Grade 3 Language Arts | Chapter 2

Lesson 1: Find the Main Idea

Learn

The main idea tells what an informational passage is mostly about. A supporting detail gives information that helps explain the main idea. A topic is usually a word or short phrase, while a main-idea sentence tells something important about the topic.

Worked example

If a paragraph explains that a library lends books, offers reading time and helps people find information, its main idea could be: 'A library helps people learn in several ways.' The three services are supporting details.

Read the original passage

The school garden has a new rain barrel. Volunteers placed it beneath a roof drain to collect rainwater. On dry mornings, they use the stored water for some garden plants. They keep the barrel covered and ask an adult to check it. Their record shows how much water they used, but it does not show exactly how much water the garden needs.

Advanced extension

Write a new title that captures the passage's main idea and explain your choice.

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Lesson 2: Sequence and Summarize

Learn

A sequence is the order in which events happen. A summary briefly tells the important events or ideas in your own words without adding details that the passage does not provide. Words such as first, next, and finally can show order.

Worked example

If a story says Mia searched, found a key and opened a box, a summary preserves that order rather than starting with the box opening.

Read the original passage

On Monday, Nia found a torn page beside the classroom bookshelf. She asked her teacher where it belonged. Together they checked the books and found one with a missing page. Nia carefully placed the page inside the cover. The teacher set the book aside for repair. The next day, Nia made a sign asking students to handle books gently.

Advanced extension

Explain how Nia's sign connects the problem in the story to a future action.

Learn

Context clues are nearby words or sentences that help a reader infer the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Test a possible meaning by rereading the sentence. A dictionary can confirm meaning, especially when the passage leaves more than one possibility.

Worked example

In 'The path was narrow, so only one person could walk on it at a time,' narrow probably means not wide. The words about one person provide a clue.

Read the original passage

The path to the creek was narrow, so the group walked in a single line. After rain, parts of the path were slippery. Their guide paused, or stopped briefly, before crossing a wet patch. She reminded everyone to step carefully. The group reached the bridge without rushing.

Advanced extension

Explain why a dictionary may still help after you make a context-based guess.

Learn

A complete sentence expresses a complete thought and usually includes a subject and a predicate. Begin with a capital letter and use appropriate ending punctuation. Revising improves meaning and organization; editing corrects conventions such as capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

Worked example

Fragment: 'The helpful neighbor.' Complete sentence: 'The helpful neighbor carried the box.' The sentence tells who and what the person did.

Read the original passage

Tariq wrote: 'the class planted seeds the class watered them the plants grew.' He revised it: 'The class planted seeds and watered them. Later, the plants grew.' His second version groups related actions and marks the sentences clearly.

Advanced extension

Combine two short related sentences without creating a run-on, then explain your punctuation.

Learn

An informational paragraph introduces a main idea, gives relevant details and closes the thought. A detail should support the topic. Plan before drafting, then reread for clarity and edit conventions.

Worked example

Topic: A pencil can be useful for planning. Details might explain writing a list and revising a sketch. A detail about a pet is unrelated unless the writer explains the connection.

Read the original passage

A community library offers several ways to learn. People can borrow books about animals, history and art. A librarian can help visitors locate information. Some libraries offer story times or classes. Each library offers its own services, so visitors should check their local library.

Advanced extension

Revise your paragraph by replacing one vague word and explaining why the revision helps.