

DURING-READING **SAMPLE LESSON**

Main Idea Strategy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Vocabulary routine adapted with permission from Archer, A. L., Gleason, M. M., & Vachon, V. (2005b). *REWARDS Plus: Reading strategies applied to social studies passages*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Main idea strategy adapted with permission from Klingner, J. K., Vaughn, S., Dimino, J., Schumm, J. S., & Bryant, D. (2001). *Collaborative strategic reading: Strategies for improving comprehension*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

TERMS TO KNOW

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Detail | A specific, minor piece of information related to the topic |
| Main idea | What the text is mostly about |
| Topic | The subject addressed by the author |

Encarta World English Dictionary; Vaughn & Klingner, 1999

The Get the Gist strategy was developed as a way to help students understand the concept of main idea (Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Vaughn, Klingner, & Schumm, 1996). It teaches students to pay attention to the most relevant information in the text and guides them to developing a main idea statement based on the following information:

- Who or what the paragraph is about (the topic of the paragraph, which will usually be the subject of the main idea statement).
- The most important information about the “who” or “what”.

Students are taught to combine the above elements into a main idea statement with 10 words or less, eliminating nonessential details.

OBJECTIVE

The students will determine the **topic**, **main idea**, and important **details** of a paragraph.

MATERIALS

- Copies of a short passage or chapter.
- Blank main idea form overhead transparency.
- Transparencies of pictures or cartoons depicting simple actions.
- Several blank main idea forms (see Figure 29).

DAILY REVIEW

Spend 3–5 minutes on vocabulary review.

1. Show the previous day's words and definitions on a transparency or chart. Read each word to the students and have students repeat each one.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| feisty | Strong and not afraid of arguing with people |
| pact | An agreement or a sworn promise |
| desolate | Very lonely and unhappy |
| dominant | More important or powerful than other people or things |
| anonymous | Written, given, or made by someone who does not want their name to be known |
| motive | A reason for doing something |

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

2. Briefly review the meaning of each word. Note that these are student-friendly definitions that are easy for students to understand.
3. Ask students questions to promote deep understanding of the words. Have students discuss each question with a partner. Then call on partners to respond. Always ask students to give reasons for their answers. There can be more than one correct answer to these questions. The important thing is that the student's reasoning reflects the true meaning of the vocabulary words.

Teacher:

When might a *pact* be a *motive* for a crime?

(If someone has made a sworn agreement, they might commit a crime to keep their promise.)

Can a *feisty* person be *desolate*?

(If a person is really strong and not afraid of arguing with people, they might not have a lot of friends. They might feel very lonely sometimes.)

Why might a *dominant* person give an *anonymous* gift?

(Sometimes powerful or important people might not want anyone to know when they give someone a gift. They might want it to be a secret so they don't have a lot of publicity. Maybe if it were public that they did something nice then others would think they were "soft" or not as powerful.)

HELPFUL HABIT | Laminate a piece of construction paper and place it under each word you are asking students to read. It works as a guide to help the reader keep his or her place and the rest of the students focused on the word being read.

STATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Teacher:

Today I am going to show you a strategy, or plan of action, that will help you determine the main idea of each paragraph as you read. It is important to be able to identify main ideas so you can monitor your understanding as you are reading.

MODEL AND TEACH

Genre: Expository

Grouping: Whole class

1. Define main idea through the Get the Gist strategy.

Teacher:

The name of the strategy you will be learning today is "Get the Gist." If you get the gist of something you read or hear or see on TV, you understand the most important ideas. The Get the Gist strategy is a step-by-step way to help you find the most important ideas in paragraphs you read. The strategy has three parts:

- Ask yourself, "Who or what is the paragraph about?"
- Ask yourself, "What is the most important information about the 'who' or 'what?'"
- Say it in a main idea statement with 10 words or less.

One way to introduce this strategy to students is to teach it without text.

2. Project a cartoon or picture of an animal doing something. No words are necessary, just a character involved in some sort of action. For instance, you might project a transparency of a dog jumping to catch a Frisbee in his mouth. Perhaps there are surrounding trees, flowers, and sunshine. Now ask the students to look at the cartoon.

Teacher:

In one or two words, tell me who or what this cartoon is about.

Students:

A dog.

Teacher:

What is the most important thing about the dog?

Students:

He's jumping to catch a Frisbee.

Some students may mention the flowers, or the trees, or that it is a sunny day. If this happens, ask questions to guide students to see the difference between the most important idea and non-essential details.

Teacher:

Is the sunny day the most important thing about the cartoon? If we just looked at this picture, would we say, "This is a picture of a dog on a sunny day," or would we say, "This is a picture of a dog jumping to catch a Frisbee"?

