Main Idea

- What is a main idea?
- What is a topic?
- How do you recognize the difference between general and specific ideas?
- What is a stated main idea?
- What is an unstated main idea?

Everyday Reading Skills: Selecting a Book
What Is a Main Idea?

The main idea of a passage is the core of the material, the particular point the author is trying to convey. The main idea of a passage can be stated in one sentence that condenses specific ideas or details in the passage into a general, all-inclusive statement of the author’s message. In classroom discussions, all of the following words are sometimes used to help students understand the meaning of the main idea:

- thesis
- main point
- central focus
- gist
- controlling idea
- central thought

Whether you read a single paragraph, a chapter, or an entire book, many experts agree that your most important single task is to understand the main idea of what you read.

Recognize General and Specific Words

The first step in determining the main idea of a selection is to look at the specific ideas presented in the sentences and try to decide on a general topic or subject under which you can group these ideas. Before tackling sentences, begin with words. Pretend that the sentence ideas in a selection have been reduced to a short list of keywords. Pretend also that within the list is a general term that expresses an overall subject for the keywords. The general term encompasses or categorizes the key ideas and is considered the topic of the list.
Satin, wool, and silk are different types of fabric. Thus fabric is the general term or classification that could be considered the subject or topic.

**EXERCISE 1**

Circle the general term or subject for each of the following related groups of ideas.

1. chimpanzees 2. cirrus 3. oats 4. Alps 5. shrimp
   - orangutans  - clouds  - wheat  - Appalachians  - crustacean
   - apes  - cumulus  - corn  - mountains  - crab
   - gorillas  - stratus  - grain  - Rockies  - lobster

**Recognize General and Specific Phrases**

Topics of passages are more often stated as phrases rather than single words. The following list contains a phrase that is a general topic and three specific ideas related to the topic. Circle the general topic that could be considered the subject.

**EXAMPLE**

Turn on the ignition.
Press the accelerator.
Insert the key.
Start the car.

**EXPLANATION** The first three details are involved in starting a car. The last phrase is the general subject or topic.
CHAPTER 4  Main Idea

exercise 2

Circle the phrase that could be the topic for each list.

1. totaling yearly income
   subtracting for dependents
   filing an income tax return
   mailing a 1040 form
   3. picking up seashells
      vacationing at the beach
      walking in the surf
      riding the waves

2. paying fees
   buying books
   starting college
   going to class
   4. pushing paper under sticks
      piling the logs
      building a fire
      striking a match

exercise 3

Read the lists of specific details and write a general phrase that could be the subject or topic for each group.

1. separate the white and dark clothes
   add one cup of detergent
   insert quarters into the machine
   General topic? doing the laundry

2. dribble the ball
   pass ball down court
   shoot a basket
   General topic? playing basketball

3. pull up alongside car
   back into space
   straighten out
   General topic? parking a car

4. switch on power
   select a program
   open a file
   General topic? working at the computer

5. boil water in a large pot
   add salt and oil
   empty noodles into water
   General topic? cooking pasta
Recognize the General Topic for Sentences

Paragraphs are composed of sentences that develop a single general topic. The next practice exercises contain groups in which the sentences of a paragraph are listed numerically. After reading the sentences, circle the phrase that best expresses the topic or general subject of the sentences.

**EXAMPLE**

1. The law of demand is illustrated in an experiment conducted by the makers of M&M candy.
2. For a twelve-month period, the price of M&Ms remained the same in 150 stores, but the number of M&Ms in a package increased, which dropped the price per ounce.
3. In these stores, sales immediately rose by 20 to 30 percent.

Candy Maker's Experiment
M&Ms Drop in Price
M&Ms Prove the Law of Demand

**EXPLANATION** The first phrase is too broad. The second relates a detail that is an important part of the experiment. The third links the candy with the purpose of the experiment and thus most accurately states the subject of the sentences.

Circle the phrase that best describes the topic or subject for each group of sentences.

**Group 1**
1. To provide a favorable climate for growing grapes, the winter temperature should not go below 15° F, and the summers should be long.
2. During the growing season, rainfall should be light.
3. A gentle movement of air is required to dry the vines after rains, dispel fog, and protect the vines from fungus disease.

Protecting Grapes from Disease
Appropriate Temperatures for Growing Grapes
Appropriate Climate for Growing Grapes

**Group 2**
1. For example, faced with fewer expansion opportunities within the United States, Wal-Mart opened new stores abroad and foreign sales reached $7.5 billion in three years.
2. As more and more companies engage in international business, the world is becoming a single, interdependent global economy.
3. In a plan to become a transglobal giant, Chrysler, one of America's apple pie auto companies, merged with Germany's Daimler-Benz to become DaimlerChrysler.

International Auto Mergers
A Global Economy
Wal-Mart Expansion
### Group 3
1. Oprah Winfrey’s success has placed her in the top 0.5 percent of the population that owns over a quarter of the nation’s wealth.
2. Oprah’s entertainment enterprises earn her over $250 million a year.
3. *Fortune* magazine has listed Oprah as one of the 400 richest Americans.

#### Rankings of Wealth
- **The Richest Americans**

#### Oprah’s Financial Success

### Group 4
1. Salsa, the popular blend of Latin American music, is also the word for *sauce*.
2. According to stories, the expression was contributed to the music world by a Cuban orchestra conductor.
3. While practicing a mambo that needed more life, the orchestra leader told his musicians to “echale salsita” or “throw in the sauce.”

#### Latin American Salsa Music
- **The Naming of Salsa Music**

#### Contribution of Salsa

### Group 5
1. Simply drinking water is the best way to prevent dehydration from sweating.
2. Taking salt tablets before drinking water can dehydrate the body even more by extracting water from body tissue.
3. Plain water is better than beverages containing sugar or electrolytes because it is absorbed faster.

#### Salt Tablets versus Water
- **Value in Plain Water**

#### Preventing Dehydration

### Exercise 5
Read the following groups of three sentences and then write a phrase that best states the subject or general topic for the sentences.

#### Group 1
1. The albatross is one of the few birds that is designed to live at sea, and it seldom visits land.
2. Because it has special glands that excrete salt, it can drink seawater and eat salty fish.
3. The albatross’s unusually long wings provide the lift for it to glide almost endlessly in high winds over rough seas.

**General topic:** Designed for Sea Life or The Albatross’s Unique Design

#### Group 2
1. Once children begin to speak and understand words, their progress is remarkably fast.
2. Most children begin speaking at 1 year of age and speak only 2 to 3 words.
3. By age 2, they speak about 50 words and understand 200 to 300 words.

General topic? Early Word Knowledge or A Child’s Understanding of Words

**Group 3**

1. Dr. Sylvia Castillo of Stanford University founded the National Network of Hispanic Women.
2. This organization publishes a national newsletter that focuses on the successes of Hispanic women in academia and business.
3. The organization has become an important voice for Hispanic issues relating to gender.

General topic?: National Network of Hispanic Women or An Organization for Hispanic Women

**Recognize General and Supporting Sentences**

Read the sentences in each of the following groups. The sentences are related to a single subject with two of the sentences expressing specific support and one sentence expressing the general idea about the subject. Circle the number of the sentence that best expresses the general subject. Then read the three topic phrases and circle the phrase that best describes the subject of the sentences.

**EXAMPLE**

1. An accountant who prefers to work alone rather than as a team member may be an important part of the organization but will not become a leader.
2. A CEO who steers a company into increased profits but exhibits poor people skills by yelling at employees and refusing to listen will not keep her job.
3. To reach the top in the workplace, companies now demand a high level of emotional intelligence (EI), which refers to skills in adaptability, self-control, conflict management, and teamwork.

IQ No Longer Matters

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Polite Changes in the Workplace

**EXPLANATION**
The third sentence best expresses the general subject. The other two sentences offer specific supporting ideas. The second phrase, “The Importance of Emotional Intelligence,” best describes the general subject of the material. The first phrase is not really suggested, and the last phrase is one of the details that is mentioned.

**exercise**

Circle the number of the sentence that best expresses the general subject. Then read the three topic phrases and circle the phrase that best describes the subject of the sentences.

**Group 1**

1. African American and Hispanic teens are not as likely to use tobacco as Caucasian adolescents.
2. Each day approximately three thousand teens start smoking, and eventually one third of those teens will die from smoking.
3. Despite the proven danger, in the past decade tobacco usage among teens has increased.

Group 2

1. Berry Gordy, an ex-boxer and Ford auto worker, borrowed $700 from his family and successfully began to manufacture and sell his own records on the Hitsville USA (later called "Motown," for "motor town") label.
2. The next year Smokey Robinson and the Miracles recorded "Shop Around," which was Gordy's first big million-copy hit.
3. Gordy signed an 11-year-old boy to record for him under the name of Stevie Wonder.

Group 3

1. The czarina believed that the devious and politically corrupt Rasputin, known as the "mad monk," was the only one who could save her son.
2. The son of Nicholas II was afflicted with hemophilia, a condition in which the blood does not clot properly.
3. In Russia during the reign of Nicholas II, hemophilia played an important historical role.

Group 4

1. By 2000 the world’s population moved past 6 billion people, and by 2050 it is expected to reach 9 billion.
2. The global statistics on population growth and the availability of food are alarming.
3. Biotechnologists estimate that the land available for raising crops will decrease by half in the next fifty years.

Group 5

1. The success of Norman Rockwell’s illustrations is based on the simple formula of drawing ordinary people doing ordinary things that make us laugh at ourselves.
2. Rockwell used humor to poke fun at situations but never at people.
exercise 7

For each group of sentences, write a phrase that states the topic, and then circle the number of the sentence that best expresses the main idea.

**Group 1**

1. Four hundred Navajos were recruited as marine radio operators, and the codes based on the Navajo language were never broken by the enemy.
2. During World War II, over 25,000 Native Americans served in the armed forces and made amazing contributions toward the war effort.
3. The most famous Indian GI was a Pima Indian, the marine Ira Hayes, who helped plant the American flag on Iwo Jima.

