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Why Didn't I Think of That?

Improving Reading Comprehension

Why Didn't I Think of That?

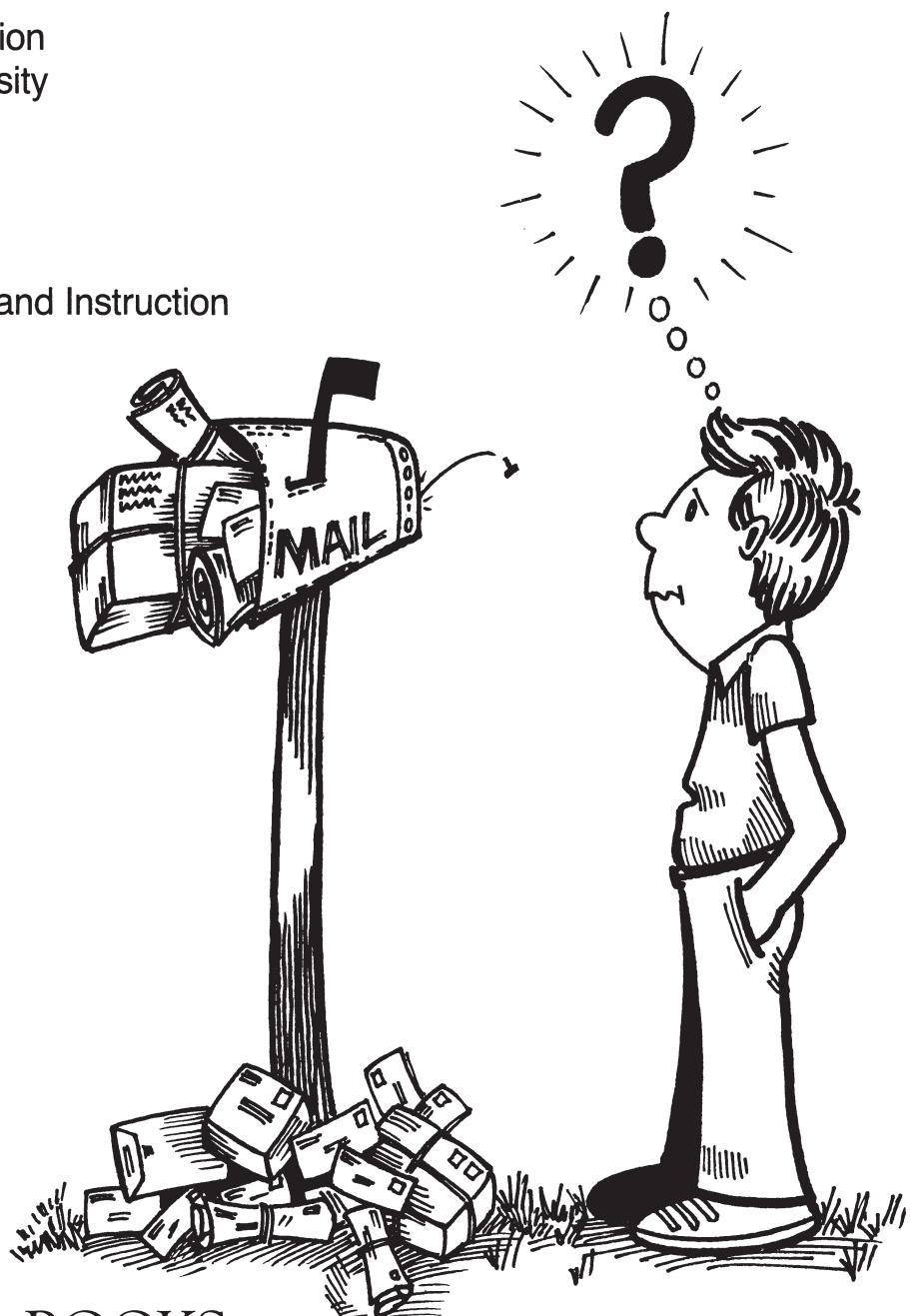
Improving Reading Comprehension

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Table of Contents

Introduction	v
Identifying Main Idea	1
Attention! Attention! Here's the Main Event!	2
Matching Main Ideas	2
Writing Main Ideas	2
Activities	3
Identifying Details	12
Common Details	12
Picture-Perfect Details	12
Graphs, Time Lines, and Charts	13
Activities	14
Identifying Sequence	27
Finding and Writing Clues to Sequence	27
Reversible and Irreversible Events	28
Writing to Understand Sequence	28
Activities	29
Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion	39
Finding Facts and Opinions	39
Rewriting Facts and Opinions	39
Activities	40
Understanding Cause-Effect Relationships	48
Why Questions . . . Because Answers	48
Short Sentences from Long Sentences	48
Dealing with Other Syntactic Problems	48
Finding and Using Clues to Cause	49
Additional Practice	49
Activities	50