Now that the students have identified "who" or "what" the cartoon is about, and the most important information about the "who" or the "what," ask them to count on their fingers to come up with a main idea statement that has 10 words or less. For example:

- The dog is jumping to catch a Frisbee. (8 words)
 - The dog is catching a Frisbee in his mouth. (9 words)
 - The dog leaps to catch a Frisbee. (7 words)
3. Repeat with other cartoons or pictures if needed, until students clearly understand the concept of main idea and the Get the Gist strategy.
 4. Give students a copy of a short passage. The sample lesson is from a science passage about hurricanes.
 - Project a blank main idea form on the overhead (See Figure 29).
 - Preview the passage: Look at illustrations, title, headings, and bold words.
 - Write the title or topic of the selection on the line provided.
 - Prior knowledge: Ask students to think about what they already know about the topic. Accept responses.
 - Read the first paragraph with the students.
 - Reread the paragraph one or two sentences at a time. Think aloud as you identify who or what the paragraph is about and the most important thing about the "who" or "what." Be sure to include in the think aloud the *process* of deciding what is the most important thing and *why*. Record in appropriate spaces on the main idea form.
 - Think aloud the process of identifying important details in the passage. Ask questions such as, "Is this detail important?" "The important information in this sentence is..." "This detail is not important because..." Then record important details in the appropriate column.
 - Think aloud how you make sure that all of the important details are related to the main idea.

- After reading an additional paragraph, show students sample main idea statements, some that are correct and some that are incorrect. Discuss each statement and determine whether it is an accurate statement of the main idea.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners

1. Give partners a blank main idea form.
2. Working with a partner, have students read the next paragraph and use the Get the Gist strategy. Ask students to work with their partners to come up with a main idea statement that includes:
 - Who or what the paragraph is about.
 - The most important thing about the “who” or the “what” stated in 10 words or less.
3. Share main idea statements with the class. Think aloud with the class to modify any statements that are inaccurate or incomplete. Also emphasize that all of the main idea statements do not have to be exactly the same in order to be correct.
4. Ask students to record important details that relate to the main idea.
5. Circulate around the room and be available to clarify and check for accurate details. Continue to ask questions such as, “What are the most important details?”
6. At the overhead, ask partners to share the important details and tell why they think the details they selected are important.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners, then individual

Provide an additional short passage or the next few paragraphs in a chapter and have students use a main idea form to develop a main idea statement and record key details.

Initially, have students work with a partner, and after students are more proficient, ask them to use this strategy independently.

GENERALIZATION

Teacher:

Think about your other classes. Raise your hand if you can think of a way to use the Get the Gist strategy in another class.

Student:

We could use the strategy in science class.

Teacher:

How would that look?

Student:

Well, we could find the main idea of each paragraph as we read the chapter.

Teacher:

That's right. Do you have to have a main idea form to do that?

Student:

Well, we could draw our own form, or we could just come up with a main idea statement for each paragraph and write down the important details.

Teacher:

Good thinking. Does anyone have a science textbook? Let's quickly look at a chapter together and see how we could take notes using the Get the Gist strategy...

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Check accuracy of main idea statements and key details.

- Does the main idea statement encompass the significant details of the paragraph?
- Are the details accurate?
- Did students select key details that relate directly to the main idea?

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

Students determine the main idea of an entire passage or chapter. This is particularly important in narrative text because state tests, such as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), can ask students to identify a correct main idea statement for multiple paragraphs or an entire passage.

- Have students write the main idea statements for each paragraph in the passage.
- Use these statements to determine the main idea of the entire passage.

Students may also use the main idea statements of each paragraph to write a summary of the entire passage or chapter (See page 123 for a sample lesson). Students may also extend the main idea strategy to complete a main idea log (see Figure 53) or some other note-taking form.

FIGURE 28. SAMPLE PARTIALLY COMPLETED MAIN IDEA FORM.

| MAIN IDEA FORM | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Name(s) _____ | | Date _____ | |
| Title or Topic of the Selection <u>What are hurricanes?</u> | | | |
| Paragraph | Who or What is the Paragraph About? | Most Important Information About the "Who" or "What" | Key Details |
| 1 | Hurricanes | are large tropical storms with heavy winds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds more than 74 mph • Large areas of rain • Produce tornadoes • Cause flooding |
| 2 | Hurricanes | form over warm ocean water. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water must be over 79 degrees F • If have winds less than 74 mph are called tropical storms |
| 3 | Hurricanes | have calm centers with very powerful winds around them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center is called the eye • Eye is 10–30 miles wide • Wind around eye can gust to 186 mph |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Note: The complete main idea statement is formed by combining the "Who or What" column with the "Most Important Information" column.

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FIGURE 29. MAIN IDEA FORM.

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