   General topic? **Contribution of Native Americans in World War II**

**Group 2**

1. To celebrate and sacrifice for Lent, Christians ate unleavened bread, which was made without lard, dairy products, or leavening agents.
2. In 610 a monk invented pretzels from leftover unleavened bread dough as a reward for children who recited their prayers.
3. The monk twisted the leftover dough to represent Christians of the day praying with their arms across their chests and each hand on the opposite shoulder.

General topic? Monk Invented Pretzels

Group 3
1. Use soap or a liquid sanitizer to wash your hands frequently, and definitely wash them before eating.
2. In developing countries, avoid uncooked food, use bottled water, and peel fruit before eating it.
3. Certain tips can protect travelers from the health risks of traveling abroad.

General topic? Tips for Travelers

exercise 8

Each of the following sentence groups contains three specific supporting sentences. Write a general sentence that states the overall message for each group. In addition, write a phrase that briefly states the general topic of that sentence.

Group 1
1. The battered woman does not want to believe the man she loves is violent.
2. She doesn’t want to face the possibility that he may be violent for the rest of their lives together.
3. She wants to hold on to the hope that someday he will quit drinking and the relationship will change.

—Marriages and Families in a Diverse Society by Robin Wolf

General sentence stating the main idea? The battered woman does not want to face the reality of abuse.
General topic? The Battered Woman’s Denial

Group 2
1. Decades before Jamestown was hailed as the first permanent settlement in America, Pedro Menendez de Aviles founded St. Augustine in Florida.
2. Menendez brought 800 soldiers and colonists to establish this first European settlement in America and to protect the land for Spain.
3. St. Augustine, so named because the landing occurred in the month of August, became a permanent and prosperous Spanish settlement.

General sentence stating the main idea? St. Augustine, not Jamestown, was the first permanent European settlement in America.
General topic? The Spanish Settlement of St. Augustine

Group 3
1. A big fear of banks and companies interested in introducing smart cards and digital cash has been the supposedly unsophisticated U.S. consumer.
2. Since the late 1990s, however, elementary school children in Westport, Connecticut, have been using smart cards to buy lunch at the school cafeteria.
3. Clearly, it doesn’t take grown-up smarts to use smart cards.


General sentence stating the main idea? If elementary school children can use smart cards, adult U.S. consumers are smart enough to use them.

General topic? The Ability to Use Smart Cards

### Differentiate Topic, Main Idea, and Supporting Details

We have said that a topic is a word or phrase that describes the subject or general category of a group of specific ideas. Frequently, the topic is stated as the title of a passage. The main idea, in contrast, is a complete sentence that states the topic and adds the writer’s position or focus on the topic. The supporting details are the specifics that develop the topic and main idea.

Read the following example from a textbook paragraph and label the topic, the main idea, and a supporting detail.

**EXAMPLE**

**Topic**

The Body Signaling Feeling

**Main Idea**

Some signals of body language, like some facial expressions, seem to be “spoken” universally.

**Detail**

When people are depressed, it shows in their walk, stance, and head position.

—Psychology by Carole Wade and Carol Tavris

EXPLANATION

The first item is general enough to be the topic. The second item is a sentence that expresses the writer’s point about the topic, and so it is the main idea. The third item is a specific example, so it is a detail.

### exercise 9

Compare the items within each group and indicate which is the topic (T), the main idea (MI), and the specific supporting detail (D).

#### Group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>1. Much in this American document comes from England’s Magna Carta, which was signed in 1215.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>2. British Roots in American Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>3. The American Constitution has its roots in the power of past documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Group 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MI</th>
<th>1. Children are highly valued in African American families.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>2. Valuing Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3. Like Latinos, African Americans view “children as wealth,” believing that children are important in adding enjoyment and fulfillment to life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

—Marriage and Families in a Diverse Society by Robin Wolf
CHAPTER 4  Main Idea

Group 3

1. The Fate of Mexican Americans

2. Some conquered Mexicans welcomed the Americans; many others, recognizing the futility of resistance, responded to the American conquest with ambivalence.

3. The 80,000 Mexicans who lived in the Southwest did not respond to the Mexican War with a single voice.


Group 4

1. Her early research led to an understanding of how viruses infect the plant and destroy its tissues.

2. Esau’s Early Career with Beets

3. Sugar beets played a major role in the career of Dr. Katherine Esau, one of this century’s most prolific plant scientists.


Group 5

1. Discrimination Against Women in Higher Education

2. Harvard, for example, was one of the last to give up sex discrimination and began admitting women to its graduate business program only in 1963.

3. In general, the more prestigious the educational institutions, the more strongly they discriminated against women.

—Sociology, Third Edition, by Alex Thio

Differentiate Distractors in Main Idea Test Items

To gain insight into recognizing a correctly stated topic, categorizing incorrect responses to main idea questions can be helpful. When stating the topic or main idea of a passage, it is easy to make the mistake of creating a phrase or a sentence that is either too broad or too narrow. The same two types of errors occur when students are answering main idea questions on standardized tests. A phrase that is too broad is too general and thus would suggest the inclusion of much more than is actually stated in the passage. A phrase that is too narrow is a detail within the passage. It may be an interesting and eye-catching detail, but it is not the subject of the passage.

EXAMPLE

After reading the following passage, decide which of the suggested titles is correct (C), too broad (TB), or a detail (D).

One interesting research finding shows that listeners can accurately judge the socioeconomic status (whether high, middle, or low) of speakers from 60-second voice samples. In fact, many listeners reported that they made their judgments in fewer than 15 seconds. Speakers judged to be of high status were also rated as being of higher credibility than speakers rated middle and low in status. Listeners can also judge with considerable accuracy the emotional states of speakers from vocal expressions.

—Human Communication, Sixth Edition, by Joseph DeVito
Read the following passage and label the suggested titles within the passage as correct (C), too broad (TB), or a detail (D).

Passage 1
In California, Mexican Americans were outnumbered and vulnerable to discrimination. During the early years of the Gold Rush, Mexican Americans were robbed, beaten, and lynched with impunity. The 1850 Foreign Miners’ Tax imposed a $20 a month tax on Mexican American miners, even though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had granted them citizenship. Many Mexicans were forced to sell land to pay onerous taxes that fell heaviest on the Spanish speakers.


1. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo **D**
2. Discrimination **TB**
3. Foreign Miners’ Tax During the Gold Rush **D**
4. Discrimination Against Mexican Americans in California **C**

Passage 2
Humpback whales strain their food from seawater. Instead of teeth, these giants have an array of brushlike plates called baleen on each side of their upper jaw. The baleen is used to sift food from the ocean. To start feeding, a humpback whale opens its mouth, expands its throat, and takes a huge gulp of seawater. When its mouth closes, the water squeezes out through spaces in the baleen, and a mass of food is trapped in the mouth. The food is then swallowed whole, passing into the stomach, where digestion begins. The humpback’s stomach can hold about half a ton of food at a time, and in a typical day, the animal’s digestive system will process as much as 2 tons of krill and fish.


1. Humpback Whales **TB**
2. Baleen for Teeth **D**
3. The Digestive System of the Humpback Whale **TB**
4. How Whales Filter Food **C**
Passage 3

Tar and nicotine are not the only harmful chemicals in cigarettes. In fact, tars account for only 8 percent of tobacco smoke. The remaining 92 percent consists of various gases, the most dangerous of which is carbon monoxide. In tobacco smoke, the concentration of carbon monoxide is 800 times higher than the level considered safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In the human body, carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the red blood cells by binding with the receptor sites for oxygen. This causes oxygen deprivation in many body tissues.

—Health: the Basics, Fifth Edition, by Rebecca Donatelle

1. Carbon Monoxide
2. Harmful Tars and Nicotine
3. Carbon Monoxide Dangers from Smoking
4. Tobacco and Smoking

Questioning for the Main Idea

To determine the main idea of a body of material, ask questions in the following three basic areas. The order may vary according to how much you already know about the subject. Usually, you decide on the general topic first, sometimes from the title and sometimes by considering the details. If you are familiar with the material, constructing a main idea may seem almost automatic. If the material is unfamiliar, however, you may need to connect the key thoughts to formulate a topic and then create your main idea statement.

1. Establish the Topic
   Question: Who or what is this about? What general word or phrase identifies the subject? The topic should be broad enough to include all the ideas, but narrow enough to focus on the direction of the details. For example, identifying the topic of an article as “College Costs,” “Change in College,” or “Changing to Cut College Costs,” might all be correct, but the last may be the most pointed and descriptive for the article.

2. Identify the Key Supporting Terms
   Question: What are the important details? Look at the details that seem significant to see if they point in a particular direction. What aspect of the subject do they address? What seems to be the common message? In a passage on college costs, the details might describe benefits of larger classes, telecommunication networks, and video instruction. A common thread is that each idea relates to changes targeted at cutting the costs of college instruction.

3. Focus on the Message of the Topic
   Question: What is the main idea the author is trying to convey about the topic? This statement should be:
   
   - A complete sentence,
   - Broad enough to include the important details, and
   - Focused enough to describe the author’s slant.
In the example about cutting college costs, the main idea might be “Several colleges experiment with ways to cut costs.”

**Stated Main Ideas**

Research shows that readers comprehend better when the main idea is directly stated, particularly when it is stated at the beginning of a passage. Such an initial main idea statement, thesis statement, or topic sentence is a signpost for readers, briefing them on what to expect. This thesis or main idea statement provides an overview of the author’s message and connects the supporting details. Read the following example and use the three-step method to determine the main idea.