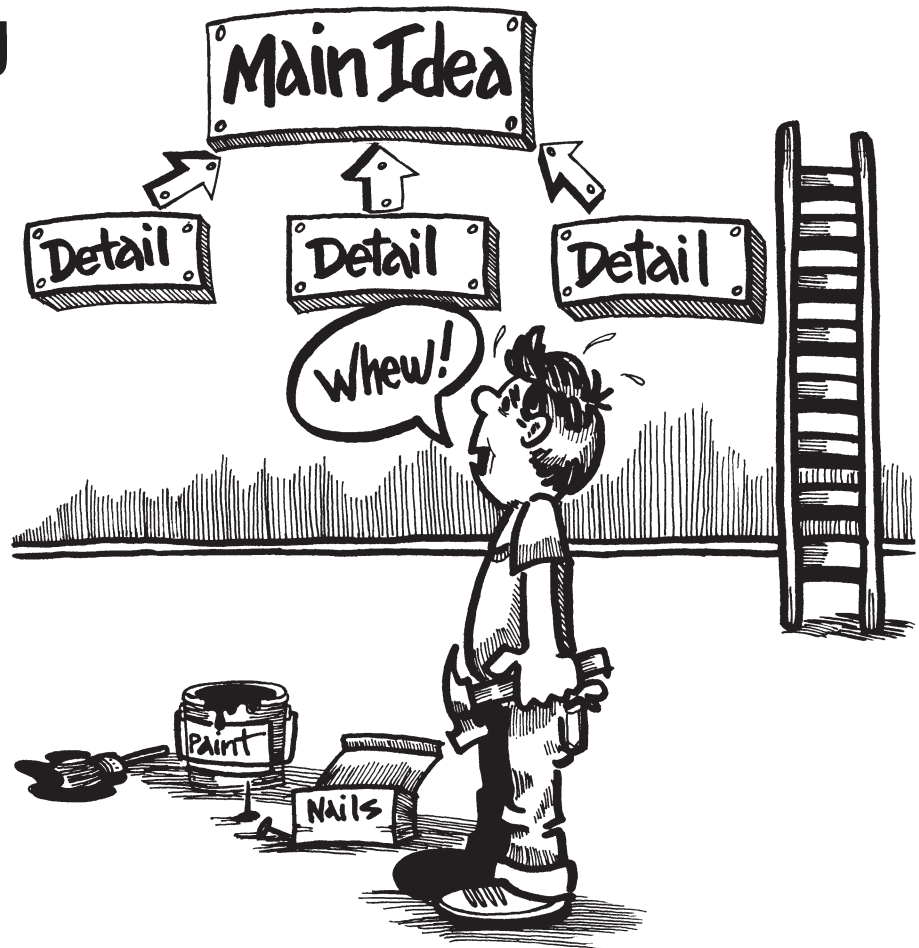
Making Generalizations and Drawing Conclusions 61

Predicting Outcomes 61
Making Generalizations 62
Drawing Conclusions 62
Activities 63

Evaluating Information 72

Tone and Mood 72
Persuasive Techniques 73
Author's Purpose 73
Audience Identification 73
Activities 74

Identifying Main Idea



ATTENTION!! ATTENTION!! HERE'S THE MAIN EVENT!!!

Home-reading materials provide many opportunities for students to practice searching for main ideas. This practice will help them identify main ideas in other types of reading. For years, for instructional purposes, educators attempted to break down the reading process into its smallest elements. Today, leading authorities suggest that we view reading as a holistic process. The following discussion describes activities you can use to encourage students to combine skills and apply them in reading situations.

