

### Finding the Main Idea

**Directions:** The main idea is the principal topic in a paragraph, and it may appear anywhere in a paragraph. Sometimes the main idea is not directly stated but is implied. Finding the main idea is an important skill that will help you improve your reading and writing skills.

In order to identify the main idea, you must do the following:

1. Read the selection carefully, and determine the subject or topic of the selection.
2. Reread the selection, and choose the words or phrases that help you decide what the main idea is.
3. Rewrite the sentence in your own words expressing the main idea.

Read the short paragraphs below. Decide what the main idea is in each paragraph, and whether the main idea is stated or implied. Circle the correct choice, and rewrite the main idea in your own words in the space provided.

1. At the start of the Civil War, the armies of the Union and the Confederacy fought a two-front war, in the east and in the west. Some of the southern states along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers were called border states. While the majority of the people in these states supported the Confederacy, the Union Army controlled them and they provided little aid to the South. The western counties of Virginia were even detached from the Confederacy; they joined the Union as the state of West Virginia.

Stated                  Implied

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2. While Abraham Lincoln respected the Constitution, he also understood that it provided him with the support and opportunity to act without the consent of Congress. During the first months of the Civil War, Lincoln created a volunteer Union army, made the regular army larger, and used money not yet appropriated by Congress to supply and equip it.

Stated                  Implied

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3. At the time the Civil War was fought, an army could claim victory if it captured the capital of its enemy. The original capital of the Confederacy, Montgomery, Alabama, was in the deep South. Soon, however, the Confederacy moved its capital to the prosperous Virginia city of Richmond. This move placed the Confederacy in great danger. Richmond was vulnerable, and the capital of the Union forces, Washington, was close by. Driven by pride and a need to protect the city, which quickly became a symbol of its struggle, the Confederacy defended Richmond at all costs, paying a high price in blood and gold. The Confederate army defending Richmond repelled one attack after another until the very end of the war.

Stated                  Implied

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### Finding the Main Idea: Benjamin Franklin

**Directions:** Read each quotation, and decide what the main idea is. Write the main idea in your own words in the space provided.

1. "The sleeping fox captures no poultry, and there will be sleeping enough in the grave."

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2. "There is no little enemy."

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3. "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other."

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4. "Don't throw stones at your neighbors, if your windows are glass."

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5. "Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."

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6. "Lost time is never found again."

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7. "Without justice, courage is weak."

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