**EXAMPLE**

Polygraph tests have been viewed as an invasion of privacy and criticized on ethical, legal, and scientific grounds. The physiological changes thought to reveal deception could result from anxiety about being interrogated, anger at being asked to take the test, or fear from pondering the consequences of “failing” the test. You might react in any of these ways if you were “hooked up” to a polygraph.

—*Psychology* by Stephen F. Davis and Joseph J. Palladino

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Polygraph Tests
2. Underline the key terms.
3. What point is the author trying to make? Polygraph tests have been viewed as an invasion of privacy and criticized on ethical, legal, and scientific grounds.

**EXPLANATION**

The topic of this passage is “Polygraph Tests.” The details give specifics about how physiological changes caused by anxiety, anger, or fear can show up the same way on a polygraph test as a lie response. The author states the main idea in the first sentence.

Textbook authors do not always state the main idea in the first sentence. Stated main ideas may be the beginning, middle, or concluding sentence of a passage. Therefore, do not think of stating the main idea only as a search for a particular sentence. Instead, rely on your own skill in answering the three questions about topic, details, and focus. Connect the details to form your own concept of the main idea, and, if a specific sentence in the paragraph restates it, you will recognize it as the main idea.

Apply the three-question technique to identify the topic, key terms, and main idea of the following passages, all of which have stated main ideas.

**Passage 1**

Mowing must be done correctly for the turf to look its best. Mowing is essentially a pruning operation done on grass. It removes a portion of the photosynthesizing part of the plant, which in turn lessens the supply of carbohydrates going to the roots for growth and respiration. Thus roots are as affected by mowing as the blades of the grass. Cutting
that removes more than 30 percent of the blade is detrimental to the roots because of the abrupt drop in carbohydrate flow.


1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Mowing Grass

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? Mowing must be done correctly for the turf to look its best.

Passage 2

Henry Dreyfuss, in his Symbol Sourcebook, points out some of the positive and negative meanings associated with various colors and some cultural comparisons. For example, red in China is used for joyous and festive occasions, whereas in Japan it signifies anger and danger. Blue signifies defeat for the Cherokee Indian, but virtue and truth for the Egyptian. In the Japanese theater, blue is the color for villains. Yellow signifies happiness and prosperity in Egypt, but in tenth-century France yellow colored the doors of criminals. Green communicates femininity to certain American Indians, fertility and strength to Egyptians, and youth and energy to the Japanese. Purple signifies virtue and faith in Egypt, grace and nobility in Japan.

—Essentials of Human Communication by Joseph DeVito

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Meaning Associated with Colors

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? The positive or negative meanings associated with colors vary according to different cultures.

Passage 3

Today, the Internet is emerging as one of the world’s key communications media. Roughly 80 percent of all information stored on the world’s computers is in English. The same proportion of Internet transmissions—e mail passages, file transfers, and the like—are in English. Many experts today argue that English is now such an intrinsic part of the global communications revolution that its dominance is unassailable.


1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? English Dominance on the Internet

2. Underline the key terms.
3. What point is the author trying to make? Many experts today argue that English is now such an intrinsic part of the global communications revolution that its dominance is unassailable.

Passage 4

Many people wonder how they can tell whether or not someone else is sexually attracted to them. Shotland and Craig discovered that when people first meet a person in whom they are sexually interested, they exhibit a particular pattern of behavior. In their study, pairs of male and female college students who had just met were videotaped having a conversation. Afterward, the researchers asked the subjects whether their interest in the other person had been sexual or just friendly. The researchers then matched reports of sexual interest to specific behaviors in the videotapes. They found that behaviors that exhibit sexual interest include long eye contact; playing with inanimate objects; asking questions; giving long answers; discontinuing eating, drinking, or reading; being the first to speak after a pause; doing most of the talking; and, especially, mentioning that one has noticed the other person before this meeting. Although these behaviors, such as asking questions, also tend to occur when a person has only a friendly interest in the partner, they occur to a greater degree when sexual interest is present. When the interest is simply friendly rather than sexual, eye contact is briefer; fidgeting is less; answers to questions tend to be shorter; and the person tends to continue eating, drinking, or even reading when the other person is present. However, because friendly and sexually interested behavior fall at two ends of a continuum and the difference between them is a matter of degree, interpreting behaviors can be difficult.

—Marriage and Families in a Diverse Society by Robin Wolf
1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Behaviors of the Sexually Attracted

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? Persons who are sexually interested in each other exhibit particular patterns of behavior.

Passage 5

Alcoholism has an impact that extends beyond the chemically dependent family member. The other family members become caught up in the addiction process in their attempt to cope with the chaotic family life that alcoholism produces. The alcoholic is known as the “dependent” because he or she is dependent on a chemical substance. The spouse typically takes on the role of the “enabler” (sometimes called “co-dependent”) who tries to help the alcoholic and thereby unwittingly engages in behavior that allows the alcoholic to continue drinking. The enabler attempts to save the alcoholic from experiencing the consequences of addictive behavior. For example, if the alcoholic is drunk or hung over and does not show up at a family barbecue attended by extended kin, the enabler will make excuses for the alcoholic and might say that the alcoholic has the flu. Thus the alcoholism is kept secret and the alcoholic is protected from the anger of relatives.

— Marriages and Families in a Diverse Society by Robin Wolf

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? The Family Impact of Alcoholism

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? Family members typically engage in enabling behavior to protect the alcoholic member.

Unstated Main Ideas

Research shows that only about half of the paragraphs in textbooks have directly stated main ideas. This should not be a problem if you understand the three-question technique for locating the main idea. The questions guide you in forming your own statement so that you are not dependent on finding a line in the text.

When the main idea is not directly stated, it is said to be implied, which means it is suggested from the thoughts that are revealed.

In this case, the author has presented a complete idea, but for reasons of style and impact has not chosen to express it concisely in one sentence. As a reader, it is your job to connect the details systematically and focus the message.

In the passage here, the main idea is not stated, but it may be determined by answering the three questions that follow.

EXAMPLE

In Australia and Belgium, nonvoters are subject to fines; not only the fine itself but the clear expectation that everyone is legally required to vote helps generate 90+ percent turnout rates. In Italy, nonvoters are not fined, but “Did Not Vote” is stamped on their identification papers, threatening nonvoters with the prospect of unsympathetic treatment at the hands of public officials should they get into trouble or need help with a problem.

— The New American Democracy, Election Update Edition, by Morris Fiorina and Paul Peterson
1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? **Penalties for Not Voting**

   *(This gives you the general topic or heading.)*

2. What are the key terms or details? Fines in Austria and Belgium.

   “Did Not Vote” stamp in Italy

3. What idea is the author trying to convey about nonvoting? In some countries, nonvoters are penalized in order to encourage voting.

   *(This is the main idea the author is trying to communicate.)*

**EXPLANATION** The sentence stating the main idea might very well have been the first, middle, or last sentence of the paragraph. Having it stated, however, was not necessary for understanding the passage. In many cases, readers spend time searching for a single sentence that encapsulates the meaning rather than digesting the information and forming ideas. Instead, answer these three questions: “Who or what is this about?” “What are the key terms?” and “What point is the author trying to make?” This passage is about penalties for not voting. The key terms are “giving fines in Australia and Belgium, and stamping ‘Did Not Vote’ on identification papers in Italy.” The author’s main idea is that in “some countries nonvoters are penalized to encourage voting.”

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**Passage 1**

Marilyn, a Southwest Airlines flight attendant, takes the mike as her plane backs away from the Houston terminal. “Could y’all lean in a little toward the center aisle please?” she chirps in an irresistible Southern drawl. “Just a bit, please. That’s it. No, the other way, sir. Thanks.” Baffled passengers comply even though they have no idea why.

“You see,” says Marilyn at last, “the pilot has to pull out of this space here, and he needs to be able to check the rearview mirrors.”

Only when the laughter subsides does Marilyn launch into the standard aircraft safety speech that many passengers usually ignore.

—Business Essentials, Third Edition, by Ronald Ebert and Ricky Griffin

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? **Using a Joke for Attention**

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? The airline attendant cleverly used humor to get the attention of her passengers for the safety message.

---

**Passage 2**

Children have more taste buds than adults do, which may explain why they are often so picky about eating “grown-up” foods. Even among adults, individuals differ in their sensitivity to taste. Indeed, recent studies have shown that people can be divided into one of three groups: nontasters, medium tasters, and supertasters. Compared to most, supertasters use only half as much sugar or saccharin in their coffee or tea. They also
CHAPTER 4 Main Idea

cherisuffer more oral burn from eating the active ingredient in chili peppers. Using videomicroscopy to count the number of taste buds on the tongue, researchers have found that nontasters have an average of 96 taste buds per square centimeter, medium tasters have 184, and supertasters have 425.


1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Sensitivity to Taste

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? People have different levels of sensitivity to taste according to the number of taste buds they have.

Passage 3

If the person is extremely important, you had better be there early just in case he or she is able to see you ahead of schedule. As the individual's status decreases, it is less important for you to be on time. Students, for example, must be on time for conferences with teachers, but it is more important to be on time for deans and still more important to be on time for the president of the college. Teachers, on the other hand, may be late for conferences with students but not for conferences with deans or the president. Deans, in turn, may be late for teachers but not for the president. Business organizations and other hierarchies have similar rules.

—Human Communication, Sixth Edition, by Joseph DeVito

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? The Relationship of Time and Status

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? Time is connected to status in social and business situations.

Passage 4

Try as she might, Marie Antoinette (1755–1793) found insufficient diversion in her life at the great court of Versailles. When she was fourteen, she had married the heir to the French throne, the future Louis XVI. By the age of nineteen she was queen of the most prosperous state in continental Europe. Still she was bored. Unpopular as a foreigner from the time she arrived in France, Marie Antoinette suffered a further decline in her reputation as gossip spread about her gambling and affairs at court. The public heard exaggerated accounts of the fortunes she spent on clothing and jewelry. In 1785 she was linked to a cardinal in a nasty scandal over a gift of a diamond necklace.
This Austrian-born queen may not have been more shallow or spendthrift than other queens, but it mattered that people came to see her that way. The queen’s reputation sank to the nadir when it was reported that she dismissed the suffering of her starving subjects with the haughty retort that if they had no bread, “Let them eat cake.”