MATCHING MAIN IDEAS

One of the simplest activities allows students to work in pairs. Students select articles, clip off headlines, then place articles and headlines in separate junk-mail envelopes for each other

to match. Students must use articles with the same number of columns, so that width offers no clue for matching.

Before students begin this activity, explain to them that newspapers and articles use headlines for two purposes: 1) to tell the reader what the article is about, or 2) to attract the reader's attention. Frequently, attention-getting headlines do not state the main idea of the article.

After several students have completed this activity, you can use the headline/article envelopes for team competition or learning center practice. Also, students can use the same procedure to match other items such as pictures and captions, cartoons (not comic strips) and captions, and questions and answers.

WRITING MAIN IDEAS

Have students choose an item and write several headlines for it. All the headlines except one should state the main idea. Encourage them

to write one of the following types of incorrect headline: 1) an attention-getting headline, or 2) a headline stating one of the details given as supporting evidence. You can use this activity to evaluate whether or not students are able to differentiate between the main idea and details.

For additional practice, allow one student to read an item. Have the student cut off the first and last paragraphs, place them in one envelope, and place the remainder of the item in a second envelope. Then have two pupils read the separate paragraphs and write main idea statements *before* reading the entire piece. Their sentences will be different. This assignment helps students learn that we can express the same idea in many different ways.

To teach students to pinpoint the main idea, have them write telegrams to friends. Selecting the words that precisely express the main idea for the telegram helps them understand the concept of identifying main ideas. Or, for group work, have students read separate paragraphs within one article, write main idea statements, and read them aloud to the group. Finally, each pupil can study the entire article, and the group

can decide whether or not they correctly identified the main idea.

After students have completed several activities, they will be ready for a more difficult assignment. Ask them to highlight the main idea in a brochure or advertisement and write a reply letter requesting additional information. All the steps in the writing process are included in this activity:

prewriting—deciding what the main idea is, listing points to use in their reply; eliminating unnecessary points; and determining the organization.

writing—writing a topic sentence with a main idea; completing a rough draft of the letter.

revising—checking the ideas and arrangement.

editing—making corrections.

proofreading—final revising and rearranging.

rewriting—producing a final copy to be mailed.

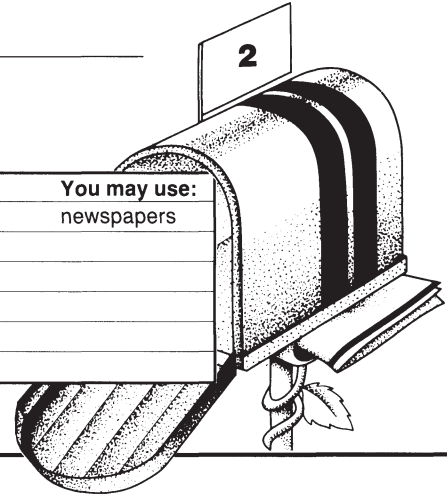
These activities help students develop main idea skills. They also encourage development of other skills including finding details, drawing conclusions, and evaluating information. In addition, students draw from sources other than the teacher and write for a different audience.

Name _____ Date _____

Headline Hunters

Objective: identifying main ideas in headlines.

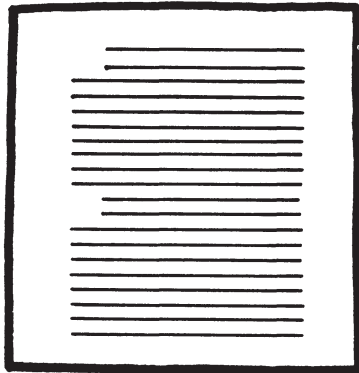
You will need:	You may use:
scissors	newspapers
pen	
stapler, paste or tape	
envelope	



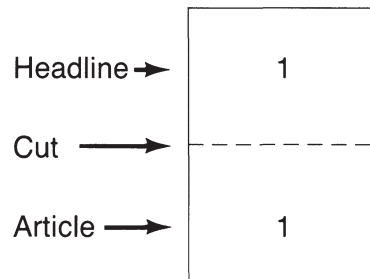
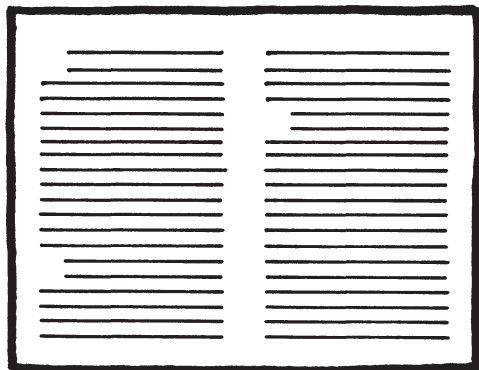
1. Select at least five articles with headlines.
2. Number lightly on the back of each article and its headline.

