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Lesson

FINDING MAIN IDEA

PART ONE: Think About the Strategy



What Is Main Idea?

Books, short stories and poems all tell a story. All stories have a main idea. A movie or television show also tells a story that has a main idea. The main idea tells what something is mostly about.

1 Write the name of a movie you enjoyed watching.

2 Write three important things that happened in the movie.

3 Write a sentence that tells what the movie was mostly about.

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Work with a Partner

- Tell your partner about a book or newspaper article you have read.
- Then take turns telling about the main idea of the book or article. Tell your main idea in one sentence.

How Do You Find the Main Idea?

You can find the main idea of most reading passages in the first or last sentence of the passage.

Read this passage about sandhill cranes. Think about the most important idea in the passage.

Sandhill cranes in northern Canada migrate to warmer climates in the autumn. The birds fly thousands of kilometres during their travels. Many sandhill cranes travel to the Gulf Coast of the United States. Some travel as far south as Mexico.

1. Let's look at the chart below.
The sentences in the top three boxes tell about the main idea of the passage, but they do not tell the most important idea.
2. Look again at the passage. The first sentence in the passage does tell the most important idea. This sentence tells what the passage is mostly about.
3. Write this main idea in the empty box below.

The birds fly thousands of kilometres during their travels.	Many sandhill cranes travel to the Gulf Coast of the United States.	Some travel as far south as Mexico.
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Lesson

4

RECOGNISING CAUSE AND EFFECT

PART ONE: Think About the Strategy



What Is Cause and Effect?

There is a reason for everything that happens. What happens is called the *effect*. Why it happens is called the *cause*. You can find examples of cause and effect almost anywhere.

1 Write what a cat usually does when it sees a mouse.

2 Write why this happens.

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Work with a Partner

- Take turns giving each other examples of cause and effect. You might say, “I saw a car skid because the road was icy.”
- In each example, tell which part is the cause and which part is the effect.

PART FOUR: Build on What You Have Learned

MORE TO KNOW

- Look for clues in the reading passage that tell what the characters are like. Think about how the characters behave, how they are feeling, and what they say and do.
- Link the clues with what you know from your own experiences. Ask yourself, “What have people like this character done in a similar situation?”

Read this narrative about a true event. Then answer the questions.

The Mutiny on the *Bounty*

The year was 1789. The British ship *Bounty* sailed in the South Pacific Ocean. Its mission was to bring breadfruit trees from Tahiti to British settlements in the Caribbean. The captain of the *Bounty* was William Bligh. Captain Bligh was an excellent sailor, but he was a cruel commander. He controlled his crew with harsh treatment. Many of the men hated him.

One of the crew was Fletcher Christian. The other sailors respected Christian, and when he spoke that forbidden word – *mutiny* – the men listened. Mutiny meant taking over the ship. Mutiny was forbidden by law, but the crew had reached its breaking point. Mutiny it would be! If British sailors who mutinied were ever caught, they would be hanged. And a captain who could not prevent a mutiny did not escape punishment either.

The crew seized control of the *Bounty*. They put Captain Bligh into a small boat. Eighteen sailors refused to go along with the mutiny. So they were put into the boat with Bligh. The boat was set adrift in the vast ocean.

The mutineers had to hide where no British vessel would ever find them. Eventually, they sailed the *Bounty* toward a tiny mountainous island more than 1600 kilometres southeast of Tahiti. No people lived there. So it was that Fletcher Christian and eight other mutineers, along with six men and twelve women of Polynesia, came to live on Pitcairn Island.

Meanwhile, Captain Bligh and the others sailed their small vessel 5600 kilometres to safety. Eventually, they returned to England. Bligh was later Governor of New South Wales.