—The Unfinished Legacy by Mark Kishlansky et al.

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? Marie Antoinette’s Reputation

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? Marie Antoinette’s reputation sank because of her shallowness and the gossip about her.

Passage 5

A mother had a son who threw temper tantrums: lying on the floor, pounding his fists, kicking his legs, and whining for whatever he wanted. One day while in a supermarket he threw one of his temper tantrums. In a moment of desperation, the mother dropped to the floor, pounded her fists, kicked her feet, and whined, “I wish you’d stop throwing temper tantrums! I can’t stand it when you throw temper tantrums!” By this time, the son had stood up. He said in a hushed tone, “Mom, there are people watching! You’re embarrassing me!” The mother calmly stood up, brushed off the dust, and said in a clear, calm voice, “That’s what you look like when you’re throwing a temper tantrum.”

Sometimes, traditional approaches such as bribing, threatening, ignoring, or giving in seem so natural that we overlook the possibility that something different, such as embarrassment, might work too.

—The Creative Problem Solver’s Toolbox by Richard Fobes

1. Who or what is the topic of this passage? A Tactic for Stopping Temper Tantrums or Changing Behavior

2. Underline the key terms.

3. What point is the author trying to make? The mother used an unexpected reversal solution to influence her son’s temper tantrum behavior.

Getting the Main Idea of Longer Selections

Because of the bulk of material included in a book, understanding the main idea of longer selections such as chapters and articles seems more difficult than understanding a single paragraph. Longer selections have several major ideas contributing to the main point and many paragraphs of supporting details. To pull the ideas together under one central theme, an additional step is necessary: Simplify the material by organizing paragraphs or pages into manageable subsections and then deciding how each subsection contributes to the whole.

The questions on page 133 can help you determine the central theme for a longer selection:
1. Describe the theme or main idea of a movie that you have seen recently, one that you liked, and give reasons for your positive evaluation.

Movie Title: 
Theme or Main Idea: 
Reasons for Positive Evaluation: 

2. Was there anything you did not understand about the main idea? 

3. This chapter includes a longer reading selection on sleep. Approximately how many hours of sleep do you get each night? 

4. What time do you usually go to bed? 

5. What time do you get up? 

6. Breakfast sends an early supply of glucose to the brain. When do you eat breakfast, and what do you eat for breakfast? 

7. Typically what, when, and where do you eat the other meals of the day?
   Lunch: 
   Dinner: 

8. Exercise is recommended to reduce stress. What exercise do you get on a regular basis, and when do you do it? 

9. Do you typically go out on weeknights? If so, typically when and where do you go? 

10. Evaluate your energy level and concentration ability.

Tear out and submit to your instructor.
1. What is the significance of the title? What does the title suggest about the topic?
2. How do the first paragraphs suggest the topic or thesis?
3. Under what subsections can the paragraphs and ideas be grouped?
4. How do these subsections support the whole?
5. What is the overall topic?
6. What point is the author trying to convey?

Search the Internet for articles on dreaming. Select an article that interests you, and on a separate sheet of paper, provide answers to the six questions just listed pertaining to getting the main idea of longer reading selections.

**Summary Points**

- **What words are typically used to name the main idea?**
  The main idea is also called the thesis, main point, central focus, gist, controlling idea, and central thought.

- **How do topics and details differ?**
  The topic is the general subject, and the details are the specific supporting ideas.

- **What questions do you ask to find the topic of a passage?**
  Ask, “Who or what is the subject?”

- **What questions do you ask to find the main idea of a passage?**
  Ask, “What point is the author trying to make?”

- **How do stated and unstated main ideas differ?**
  A stated main idea is a sentence within the passage. An unstated main idea is implied or suggested by thoughts revealed but not directly stated.

- **How do you get the main idea of longer selections?**
  Break the material into subsections and determine how they support the whole.

**Collaborative Problem Solving**

Form a five-member group and select one of the following activities. Brainstorm and then outline your major points on a transparency. Choose a member to present the group findings to the class.

- Why is prior knowledge the best single predictor of reading comprehension?
- Why is comprehension better when the main idea is stated at the beginning of a test passage?
- Describe a passage that you might write that would have the main idea stated at the end.
- Why should the main idea of a passage be stated in a sentence rather than a phrase? Give examples.
In studies conducted worldwide, modern dream scientists have found that dreams vary according to age, gender, and culture. Women tend to have more dreams of children, whereas men dream more of aggression, weapons, and tools. Americans are frequently embarrassed by nakedness in dreams, but such dreams rarely occur in cultures of people wearing fewer clothes. Mexican American college students dream of death more often than do Anglo American students, perhaps because death is more a part of life in Latin American cultures. The findings of such cross-cultural research support the hypothesis that dreams reflect life events that are important to the dreamer.

**THINKING BEFORE READING**

Preview for content, activate your schema, and anticipate what you will learn.

Did you dream last night?
What dream or dreams have you had recently?
Can you explain the meaning of any of your dreams?
I think this will tell me ____________________________.

**VOCABULARY PREVIEW**

Are you familiar with these words?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>unconscious</th>
<th>paradox</th>
<th>convenient</th>
<th>symbolizes</th>
<th>bullied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>idling</td>
<td>depriving</td>
<td>ascribed</td>
<td>critical</td>
<td>synchronized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which word has the same root as *chronological*?

What is the definition of the prefix in *unconscious*?

Is the phrase *jumbo shrimp* a paradox?

*Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review before or after reading.*

**THINKING DURING READING**

As you read, use the five thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, and correct.

**SLEEPING AND DREAMING**

The time when we are most obviously unconscious is when we are asleep. Yet we have dreams during that time. This implies that something is going on in our brain.

Is all sleep the same? Are there stages in sleep? When do humans dream? How can you tell if a person is dreaming? Why do people have dreams, anyway? These are the questions to be answered in this section.
Researchers have learned more about sleep and dreaming in the past twenty-five years than in all of history up to that time. One major reason for this is the discovery that when people are asleep there are changes in the activity of their brain and eyes. These changes can be recorded.

Beth Smith lies down to sleep after a hard day. She drifts off. At first she is in a light kind of sleep. Her brain waves, if recorded on a brain-wave machine, show a pattern that is definitely different than when she is awake. After less than an hour, two things happen to Beth. Her brain waves change, so that they now look pretty much the way they do when she is awake. Yet she is still asleep. Also, although her eyelids are closed, her eyes begin to move about rapidly under the lids. This lasts for twenty minutes. Then Beth returns to the sleep of easy brain waves and no eye movement.

Basically, there are two kinds of sleep. One is Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. In this, the brain waves are similar to those of a waking person, and the eyes move about rapidly under the closed lids. The other kind of sleep is Non-Rapid Eye Movement sleep. You can guess what that’s like, right? Stop for a moment and describe REM and non-REM sleep to yourself.

REM sleep is also called paradoxical sleep. A paradox is something that seems contradictory within itself. What is the paradox about REM sleep? That the sleeper’s brain waves would lead you to believe the person is awake, but in fact the person is asleep.

Now, the interesting thing is this. Suppose Beth is showing non-REM sleep. We wake her up and say: “Wake up, Beth! What are you dreaming?”

“Uh . . . nothing,” Beth mumbles.

Disappointed, we let her go back to sleep. Later on, Beth begins to show REM sleep. Again, we wake her up. “What are you dreaming, Beth?”

“Uh . . . this man has ridden a camel into Mom’s office. It’s too big. The camel fills up the whole office. The man riding him is an Arab.” She goes on with her dream.

Dreaming happens mainly in REM sleep. This is very convenient for researchers. They get volunteers to sleep in a bed in the laboratory. An electronic sensing device that registers eye movement is placed on the eyelids of the volunteers. Thus the researcher can tell exactly when the volunteer is showing REM sleep.

“What up, volunteer! What are you dreaming?”

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED ABOUT DREAMING?

Everyone dreams about 20 percent of the time they are sleeping—that is, they show REM sleep about that much. Even people who say they never dream show about 20 percent
REM sleep. If these "nondreamers" do their sleeping in a laboratory where the researcher can wake them up, it turns out that they dream as much as others. They just don't remember the dreams in the morning, perhaps because memories for dreams fade fast and they are slow waking up.

People go back and forth between REM and non-REM sleep during the night. If something happens in their environment while they are sleeping, people may fit this into the dream. Did you ever have the experience of someone calling you in the morning, but at first you thought it was part of a dream?

Events in daily life sometimes occur in symbolic form in dreams. For example, a boy was having a lot of difficulty on the school playground because a bigger boy kept bullying him. That night the smaller boy dreamed of being alone and unarmed in the African grass country, facing a lion. The lion symbolizes the bully. At other times the dreaded event from daily life simply occurs in a dream in its real-life form—the boy dreams of being bullied by the bigger boy. How and when dream symbols are used is not yet understood.

WHY DO WE DREAM?

Do people actually need to dream? Or is it just the brain "idling its motor"? It's possible that dreams are unimportant, just an accidental part of REM sleep.

One experimenter waked volunteers each time they started REM sleep. This meant that he was also depriving them of their dreams. When they showed non-REM sleep, he let them sleep on. Notice that by itself this experiment wouldn't prove much, even if effects did occur. Why? Because the effects might result from just being waked up all the time, rather than from just not being allowed to dream. The experimenters realized this, so they used a second group of volunteers. These were waked exactly as much as the first group, but no attention was paid to whether it was REM or non-REM sleep. Thus any differences could be ascribed to lack of REM sleep periods in the one group.