HINT: Be sure all headlines and articles have the same number of columns so that the other student must read the article in order to match it with the headline.

One Column



Two Columns



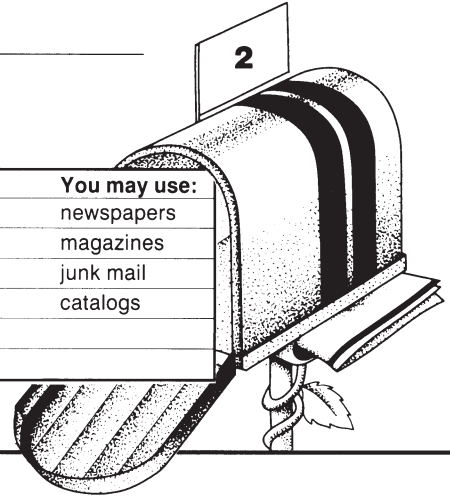
3. Cut the headline from each article.
4. Mix up the articles and headlines.
5. Place them in an envelope.
6. Exchange envelopes with the other student.
7. Read the articles and headlines; match them.
8. Check each other's work by looking at the numbers on the back.
9. Attach your envelope to this sheet.

Name _____ Date _____

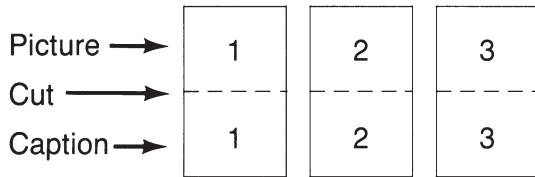
Picture Perfect!

Objective: identifying main ideas in pictures.

You will need:	You may use:
scissors	newspapers
pen	magazines
stapler, paste or tape	junk mail
envelope	catalogs



- 1. Find at least five pictures with captions.
- 2. Number lightly on the back of each picture and caption.



- 11. Write a new caption for each.

New caption for Picture A: _____

New caption for Picture B: _____

- 3. Cut each picture from its caption.
- 4. Mix up the pictures and captions.
- 5. Place them in an envelope.
- 6. Exchange envelopes with other student.
- 7. Match the pictures and captions.
- 8. Check each other's work by looking at the numbers on the back.
- 9. Attach your envelope to this sheet.

- 12. Attach the two pictures to the back of this sheet.

- 13. Answer these questions: Did the new captions change the main idea of the picture?
 ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, are your new captions logical?
 ___ Yes ___ No

Additional Practice

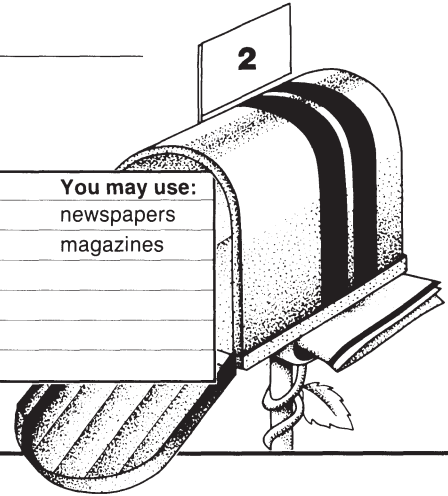
- 10. Choose two pictures from your envelope.

Name _____ Date _____

Cartoon Capers

Objective: identifying main ideas in cartoons and advice columns.

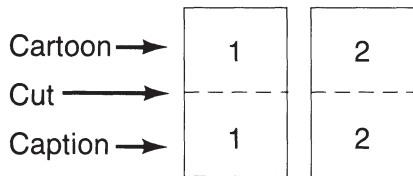
You will need:	You may use:
scissors	newspapers
pen	magazines
stapler, paste or tape	
envelope	



- 1. Select at least five cartoons with captions.

