics as big, medium and small.

The subject of a book is big and broad. Try asking yourself, "What is this book about?" and answering in a few words.

Read the following passage.

The ability to vote is one of the most important rights in a democracy. People should be able to vote easily, and voting laws should be written to make sure that the largest number of people are able to vote. Voting stations should be easy to get to and should be open early enough and late enough so that everyone has time to vote.

What is the subject of the passage?

- A. the ability to vote
B. The ability to vote is an important right.
C. Voting stations should be easy to get to.
D. People should be able to vote easily.
2. The main idea is more specific than the subject. It gives us more information about what the text is about. Try asking yourself, "What is the author saying?" and "What is the most important thing the author wants me to walk away with from this text?"

Read the following passage.

Federica sat in the back of the cab, watching her new city go by. Nothing around here felt like home. Home was a house at the very end of a sloping dirt road, with no one else around for miles. Home was the sound of wind through grass and trees and the calls of animals at night. Home was peaceful and Federica liked it that way. Home was not what whizzed past her window now: soaring glass buildings, traffic in the streets, the sound of cars rushing past and so many people talking, talking, always talking. "This place is chaos," Federica thought. "I'll never get used to this."

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Federica sat in the back of the cab, watching her new city go by.
B. Federica doesn't feel at home in her new city.
C. a girl named Federica
D. Sometimes, people must get used to new ways of life.

3. The details are the most specific of all. They support the main idea. They often include descriptions about places, people or things.

Read the following passage.

Serena crossed the beach. She could feel the sand shifting beneath her feet as she ran. It was early morning, and the ocean tide was low. She was rushing to the tidal pools to search for shells. She did this every morning. The shells were most important to her, but she also liked the surprises she would sometimes find—hairy and ancient hermit crabs and swift, darting minnows and sometimes a crumbling sand dollar.

Which of the following details from the passage best supports the main idea that “Serena enjoys searching for shells and other creatures on the beach”?

- A. “Serena crossed the beach.”
- B. “It was early morning, and the ocean tide was low.”
- C. “...sand shifting beneath her feet as she ran.”
- D. “...hairy and ancient hermit crabs and swift, darting minnows and sometimes a crumbling sand dollar...”

4. You’ll find main ideas in both fiction and nonfiction texts.

Read the following passage.

A festival is a type of party to which everyone is invited. For thousands of years, people have thrown festivals. Mardi Gras is a famous annual festival in New Orleans, Louisiana. Mardi Gras happens the week before Lent, a Christian holiday. During Lent, people give up certain things, like eating their favorite foods, for a few weeks. Mardi Gras is their last chance to do the things they enjoy before Lent. People are permitted to eat and drink whatever they want during the week of Mardi Gras. They have parades in the streets. The entire city contributes to the fun.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Mardi Gras is an annual festival in New Orleans, during which people can enjoy themselves before Lent.
- B. Festivals
- C. Festivals help bring people together.
- D. During Lent, people give up certain things, like eating their favorite foods, for a few weeks.