There were differences. People who were deprived of most of their REM sleep for three nights in a row became irritable and somewhat disrupted in their actions. When on the fourth night they were allowed to sleep on, so they could have REM sleep, they had it about 30 percent of the time instead of the usual 20 percent. Apparently they were "catching up" on their REM sleep. It looks as though people do, indeed, need REM sleep.

The critical question is: Is it the REM sleep that they need or the dreams? Do we have REM sleep because it brings dreaming, or is dreaming just an accidental aspect of the needed REM sleep? We don't know.

Why do people dream, then? We don't know that either. It does seem that REM sleep is necessary. But are dreams? What do they accomplish? Some theorists have suggested that we use dreaming to solve emotional problems, some have suggested that memories are stored in the brain during sleep time and dream time. Some even suggest this is a way of keeping our two eyes synchronized. Tomorrow we may know the answer. The discovery of rapid eye movements during dreaming has opened up the world of dreams for research. Notice that the researchers here do something interesting. They go from an observable behavior—the eye movements—to an internal condition—the dream. The discovery of REM sleep helps bridge the gap between mental processes and the outside world.

(1,124 words)

—Psychology: What It Is/How to Use It by David Watson
THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

RECALL  Self-test your understanding.
Your instructor may choose to give you a true-false comprehension review.

REACT  Why are sleep and dreaming important research topics for psychologists?

REFLECT  Describe and try to interpret one of your recent or recurring dreams.

THINK CRITICALLY  Would you predict any correlation between a good night’s sleep and a good quality of life? Why or why not? Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

THINK AND WRITE  Researchers suggest that dreams differ according to age, gender, and culture. Do sleep patterns show similar differences? How would you predict that sleep patterns differ according to age, gender, and culture?

MAIN IDEA  Answer the following questions concerning the selection.

1. Who or what is the topic of the selection? Sleeping and Dreaming

2. What point is the author trying to make? Everyone dreams about 20 percent of the time, and this dreaming occurs during REM sleep.
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d, or fill in the blank. In order to help analyze your strengths and weaknesses, the question types are indicated.

Main Idea 1. The best statement of the main idea of this selection is
   a. People become irritable when they do not have an adequate amount of dreaming.
   b. Through the discovery of REM, researchers have begun to learn about sleeping and dreaming, but many questions remain unanswered.
   c. Sleep is an observable behavior, whereas dreaming is an internal condition reflecting the mental processes.
   d. Dreams follow an irregular pattern, with people moving back and forth between REM and non-REM sleep all during the night.

Detail 2. During REM sleep a person experiences
   a. different brain waves than when awake.
   b. the same brain waves as when awake.
   c. eye movement under closed lids.
   d. both b and c.

Inference 3. REM sleep is called paradoxical sleep because the brain waves signal the opposite of sleep.

Detail 4. Dreaming occurs
   a. during REM and non-REM sleep.
   b. mainly during REM sleep.
   c. only during non-REM sleep.
   d. as people go back and forth between REM and non-REM sleep.

Detail 5. Some people probably cannot remember dreams because
   a. they awaken in the middle of a dream.
   b. they are nondreamers.
   c. they experience only 20 percent REM sleep.
   d. they are slow waking up.

Inference 6. The author implies that dreams do all of the following except
   a. symbolically reflect real-life problems.
   b. include experiences in the environment.
   c. relieve tension and irritability.
   d. normally occur in the last two hours of sleep.

Detail 7. According to the passage, after several nights of interrupted REM sleep, people need to
   a. sleep longer.
   b. dream a greater percentage of the next sleeping time.
   c. have a higher percentage of non-REM sleep.
   d. sleep more frequently for brief periods of time.
Answer the following with T (true), F (false), or CT (can't tell).

Inference 8. Research shows that dreams are unimportant and just an accidental part of REM sleep.
F

Inference 9. The author feels that the discovery of rapid eye movement is the most significant finding thus far in dream research.
T

Inference 10. Dreams help people store memories.
CT

VOCABULARY

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d for the word or phrase that best defines the boldface word as used in the selection. The number in parentheses indicates the line of the passage in which the word is located.

1. “most obviously unconscious” (1)
   a. alert
   b. daydreaming
   c. half-knowing
   d. not aware

d

2. “the paradox about REM” (22)
   a. mystery
   b. error
   c. contradictory truth
   d. reasoning

c

3. “convenient for researchers” (32)
   a. logical
   b. easy to use
   c. necessary
   d. cooperative

b

4. “symbolizes the bully” (50)
   a. warns
   b. summarizes
   c. represents
   d. suspects

c

5. “bullied by the bigger boy” (52)
   a. intimidated
   b. befriended
   c. joined
   d. recognized

a

6. “idling its motor” (54)
   a. exhausting
   b. running without power
   c. withdrawing
   d. renewing

b

7. “depriving them of” (57)
   a. irritating
   b. educating
   c. encouraging
   d. preventing

d

8. “ascribed to lack of” (63)
   a. convened
   b. remembered
   c. attributed
   d. returned

b

9. “The critical question is” (69)
   a. first
   b. general
   c. crucial
   d. most frequent

c

10. “keeping our two eyes synchronized” (76)
    a. working simultaneously
    b. working vigorously
    c. focused
    d. slightly crossed

a

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review.
A. An acronym is an invented word formed by the initial letters of a compound term. REM, for example, is pronounced as a word that rhymes with them, rather than pronouncing the three letters separately to indicate rapid eye movement. Write an A beside the following letters that are pronounced as words and thus are acronyms.

A 1. HUD 3. FBI 5. NAFTA 
A 2. UNICEF 4. CIA 6. radar

B. Study the following easily confused words, and circle the one that is correct in each sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conscience</td>
<td>sense of right or wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscious</td>
<td>awareness of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its</td>
<td>ownership or possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's</td>
<td>contraction of it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too</td>
<td>more than enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>the number 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Let your (conscience, conscious) be your guide when faced with temptation to oversleep and cut class.
8. Over a lifetime, (its, it's) estimated we spend 25 years sleeping.
9. Sleeping for five hours is (to, too, two) little for most people.

C. Use the context clues in the following sentences to write the meaning of the boldface psychology terms.

10. Nightmares frequently reflect the frustration and anxiety felt in daily life

11. After years of practice, we condition ourselves to get up by the alarm clock.

12. With the birth of the second child, the first child’s desire for a bottle at bed time was a sign of regression, reversion to earlier behavior patterns.

13. Saying that you are too busy to sleep is only rationalizing, attempting to explain failure by protecting self-esteem.

14. Dream therapy offers a permissive setting for revealing haunting and embarrassing nightmares, less restrictive.

15. Adequate sleep reinforces the immune system’s ability to fight disease, rewards.
ASSESS YOUR LEARNING

Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your text to help you remember new information and vocabulary.

Connect

Read the following passage about getting too little sleep. Describe a situation in which your actions have been adversely affected by lack of sleep. List five tips or bits of advice that you would offer other students for getting an adequate amount of sleep each night that would include REM sleep. In addition, explain a catch-22 situation.

Students Choose Sufficient Sleep or Study

Preethi Jangla, Daily O’Collegian
University Wire, March 4, 2003

Sleep deprivation is a problem that affects many college students. According to the National Sleep Foundation Web site, most people need an average of eight hours of sleep a night. However, many college students are lucky to get even half that amount of sleep.

Unfortunately, students face a Catch-22 regarding sleep. Getting more sleep requires sacrificing study time or personal time. Going without sleep sacrifices many important health benefits.

Not only is the amount of sleep important but also the quality of sleep. Students cannot make up for sleep with naps or sleeping late because these involve light sleep, not the deep sleep required for the body to feel rested. Also, students who nap or sleep late develop irregular sleeping patterns.

Lack of adequate sleep can dramatically affect academic performance. Students can doze off in class or may not be mentally alert enough to recall information on tests and quizzes. Sleep deprivation negatively affects the immune system, which can cause students to become sick more easily and possibly miss classes.

Explore the Net

➤ What are some interpretations of the meaning of water, animals, and flying in dreams?

DreamMoods.com  www.dreammoods.com
Dream Lover Inc.  www.dreamloverinc.com/

➤ What have scientists learned from sleep deprivation studies? List and explain three findings not covered in this reading selection.

National Sleep Foundation  www.sleepfoundation.org/
Sleepnet.com  www.sleepnet.com

➤ For additional readings and exercises, visit the Breaking Through Web site:

www.ablongman.com smith
The fiction of H. H. Munro reflects his life as an outsider. Munro, whose penname Saki is derived from a character in The Ruba’iyat of Omar Khayyam, was born in Burma to Scottish parents. At age twelve, he left for England to attend boarding school. Growing up, he held outsider status both as a nonnative in Burma and as a foreigner in England. His literature highlights this experience, especially his distaste for the elite Victorian–Edwardian society of England. Many of his short stories ridicule the social customs of the prim British culture.

THINKING BEFORE READING
Preview the selection for clues to content. Activate your schema and anticipate what you will learn.

What do you know about life in the British countryside in the early 1900s?
What authors do you know who write under a pseudonym?
I’ll read this to find out _________________________________

VOCABULARY PREVIEW
Are you familiar with these words?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>endeavored</th>
<th>duly</th>
<th>retreat</th>
<th>engulfed</th>
<th>treacherous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>falteringly</td>
<td>delusion</td>
<td>infirmities</td>
<td>imminent</td>
<td>pariah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can *retreat* be both a noun and a verb?
Is a *delusion* a fantasy?

*Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review before reading.*

THINKING DURING READING
As you read, use the five thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, and correct.
“My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel,” said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; “in the meantime you must try and put up with me.”

Framton Nuttel endeavored to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

“I know how it will be,” his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to his rural retreat; “you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice.”

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

“Do you know many people round here?” asked the niece, when she judged that they had sufficient silent communion.