HINT: Select cartoons, not comic strips that have only one frame.

- 2. Number lightly on the back of each cartoon and its caption.



- 3. Cut each cartoon from its caption.
- 4. Mix up the cartoons and captions.
- 5. Place them in an envelope.
- 6. Exchange envelopes with the other student.
- 7. Read the captions and match them with the cartoons.
- 8. Check by looking at the numbers on the back.
- 9. Attach your envelope to this sheet.

Additional Practice

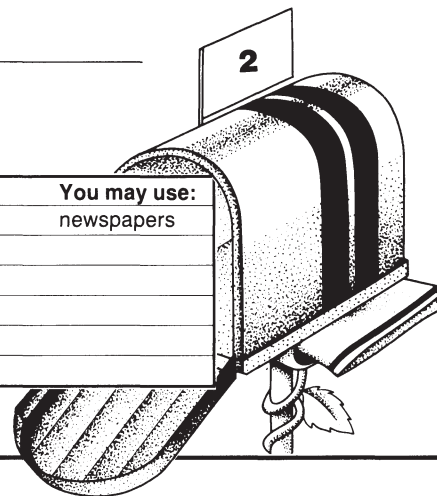
- 10. Select at least five questions and answers from advice columns.
- 11. Number lightly on the back of each question and its answer.
- 12. Cut each question from its answer.
- 13. Mix up the questions and answers.
- 14. Place them in an envelope.
- 15. Exchange envelopes with the other student.
- 16. Read the items and match them.
- 17. Check each other's work by looking at the numbers on the back.
- 18. Attach your envelope to this sheet.

Name _____ Date _____

Headline Guessing

Objective: identifying main ideas in newspapers.

You will need:	You may use:
scissors	newspapers
pen	
stapler, paste or tape	



- 1. Select an item in a newspaper and read it.
- 2. Think of two other headlines beside the one in the newspaper that state the main idea.
- 3. Write the headlines in any two blanks below.
- 5. Ask another student to read the item.
- 6. Ask the student to circle the headline that *does not* state the main idea.
- 7. Answer the following questions: Did the student select the correct headline?
___ Yes ___ No

Headline A: _____

Headline B: _____

Headline C: _____

- 4. Think of another headline which *does not* state the main idea.

HINT: This headline may be either attention-getting (Celebrate!) or may state details that support the main idea (Two Hundred People Attend the Fireworks Display!).

What is the difference between a headline that states the main idea and an attention-getting headline? _____

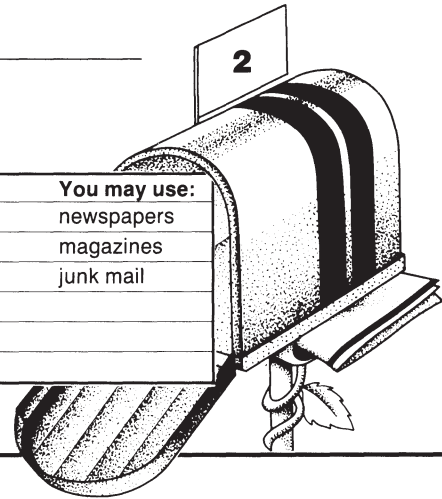
- 8. Cut out the item and attach it to this sheet.

Name _____ Date _____

What's It All About?

Objective: identifying and writing main ideas in articles and letters.

You will need:	You may use:
scissors	newspapers
pen	magazines
stapler, paste or tape	junk mail
envelope	



- 1. Select an article or letter and read it.
- 2. State the main idea in one sentence, but do not let the other student see what you have written.

The main idea of this item is _____

- 3. Cut off the first and last paragraphs of the item and place them in an envelope.
- 4. Place the remainder of the item in another envelope.
- 5. Ask the other student to read the first and last paragraphs and write the main idea.

My friend thinks the main idea is ____

- 6. Ask the other student to read the entire item.
- 7. Decide if both of you stated the same main idea. (Remember, the two of you do not need to use the same words in your main idea statements.)
 ____ Yes, we did. ____ No, we did not.
- 8. If the two of you did not agree, then together write a new main idea sentence.

We (your names) _____
and _____

now think the main idea is _____

- 9. Attach the item to this sheet.