5. What probably happened to the *Bounty*?
 - (A) The mutineers sailed it to England.
 - (B) The mutineers destroyed it.
 - (C) The British navy found it.
 - (D) The mutineers lived in it.
6. Which clue hinted that Captain Bligh would be able to sail his small boat to safety?
 - (A) He would not escape punishment.
 - (B) He was in a boat that was small.
 - (C) Many of the men hated him.
 - (D) He was an excellent sailor.
7. What most likely happened after Captain Bligh returned to England?
 - (A) He was blamed for losing his ship.
 - (B) He never sailed again.
 - (C) He was given a new ship.
 - (D) He was punished for being cruel.
8. If the British navy found the mutineers, the mutineers would probably have
 - (A) surrendered without a fight.
 - (B) apologised for what they had done.
 - (C) seized control of the British ship.
 - (D) been hanged for their crime.

PART FOUR: Build on What You Have Learned

MORE TO KNOW

- Facts can be observed, checked or tested. You can prove that a fact is correct or true.
- Opinions express someone's thoughts, feelings or beliefs. An opinion can be about an event, an idea, a person or a thing. Even though people might agree or disagree with an opinion, it still cannot be proved.

Read this report written by Lionel. Then answer the questions.

A Tribute to a Hero

Lionel Rose was the finest Australian to grace the sport of boxing. I am proud to be named in his memory. He is a hero to all Australians – Aboriginal or not.

Rose was born in a settlement near Drouin, Victoria in 1948. He grew up learning how to box by watching his father, also a professional boxer. He just missed the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo.

Rose began his professional boxing career in 1964. In 1968, Lionel Rose made world history. He became the first Aboriginal world champion. He defeated Fighting Harada to win the World Bantamweight title. With this win, Rose became a national hero and one of Australia's sporting icons.

In 1968 Rose was named Australian of the Year. He was the first Aboriginal person to receive this honour. At the end of his career, he had a record of 53 wins and 11 losses. 12 of these wins were by knockout.

After he retired in 1975, Lionel Rose also showed he was the country's most clever businessman. He managed the rewards of his career and made good financial decisions.

In 2007, Lionel Rose suffered a stroke. He died in 2011 after a long illness. But Lionel Rose will live on. He is an icon to all Australian boxing fans. He is also a great Australian. All sporting fans should mourn his death.

- Which of these statements about Lionel Rose cannot be proved?
 - He won 53 times.
 - 12 of his 53 wins were by knockout.
 - He is a hero to all Australians.
 - He retired in 1975.
- Which tells an *opinion* from the report?
 - He was the finest Australian to grace the sport of boxing.
 - He became the first Aboriginal world champion.
 - In 2007, Lionel Rose suffered a stroke.
 - Rose only lost 11 times.
- Which of these clue words from the article signals an *opinion* about Rose's business skills?
 - more
 - most
 - always
 - never
- Which statement tells a *fact* about Rose?
 - He is an icon to all Australian boxing fans.
 - He was the country's most clever businessman.
 - He was born in Victoria in 1948.
 - All sporting fans should mourn his death.

Read this courtroom conversation. Then answer the questions.

DOG: Your Honour, I'm here to complain about Porcupine's behaviour. I believe that he's a danger to society.

PORCUPINE: A danger? Why, I've never done anything wrong in my life!

DOG: Is that a fact? Then how do you explain these quills I'm wearing?

JUDGE: Yes, Porcupine, how did those quills get stuck in Dog's skin?

PORCUPINE: Your Honour, it seems to me that Dog was at fault for his injury. He's wearing my quills because he got too close to me.

DOG: You tell the biggest fibs! You know that you shot your quills at me.

PORCUPINE: You're always making ridiculous statements. Everyone knows that porcupines can't shoot their quills.

JUDGE: He's right, Dog. I think you owe Porcupine an apology.



DOG: But, Judge, Porcupine still caused me harm. When he spotted me in the woods last night, his quills stood straight up, like pins in a pincushion. Then he turned his back to me and shook his tail. The next thing I knew, his sharp quills were piercing my skin. Believe me, the pain is worse than anything anyone has ever felt.

PORCUPINE: Oh, stop whining, Dog. You're always complaining.

JUDGE: Porcupine, did you use your quills as weapons?