“Hardly a soul,” said Framton. “My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.”

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

“Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?” pursued the self-possessed young lady.

“Only her name and address,” admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.
“Her great tragedy happened just three years ago,” said the child; “that would be since your sister’s time.”

“Her tragedy?” asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

“You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon,” said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

“It is quite warm for the time of the year,” said Framton; “but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?”

“Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day’s shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favorite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been dreadful that summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it.” Here the child’s voice lost its self-possessed note and became faltering human. “Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing, ‘Bertie, why do you bound?’ as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window—”

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

“I hope Vera has been amusing you?” she said.

“She has been very interesting,” said Framton.
“I hope you don’t mind the open window,” said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; “my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They’ve been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they’ll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you men-folk, isn’t it?”

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

“The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise,” announced Framton, who labored under the tolerably widespread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one’s ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. “On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement,” he continued.

“No?” said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention—but not to what Framton was saying.

“Here they are at last!” she cried. “Just in time for tea, and don’t they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!”

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung around in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window; they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted cut of the dusk: “I said, Bertie, why do you bound?”

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel-drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

“Here we are, my dear,” said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window, “fairly muddy, but most of it’s dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?”

“A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel,” said Mrs. Sappleton; “could only talk about his illness, and dashed off without a word of good-bye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost.”

“I expect it was the spaniel,” said the niece calmly; “he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make any one lose their nerve.”

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

(1,206 words)

—“The Open Window” by Saki
from The Complete Saki
THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

RECALL  Self-test your understanding.

*Your instructor may choose to give you a true-false comprehension review.*

REACT  Do you feel sorry for Framton? Why or why not? Do you admire Vera? Why or why not?

REFLECT  Why was Framton easy prey for Vera? What does the author suggest by giving him the last name of Nuttel?

THINK CRITICALLY  What makes Vera’s trick work? How was Vera particularly insightful about human nature? How did Vera predict the actions of others? How did Mrs. Sappleton’s words and actions play into Vera’s plot? When did you figure out the trick?

THINK AND WRITE  How does the short story cast a critical light on English society? How does Saki ridicule the situation and the characters’ interactions? What is the cruelty that lies beneath the politeness?

MAIN IDEA  What is the main reason the author wrote this story?

*To entertain the reader with a witty trick by a young girl.*
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d, or fill in the blank. In order to help you analyze your strengths and weaknesses, the question types are indicated.

Main Idea  
1. The best statement of the main idea of the selection is:
   a. The hunting party returned alive.
   b. The supernatural can be more difficult to explain than reality.
   c. A vivid imagination can save guests from boredom in the British countryside.
   d. A young girl plays a witty but cruel trick on a vulnerable man.

Detail  
2. The author would describe Vera as all of the following except
   a. fifteen.
   b. self-possessed.
   c. honest.
   d. entertaining.

Detail  
3. Framton was paying a visit to Mrs. Sappleton because
   a. his sister had suggested it as therapy.
   b. he had previously known Mrs. Sappleton.
   c. he was staying at the rectory nearby.
   d. his sister had previously lived in the house.

Inference  
4. Vera’s initial questions to Framton were designed to
   a. entertain Framton while waiting for her aunt.
   b. ascertain how much Framton knew about her aunt and area news.
   c. inquire politely about Framton’s health.
   d. learn about Framton’s sister and her concerns.

Inference  
5. Mrs. Sappleton’s reactions indicated that she felt Framton was
   a. intelligent.
   b. boring.
   c. interesting.
   d. creative.

Inference  
6. When Mrs. Sappleton announces that the hunters have arrived, Framton gives Vera an intentional look
   a. because he knows Vera has tricked him.
   b. because he expects to see the hunters.
   c. to show that he is afraid of dogs and is leaving.
   d. to indicate that he understands that Mrs. Sappleton is perhaps mentally ill.

Inference  
7. How is the author being positive rather than negative in the final sentence by saying, “Romance on short notice was her specialty”?
   a. The author refers to her stories as ‘romances’ rather than lies.
   b. The author refers to her stories as ‘romances’ rather than lies.
   c. The author refers to her stories as ‘romances’ rather than lies.
   d. The author refers to her stories as ‘romances’ rather than lies.
Answer the following with T (true), F (false), or CT (can't tell).

Detail  
8. According to Vera's story, the hunters had been drowned in a muddy bog and thus disappeared.  

Inference  
9. The most convincing actor in the story was Mrs. Sappleton.  
10. In accordance with previous actions, the reader can safely assume that Framton was never on the banks of the Ganges.

VOCABULARY

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d for the word or phrase that best defines the boldface word as used in the selection. The number in parentheses indicates the line of the passage in which the word is located.

1. “endeavoured to say” (3)  
   a. avoided  
   b. attempted  
   c. began  
   d. felt

2. “should duly flatter” (3)  
   a. properly  
   b. complimentary  
   c. rudely  
   d. incorrectly

3. “rural retreat” (9)  
   a. city  
   b. neighborhood  
   c. refuge  
   d. region

4. “all three engulfed” (35)  
   a. overthrown  
   b. swallowed up  
   c. surprised  
   d. tripped up

5. “treacherous piece of bog” (35)  
   a. unexpected  
   b. protruding  
   c. hidden  
   d. dangerous

6. “falteringly human” (39)  
   a. hesitatingly  
   b. unconsciously  
   c. angrily  
   d. disgustedly

7. “widespread delusion” (63)  
   a. understanding  
   b. knowledge  
   c. misfortune  
   d. false belief

8. “ailments and infirmities” (64)  
   a. adventures  
   b. frailties  
   c. sadness  
   d. social misfortunes

9. “imminent collision” (82)  
   a. impending  
   b. unexpected  
   c. hazardous  
   d. quick

10. “pariah dogs” (91)  
    a. large  
    b. rabid  
    c. outcast  
    d. howling

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review.
VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

A. Use the indicated prefix to write words that complete each sentence in the groups.

**dis**: not, take away, deprive of

1. If Mrs. Sappleton learns of Vera’s consistent lies, she may eventually disinherit her niece in her will.

2. Vera’s demonstrates disrespect for her elders by tricking Framton and lying to her aunt.

3. Saki resigned from the Burma police, not because he was actually disabled, but because his poor health hindered his job performance.

**con, com, co**: with, together

4. Framton’s only connection with Mrs. Sappleton was through his sister.

5. Framton’s sister gave her brother letters of introduction to people she had previously met through the minister and the congregation at the rectory.

6. Rather than publish a book for each story, most of Saki’s short stories have been consolidated into a single large book called an anthology.

**ad**: to, toward

7. As a compulsive liar, Vera is addicted to weaving creative tales of deception.

8. The openness with which Framton discusses his nervous breakdown makes it seem as if he is almost advertising it to the public.

9. A mysterious element of the supernatural is the glue or adhesive that holds many of Saki’s stories together.

B. Use the context clues in the sentence to write the meaning of the boldface words.

10. **Narratives** never preach, but rather deliver a message to our emotions, senses, and imagination through a powerful shared experience. A narrative tells a true or fictional story through characters and carries a message.

11. The **theme** of a story about a college tennis champion might be that the journey to the top, including the hard work and discipline, was more meaningful than the final victory. The theme of a narrative is the main idea, controlling point, or central insight.
12. Poisoned apples and talking mirrors may not seem realistic in a modern telephone conversation; however, in the context of Snow White, we easily find both plausible. Plausibility is the sense of believability or reality within the realm of the story.

13. E. M. Forster said that “The king died, and the queen died,” is a narrative, but changing this to “The king died, and the queen died of grief,” creates a plot. The plot is the sequence of events in the story, which build to a climax as conflict intensifies.

14. The suspense of a narrative is based on conflict, which perhaps starts out as mild and intensifies as each incident occurs. Suspense is the eagerness to know what is going to happen next and is based on the conflict of the story and concern for the character.

15. Good writers select incidents and details that give unity to the story and advance the central theme. Unity means that every event and detail is relevant to the central theme.

ASSESS YOUR LEARNING
Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your text to help you remember new information and vocabulary.

Explore the Net

- Vera’s lie worked because Frampton found it plausible or believable. Do you believe in ghosts? Research eerie sightings and the world of the supernatural. Identify two publicly accessible haunted places that you can visit, and summarize the ghost story for each.

  Obiwan UFO-Free Paranormal Page  www.ghosts.org
  History & Hauntings Book Co.  www.prairieghosts.com

- Search the Internet for more information about Saki’s life and his stories. What kind of writing did he do before he wrote short stories? What themes are dominant in his stories? How did he die? List ten interesting facts about Saki and his work.

- For additional readings and exercises, visit the Breaking Through Web site:
  www.ablongman.com/smith
A critical event in the struggle for equal rights occurred in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. Rosa Parks, a black seamstress who was returning from work and tired, sat down on a bus in a section reserved for whites. When asked to get up, she refused. Parks was arrested and ordered to stand trial. Black civil rights officials seized the issue and responded with a boycott of the bus system. Organizational meetings for the boycott were held in a Montgomery Baptist church where the young 27-year-old minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., took an active role in the protest. Soon the talented and articulate King emerged as the leading spokesman for the protest and for the civil and economic concerns of black Americans.

THINKING BEFORE READING
Preview for clues to the content. Activate your prior knowledge. Anticipate what is coming and think about your purpose for reading.

In what city is the Martin Luther King, Jr., homeplace and national memorial? Where did Martin Luther King, Jr., make the “I have a dream” speech? What world leader inspired Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nonviolent tactics? I want to learn _____________________________.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW
Are you familiar with these words?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sweltering</th>
<th>centennial</th>
<th>oppressive</th>
<th>podium</th>
<th>resonant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>galvanized</td>
<td>spurious</td>
<td>dire</td>
<td>recanted</td>
<td>compelled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is a centenarian?
At what temperature do you swelter?
How do compel, repel, and expel differ?

