

# Main Idea and Thesis

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# Topic

- One of the first steps to finding the **Main Idea** of a reading is determining the **Topic**.
- A **topic** is the general subject the passage explains.
- **Topics** are short (usually 1-3 words)

# Main Idea/Topic Sentence (for paragraphs)

- In regards to paragraphs...
- Understanding the **Main Idea** means to understand the **author's key point**.
- Each paragraph has a **Main idea**, which is also referred to as a **Topic Sentence**. This is like a mini thesis for each paragraph.

# Main Idea/Thesis (for longer texts)

In regards to longer texts and passages...

- Most important task is understanding the **main idea** of what you read.
- **Main idea** is the term used when reading. **Thesis** is the term used when writing– both terms mean the author's **central message**.
- It may be “stated” (the author writes the main idea in a sentence or two), or “implied” (the author suggests the main idea, but the reader must figure it out).

# Details

- **Details** develop, explain and support the Main Idea/Topic Sentence.
- Every paragraph must include details.
- **Details** include facts, reasons, examples, incidents, steps and definitions.

# Strategies for finding the stated Main Idea

- After reading a passage, ask yourself these questions:
  - **1. Who or what is this about? (That will be the Topic)**
  - **2. What are the major details or key terms?**
  - **3. What main idea is the author trying to convey about the topic?**

# Finding and Telling the Main Idea

- When telling the Main Idea, it should be at least one complete sentence that is...
  - ...broad enough to include the significant details.
  - ...focused enough to reflect the author's slant (position).

# Implied (Unstated) Main Ideas

- ***Implied*** means ***suggested***. The author doesn't always state the main idea, so the reader needs to figure it out.
- Use the same 3 questions:
  - 1. **Who or what is the passage about ? (That is the Topic)**
  - 2. **What are the major details or key terms?**
  - 3. **What main idea is the author trying to convey about the topic?**
  - **\*\*It is your job to connect the details and focus the message.**



# Main Ideas of Longer Selections

- Each paragraph of a longer selection usually represents a new supporting detail, and therefore contains its own **Main Idea/Topic Sentence**.
- When reading long selections, you must fit the many pieces together under one **Main Idea/Thesis** (central theme).
- It helps to **Annotate** (mark your book and make notes).