PORCUPINE: Not exactly, Your Honour. Dog didn't tell you why I bumped into him. I was afraid because he had threatened me. And when I'm frightened, my quills stand straight up and come loose easily.

JUDGE: So, Dog, what do you have to say for yourself?

And for once, Dog had nothing to say.

9. Which statement about Porcupine can be proved?
- (A) He's a danger to society.
 - (B) His quills stand up straight when he's frightened.
 - (C) He's never done anything wrong in his life.
 - (D) He tells the biggest fibs.
10. Which statement cannot be proved?
- (A) Porcupine's quills come loose easily when he is frightened.
 - (B) Dog didn't tell all the facts at first.
 - (C) Porcupine and Dog met in the woods.
 - (D) Dog's pain is worse than anything anyone has ever felt.
11. Which of these is an *opinion* from the passage?
- (A) Porcupine bumped into Dog because he was afraid.
 - (B) Dog admitted that he might have growled at Porcupine.
 - (C) Everyone knows that porcupines can't shoot their quills.
 - (D) Dog didn't touch Porcupine.
12. Which statement tells a *fact* about Dog?
- (A) He was hurt by Porcupine's quills.
 - (B) He has nothing to say.
 - (C) He is always complaining.
 - (D) He is always making ridiculous statements.

PART FOUR: Build on What You Have Learned

MORE TO KNOW

- Each paragraph in a reading selection can have its own purpose. As you read each paragraph, ask yourself, “Why was this particular paragraph written? Was the author’s purpose to describe, to entertain, to explain or to persuade?”
- The entire reading passage has one main purpose. After you have finished reading the passage, ask yourself, “Why was this passage mainly written? What did the author probably want readers to know?”

Read this article about wild animals as pets. Then answer the questions.

Many people are tempted to keep wild animals as pets. Some think fox cubs are great to cuddle. Some think that monkeys are fun to train. And others think that having exotic snakes will impress their friends. But keeping wild animals as pets is not a good idea.

Wild animals often grow to be stronger and more dangerous than their owners expected. These animals have natural instincts that cause them to change as they grow. Young animals can grow to be large animals that bite, scratch and even attack humans. Owners often abandon their pets when this happens.

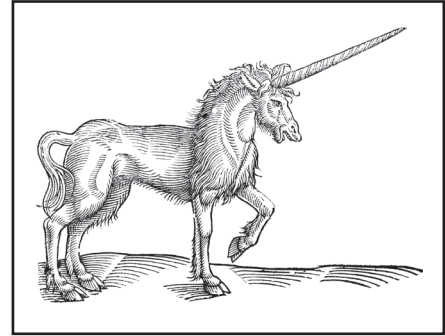
Many wild animals carry diseases that are harmful to people. It’s not only large animals that carry harmful germs. Small animals, such as rabbits, chicks and mice, spread them, too. So do many kinds of reptiles. Turtles less than ten centimetres long can make children very sick.

It’s not fair to keep wild animals in cages or backyards. They often become sick or die because their owners don’t care for them properly. Admire wild animals in their natural habitat, and get a dog or cat as a pet.

- The author’s main purpose in the first paragraph is to
 - describe why fox cubs make good pets.
 - explain why people keep wild animals as pets.
 - entertain readers with a personal story.
 - persuade readers to raise exotic snakes.
- The author’s main purpose in paragraph 2 is to
 - describe how wild animals can change.
 - explain why wild animals are so strong.
 - entertain readers with an animal riddle.
 - persuade readers not to abandon pets.
- The author’s main purpose in paragraph 3 is to
 - describe the diseases that are carried by wild animals.
 - explain that wild animals carry diseases.
 - entertain readers with a silly pet story.
 - persuade readers that animals are safe.
- The article was mainly written to
 - describe how to care for wild animals.
 - explain the difference between wild animals and pets.
 - entertain readers with a fun story.
 - persuade readers not to keep wild animals as pets.

Read this passage about the unicorn. Then answer the questions.