Your instructor may chose to give a true-false vocabulary review before or after reading.

THINKING DURING READING
As you read, use the five thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, and correct.
THE DREAM OF NONVIOLENT REFORM

Perspiring in the sweltering heat of a Washington August afternoon, Martin Luther King, Jr., looked down from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the largest assembly ever congregated in the United States. Well over 200,000 people, 70 percent of them blacks, jammed the mile-long mall that swept away to the Washington Monument. Angry yet hopeful, they had come to the nation's capital in 1963, the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, to personify black demands for equality in society. But the speakers and singers who preceded King had not been particularly effective, the heat and humidity were oppressive, and the great crowd was starting to thin around the edges. As he mounted the podium, King sensed this restlessness and the need for a focus. At first his deep voice was husky, but it soon became resonant with a purpose that quieted and transfixed the multitude and the millions of television viewers. King's eloquence dramatized the anguish of black history. One hundred years after slavery, he pointed out, the black was still "an exile in his own land." It was the future, however, that mattered. "I have a dream," he cried repeatedly, as he sketched his vision of freedom, justice, and harmony. At the end of his speech King prophesied that one day all people would be able to join together in singing the words of an old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last." There was an awed silence, then an ear-shattering roar: the crowd was applauding wildly. King had galvanized the massive assembly. At that moment he stood at the crest of a mounting wave of African American protest. Yet, as King must have known, his dream would have an agonizing birth. Just five years after his Washington address, he lay dead on the balcony of a Memphis motel, the victim of the violence he had devoted his life to overcoming.

The Poor People's March was set for June 1968, but the whirlwind pace King had kept since the beginning of the decade allowed him only occasional participation in the planning. One of the detours took him to Memphis, where a garbage strike threatened to evolve into a racial encounter of crisis proportions. Local black leaders wanted King to organize a peaceful demonstration, but once again he had difficulty working with Black Power militants. Uncontrollable black looters, arsonists, and street fighters were another source of difficulty. On March 28, they had transformed a nonviolent march into an orgy of destruction that had provoked an even greater measure of police brutality. As a self-styled "riot preventer," King was sick at heart. If Memphis exploded, he feared, the approaching summer of 1968
would be chaos. Already, black leaders like Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell were arousing the urban masses and, as part of their campaign, making references to “Martin Loser King” and his Uncle Tom tactics. Nonviolence, King felt, was on trial in Memphis.

On April 3, 1968, on the eve of the crucial Memphis march, King addressed a capacity crowd at the Masonic Temple located in that city. His mood was strangely somber and introspective. “Like anybody,” he mused, “I would like to live a long life.” But longevity, he added, was not his chief concern; he would rather do God’s will. Some of his aides were reminded of the great Washington rally of 1963, where King had expressed his belief that “if a man hasn’t discovered something that he will die for, he isn’t fit to live!” The following evening, on the way to yet another mass meeting, King walked onto the balcony of his hotel room and leaned over the railing to talk with a colleague. A moment later he crumpled to the ground. An assassin’s bullet, fired from a hotel room across the street, had pierced his skull. The killer, arrested two months later and identified as James Earl Ray, was a white drifter with a long criminal record.

Following Ray’s confession, investigations of King’s murder continued until 1977. Exhaustive reviews of the evidence seemed to prove conclusively that Ray had acted alone in the assassination, and there was no conspiracy. The research did reveal that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under orders of its director, J. Edgar Hoover, had complicated the last six years of King’s life with a program of systematic harassment on the spurious grounds that he was under the influence of the Communist party. The conspiracy theory surrounding King’s death reemerged in the 1990’s when James Earl Ray, in prison and in dire health, recanted his confession. Talk of Ray being brought to trial—there had been none due to his confession—ended abruptly when Ray died in early 1998.

The murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., moved the American people as had few events in recent years. The immediate response in all but the most prejudiced white minds was shame. Millions of whites felt compelled to apologize to black people as a whole and went to their churches for services honoring King. But even among the mourners, white and black eyes did not meet easily. Everyone seemed to recognize that, with King’s death, a powerful influence for interracial compassion and understanding had been eliminated—the basis of ordered change and reform.

(878 words)

—From These Beginnings, Sixth Edition, Volume Two, by Roderick Nash and Gregory Graves
THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

RECALL  Self-test your understanding.
Your instructor may choose to give you a true-false comprehension review.

Aside from their stated reasons, why do you think the FBI would spend six years tracking Dr. King?

REFLECT What seemed to be the differences in philosophy among the civil rights leaders?

THINK CRITICALLY Why was Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday made a national holiday?

THINK AND WRITE Events often call for ordinary men and women to do extraordinary things. How were Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., both ordinary and extraordinary? How did events converge to change their destinies and our history?

MAIN IDEA
1. What is the topic of the first paragraph? King’s Speech in Washington
2. What is the topic of the last paragraph? King’s Importance to the American People
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d, or fill in the blank. In order to help you analyze your strengths and weaknesses, the question types are indicated.

Main Idea 1. The best statement of the main idea of the selection is
   a. King started the civil rights movement with his “I have a dream” speech in Washington.
   b. Though his life was taken violently, King was a moving speaker and a major force in the nonviolent movement for civil rights.
   c. King was killed violently by a drifter.
   d. King controlled the violence in Memphis but was killed for doing so.

Detail 2. The primary reason over 200,000 people had congregated in Washington in 1963 was
   a. to hear Dr. King speak.
   b. to urge legislators to pass the Emancipation Proclamation.
   c. to show strength in demanding equal treatment for African Americans in society.
   d. to honor Lincoln for freeing the slaves.

Detail 3. In his “I have a dream” speech, King’s major thrust is to
   a. recall the hardships of the past.
   b. blame society for prejudice and hatred.
   c. ask God for forgiveness and strength.
   d. focus on the possibilities of the future.

Inference 4. The author implies that
   a. Black Power militants did not agree with King’s tactics.
   b. King and Black Power militants shared the same philosophy and strategies.
   c. Adam Clayton Powell supported King’s tactics.
   d. little friction existed among the different leaders supporting civil rights.

Inference 5. King felt that nonviolence was on trial in Memphis because more militant groups were seeking to take over the struggle for civil rights and if they took over Memphis, they would control the protests for the rest of the summer.

Inference 6. The author suggests all of the following except
   a. King was willing to die for his cause.
   b. King had a premonition that he would not live a long life.
   c. King knew that fighting for his cause was dangerous.
   d. King was willing to back off from his nonviolent stand to get the support of other civil rights leaders.
Detail 7. The author indicates that evidence suggests that
a. Ray acted alone.
b. Ray was part of a conspiracy.
c. J. Edgar Hoover was involved in King's death.
d. Ray was not the man who fired the shots from the hotel room.

Answer the following with T (true) or F (false).

Inference T 8. After King's death, the American people realized that he was indeed the "riot preventer."

Detail F 9. The garbage strike in Memphis was in June 1968.

Detail F 10. Ray was brought to trial after he revoked his confession.

VOCABULARY

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d for the word or phrase that best defines the boldface word as used in the selection. The number in parentheses indicates the line of the passage in which the word is located.

b 1. "sweltering heat" (1)
   a. never-ending
   b. hot and humid
   c. permanent
   d. oncoming

c 2. “the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation” (5)
   a. 10-year celebration
   b. 50-year celebration
   c. 100-year celebration
   d. 1,000-year celebration

a 3. “heat and humidity were oppressive” (8)
   a. suffocating
   b. surprising
   c. brief
   d. energizing

d 4. “mounted the podium” (9)
   a. stairway
   b. top of the monument
   c. steps
   d. speaker's stand

b 5. “resonant with a purpose” (10)
   a. sensitive
   b. hoarse
   c. forceful and loud
   d. repetitious

b 6. “galvanized the massive assembly” (18)
   a. stopped
   b. excited
   c. frightened
   d. shamed

a 7. “on spurious grounds” (50)
   a. false
   b. evil
   c. criminal
   d. socialistic

b 8. “in dire health” (53)
   a. fair
   b. uncertain
   c. questionable
   d. terrible

d 9. “recanted his confession” (53)
   a. emphasized
   b. questioned
   c. regretted
   d. took back

b 10. “compelled to apologize” (57)
   a. nervous
   b. obliged
   c. angered
   d. manipulated

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review.
VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

A. Use the indicated root to write words to complete each sentence in the groups.

**voc, vok:** voice, call

1. Dr. King's message of freedom and love for all mankind provoked a feeling of hope for racial unity in his audience.

2. Dr. King's brave manner of speaking out against injustice has inspired future generations to be more vocal about prejudice.

3. Dr. King's persuasive vocabulary included simple words like *dream* and *justice*.

**gress, grad, gred:** step, degree

4. Martin Luther King's inspiring words are often quoted to graduates in commencement speeches.

5. While Dr. King used peaceful methods of conflict resolution, Black Power militants tended to use more aggressive tactics.

6. While many advocates for civil right wanted instant change, Dr. King recognized that lasting change would be more gradual.

**spec, spect:** see, watch

7. Over 200,000 spectators observed King's speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

8. An inspection of the assassination scene indicated that King had been shot from the window of a neighboring hotel.

9. The Memphis march was intended to be a spectacle that would call national attention to the Civil Rights Movement.

B. Use context clues and mark *a, b, c,* or *d* for the meaning closest to that of the boldface word.

**a**

10. The fight for racial equality signifies a larger struggle for all human rights.

   a. indicates  
   b. simplifies  
   c. curtails  
   d. admonishes

**b**

11. Sit-ins by diligent believers in racial equality resulted in the desegregation of public facilities in a hundred southern cities.

   a. convincing  
   b. hard-working  
   c. older  
   d. talkative
12. The Civil Rights movement accomplished a **tangible** result when the Supreme Court ruled the Alabama segregated bus seating law unconstitutional.

