

Main Idea

What's the Big Idea?

Main Idea

The purpose of the paragraph or text

- All information in the paragraph should connect to the main idea
- Some information is not as important
- Good readers identify key ideas

Identifying **Main** Idea

1. **Read the whole text.**
2. **Ask, “What is the author doing here?”**
3. **Pay extra attention to the first and last sentence.**

Example

Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first men to walk on the surface of the moon, but they were not the last. That was Gene Cernan, the last man to step off the lunar surface. In total there have been twelve men who have walked on the moon, all of whom had done so between 1969 and 1972, which is the most recent non-Michael Jackson moon walking.

Understanding Main Idea

You must comprehend the text.

Focus on the **BIGGEST** idea.

This paragraph is about moon walkers.

**Armstrong & Aldrin
First Men on the Moon**

**Cernan was the
Last Man on the Moon**

**12 Men Have Walked
On the Moon**

Careful...

Test writers may ask you:

“Another good title for this passage would be...”

It’s just a way of asking for the main idea.

Practice

1. Summarize each passage in one sentence, including the main idea.
2. Write an appropriate title for the passage.
3. Your title should relate to the main idea of the text.

An assassination is the murder of a famous person, usually a celebrity or political figure. Many famous assassinations have been attempted, but fewer have succeeded. Here is a brief overview of some famous successful assassins. Lee Harvey Oswald was a former marine who allegedly killed president John F. Kennedy. Ironically, Oswald was himself assassinated a few days later by Jack Ruby. Mark David Chapman was a mentally deranged man who shot and killed John Lennon, lead singer of The Beatles. But, perhaps the most notorious assassin of all is John Wilkes Booth, who killed President Abraham Lincoln while Lincoln attended the theatre.

Nicki Minaj, rap phenomenon hailing from Queens, New York, has a new honor to add to her resume: top searched Halloween costume based on a person for the 2011 season. Nicki edged out other popular costume searches such as Charlie Sheen. Though no commercial Nicki Minaj costume kit is available, there are a lot of helpful hints available online that show people how to get that “Nicki look.” The popularity of the Nicki Minaj costume search was only edged out by the Angry Birds costume search, which was the most searched for costume this year.

The Greek word “deinos” means *terrible, powerful, or wonderful*. Combine this with the Greek word “sauros,” which means *lizard* or *reptile*, and you might get “dinosaur,” which refers to huge creatures that roamed the earth millions of years ago. The term “dinosauria” was coined by English paleontologist Richard Owen in 1842, which was meant to express the idea that dinosaurs were “terrible reptiles” or “fearfully great lizards.” Over the years, “dinosauria” gradually became “dinosaur,” which is the word we use today to describe those giant beasts from the past.

Most people think of submarines as amazing underwater naval transports, not as a refuge for sexual discrimination in the military; however, most navies prohibited women from serving on submarines, even after they had been permitted to serve on surface warships. The Royal Norwegian Navy became the first navy to allow female crew on its submarines in 1985. The Royal Danish Navy allowed female submariners in 1988. Others followed suit including the Swedish Navy (1989), the Royal Australian Navy (1998), the German Navy (2001) and the Canadian Navy (2002). Women may serve on US submarines this year, but the British Royal Navy still does not permit women to serve on its submarines.

The next time you get the sniffles, remember that it could be worse. SARS is an airborne sickness that killed around a thousand people on and after its discovery in 2003. AIDS is one of the most devastating illnesses in human history. It is estimated that there are over two million AIDS related deaths each year in the world. But perhaps the most infamous and devastating outbreak in history was the bubonic plague or Black Death, which is estimated to have killed 75 million people, or one-third of the population of Europe in the 14th century.