People from all parts of the world have told and written about the unicorn for thousands of years. The first description of this legendary creature appeared about 400 B.C. A Greek physician named Ctesias had travelled to ancient Persia, where he heard many marvellous tales. Ctesias wrote that in India, there were unusual wild donkeys. They had a white body, dark-red head and a pointed horn on the forehead. The horn was about 50 centimetres long. It was white at the base, black in the middle and bright red at the tip.



Over time, the image of the unicorn slowly changed. Eventually, the unicorn came to be a pure-white creature. It had the body and head of a small horse, the legs of a deer and the tail of a lion. On its forehead was a magnificent twisted horn.

During the Middle Ages, people believed that the unicorn's horn had special powers. It could guard against poison, illness and evil. People paid a lot of money for the horns. Most of these horns, though, were probably the tusks of narwhals. The narwhal is a small Arctic whale that has a spiral tusk growing from its snout.

Today, common belief is that there are no more unicorns on earth. Some people claim that unicorns were hunted until there were none left. Other people insist that unicorns never existed. Real or not, the legend of the extraordinary unicorn lives on.

9. The author wrote the first paragraph mainly to
- (A) explain why unicorns have horns.
 - (B) persuade readers to visit Persia.
 - (C) describe what the first unicorns were said to have looked like.
 - (D) entertain readers with a fanciful legend about unicorns.
10. The author wrote paragraph 3 mainly to
- (A) persuade readers to learn more about the Middle Ages.
 - (B) explain that unicorn horns were probably narwhal tusks.
 - (C) describe what a narwhal looks like.
 - (D) entertain readers with a silly comparison.
11. The author wrote the last paragraph mainly to
- (A) explain why unicorns disappeared.
 - (B) convince readers that the unicorn – real or not – is special.
 - (C) amuse readers with a riddle about an extraordinary animal.
 - (D) describe an imaginary creature.
12. The passage was written mainly to
- (A) describe an unusual creature.
 - (B) explain why the unicorn is legendary.
 - (C) entertain readers with a story about a magnificent beast.
 - (D) persuade readers that the unicorn had special powers.

PART FOUR: Build on What You Have Learned

MORE TO KNOW

- A good summary of fiction often tells about the theme, or message, of the story.
- A good summary of nonfiction answers *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how* questions.

Read this article about different kinds of vehicles. Then answer the questions.

People today may think that city streets are too crowded with traffic. Yet, city streets have always been filled with traffic. Only the vehicles have changed!

In the 1800s, people got around cities by taking the horsecar. It was a covered carriage pulled by horses. It ran along rails sunk into the street. The larger horsecars could seat more than a dozen people.

In the 1880s, cities began adopting a new kind of “streetcar”. It was not pulled by horses. It was powered by an electric motor. The electricity for the motor came from cables overhead. City streets were soon filled with the screeching of metal wheels against metal tracks. All around was the sound of clanging bells.



In the early 1900s, a strange new vehicle appeared. It had an engine and ran without being connected to cables. People called it a horseless carriage. Before long, these vehicles were everywhere. They were, of course, the first automobiles. Built-up automobiles, called motorbuses, shortly took the place of horsecars. By the 1930s, “buses” had replaced almost all the electric streetcars.

5. What is the article mostly about?
 - (A) using buses for city travel
 - (B) traffic on city streets
 - (C) the disappearance of horsecars
 - (D) vehicles that have travelled city streets
6. Which of these were rarely seen on city streets after 1930?
 - (A) horseless carriages
 - (B) electric streetcars
 - (C) buses
 - (D) automobiles
7. Why was the automobile important to city travel?
 - (A) It was safer than riding a horse.
 - (B) It could carry more people.
 - (C) It ran without cables.
 - (D) It was less noisy.
8. What is a good summary of the article?
 - (A) Automobiles and buses replaced horsecars and streetcars during the early 1900s.
 - (B) Traffic once crowded city streets.
 - (C) Horsecars and streetcars were the first forms of transportation.
 - (D) City streets have always been filled with vehicles.