- a. sizable
- b. tremendous
- c. actual
- d. movable

C. Study the following easily confused words, and circle the one that is correct in each sentence.

- **thorough**: careful
- **straight**: not curving
- **loose**: not tight
- **threw**: tossed
- **strait**: narrow passage of water
- **lose**: misplace
- **through**: by means of

13. Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail" did a (thorough, threw, through) job in explaining his vision to a group of Alabama clergymen.

14. Dr. King's doctrine of passive resistance required followers to stare and walk (straight, strait) ahead when confronted by violence.

15. Police often let attack dogs run (loose, lose) to menace Civil Rights protestors.

**ASSESS YOUR LEARNING**

Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your text to help you remember new information and vocabulary.

---

**Explore the Net**

- The assassination of Dr. King, like that of President John F. Kennedy, is an event shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Search for information regarding the assassination of Dr. King. Find at least two articles on the topic. Explain whether you think his death was a conspiracy and support your decision with facts found in your articles.
  - **Department of Justice**  www.usdoj.gov/crt/crim/mlk/part2.htm#over
  - **“I Have A Dream”**  http://www.toptags.com/aama/events/mlk_assass.htm

- Dr. King’s “I Have A Dream Speech” is his most famous oration. Locate a copy of the speech and read it. Write down information regarding the delivery of the speech as well as some of the dreams mentioned in it. If you can access the recorded copy of the speech on the History Channel Web site, write down how hearing the live version brings the words to life.
  - **Don Mabry’s Historical Text Archive**  http://www.mecca.org/~crights/dream.html
  - **History Channel**  www.historychannel.com/speeches
SELECTION 3  History  159

► Locate and read Dr. King’s “Letter from the Birmingham Jail.” He said it was the longest letter he had ever written. Write a summary of the letter that includes the circumstances that compelled him to write the letter, the audience for whom the letter was intended, and the main points Dr. King wanted to convey.

Historical Text Archives  
http://historicaltextarchive.com/
sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=40

► For additional readings and exercises, visit the Breaking Through Web site:
www.ablongman.com/smith

Personal Feedback 2

1. Review your responses on the three longer reading selections. Summarize and comment on your error patterns. ________________________________________________

2. What selection, short or long, has held your attention the best? Why do you think it did so? ________________________________________________

3. What are your major responsibilities other than going to college? ______________

4. Did you receive any scholarships for college? If so, describe how you qualified for them. ________________________________________________

5. Describe your mode of transportation and your average traveling time to class. ________________________________________________

6. What unforeseen difficulties have you already encountered this term that have interfered with your ability to study? ________________________________________________

Tear out and submit to your instructor.
### Vocabulary Lesson

#### Before and After

Study the prefixes, words, and sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefixes</th>
<th>ante: before</th>
<th>pre: before</th>
<th>post: after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Words with ante = before

Can antenuptial counseling strengthen marriages? Is an entry an anteroom?

- Antebellum: existing before the war
  
  The *antebellum* home with the white columns was built before the Civil War.

- Antecede: to go before
  
  Queen Elizabeth should *antecede* Prince Philip at state events.

- Antecedent: word coming before the pronoun to which the pronoun refers
  
  The name Valerie is the *antecedent of her* in the sentence.

- Antediluvian: belonging to the time before the flood; very old
  
  She ignored the advice and regarded it as *antediluvian*.

- Antennae: feelers on the head of an insect used as organs of touch
  
  The insect's *antennae* inspected the food.

- Antescript: a note added before something such as a prefix to a letter
  
  The *antescript* indicated why the letter would be late arriving.

#### Words with pre = before

Can a *prefix* predict the meaning of a new word?

- Preamble: an introduction
  
  Schoolchildren learn the *Preamble* to the Constitution.

- Precede: to go before
  
  Your good name can *precede* your presence.

- Predecessor: one who preceded another in office
  
  Her *predecessor* helped orient the new chairperson to the job.

- Preeminent: supreme, before all others
  
  Our professor is the *preeminent* scholar in contemporary Russian literature.

- Prelude: a musical or dramatic introduction
  
  As the *prelude* began, the remaining ticket holders were seated in the audience.

- Premonition: a forewarning or omen
  
  When I heard the dog bark, I had a *premonition* that trouble was near.
• Prejudice: judgment before proof is given
A lawyer tries to avoid choosing a potential juror who shows signs of prejudice.

• Precocious: having early development
The precocious child could read at 2 years of age.

Words with post = after
Is the time ante meridian or post meridian?

• Posterity: descendants who come after
Leave a gift for posterity and donate money to the college library.

• Posthumous: after death
The posthumous award was given to the widow of the soldier.

• Postnatal: the time immediately after birth
A postnatal examination monitors the health of the new mother.

• Postpone: delay or set the date back
Let’s postpone the meeting until tomorrow after lunch.

• Postscript: a note added to a letter after it has been signed
Karen scribbled an afterthought in the postscript of her long letter.

Review
Part I
Choose an appropriate word from the list to complete each of the following sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>precocious</th>
<th>premonition</th>
<th>antebellum</th>
<th>prelude</th>
<th>postponed</th>
<th>postscript</th>
<th>preeminent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. The ambassador is a preeminent scholar in the history of Nigeria.
2. Shorten the preamble and begin the main point of your speech.
3. As a precocious athlete, Tiger Woods golfed on TV with adults.
4. The threat of a tornado postponed the game for three hours.
5. A posthumous award honors a dead hero.
6. The couple restored the antebellum home to its original 1860s’ appearance.
7. The musical prelude introduced the song to follow.
8. Bill Clinton was the predecessor of George W. Bush.
9. A superstitious person would see a black cat as a **premonition** of danger.

10. Sara’s letter ended with her quickly remembered thoughts in a **postscript**.

**Part II**

Answer the following with true (T) or false (F).

**T** 11. A prejudiced listener has trouble fairly evaluating both sides.

**F** 12. An antediluvian outfit is up to date.

**F** 13. A postnatal exam checks the growth of the fetus.

**F** 14. Antemeridian refers to the afternoon.

**F** 15. The antennae of an insect is usually attached to its tail.

**F** 16. The antescript is positioned in the main body of the letter.

**T** 17. An antecedent is a person, place, or thing.

**F** 18. Antenuptual arguments occur after the wedding day.

**T** 19. A presumed appointment needs to be double-checked for certainty.

**T** 20. Environmental regulations consider both the present and posterity.
EVERYDAY READING SKILLS

Selecting a Book

The next time you are in the market for a good read, enter a bookstore, feast your eyes on the colorful array of books, and remind yourself, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Like groceries and clothing, books are products—and the packaging matters. Book jackets are slick marketing tools designed by experts to entice you to make a purchase through pictures, testimonials, and exaggeration. Cut through the hype and decide if the book will be of interest to you. The introductory material on the cover can be helpful, but remember that exciting covers can be wrapped around boring books.

**THE**

Depth

**OF THE**

Howard Wells

By *New York Times* bestselling author, Lou Franklin

“A torrid tale of international intrigue and mystery”
*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Splendid characters bring a privileged Texas family to life”
*Maria Garcia, columnist*

“A wealthy and powerful family threatened by mistrust and greed”
*Washington Post*

Renowned New York Times bestselling author Franklin unravels the secrets of the oil rich Howard family in a mystery that begins with the murder of Jeff Howard’s former mistress and ends up reaching into the sordid past of an international jetsetter and national hero. Never has the truth been told in such riveting detail or has a family seemed more real. The scandals and the financial crises weave a tapestry of trouble for the Howard family and those who have benefited from their vast wealth.

exercise 1

Refer to the preceding figure to answer the following questions.

1. Is this book on the *New York Times* Best Sellers List? **No**

2. What is the book about? The mystery and scandals of the Howard family

3. Who wrote “Never has the truth been told in such riveting detail”? The publisher
4. Which of the three review quotes seems most positive and why?

The second because of the word splendid. The other two may have been taken out of context to appear more positive.

**Reader's Tip: Selecting a Book**

After locating a book that looks interesting, further investigate using these strategies.

- Read the book jacket. Do the quotes from reviewers seem valid or clipped out of context? Do the blurbs introducing the book entice you? Has the author written other books that you have enjoyed? If the book is nonfiction, what are the author's credentials?
- Read the first page and at least one other page. Do you like the writing style? Is it comfortable for you to read? Does the first page grab your attention?
- If nonfiction, look at the illustrations and read the captions. Are you intrigued?
- If nonfiction, review the table of contents and scan the index. Is this material that you want to learn more about?

**Consult Best-Seller Lists**

If you want to know what books other people are buying, consult a best-seller list. Your bookstore or your city newspaper may publish one. If not, the *New York Times* Best Sellers List is nationally respected. Such lists are sometimes divided into best-selling fiction and nonfiction, and then further divided into hardbound books—which are published first and cost more—and paperbacks. Similar to a listing of top-grossing movies, a ranking on a best-seller list indicates quantity, but not necessarily quality. Bookstores also have their own lists of local best-selling suggestions.

**Sample a Variety of Fiction and Nonfiction**

**Fiction** is writing that has been invented by the imagination. The **novel**, the literary form for the imaginative and pleasurable stories of contemporary fiction, is longer than a short story but presents the same elements of plot, character, theme, setting, and tone.

**Nonfiction** is a piece of writing based on true events. The label of *nonfiction* includes biographies and books about travel, art, music, decorating, computers, cooking, and other special interests. Some are historical works in which dialogue may be invented based on known facts about the actual people and events of a given time period. Such books are difficult to distinguish from fiction.

**exercise 2**

Visit a local bookstore or log on to an online bookstore and pretend you have $100 to spend on books. Review both fiction and nonfiction books and make your choices. Record the title and author of each book you select, as well as a one- or two-sentence summary of what you think the book will be about and why you may want to read it.