

Learning together

Identifying the Main Idea in a Text

ACTIVITY #7

SEQUENCE: READING STRATEGIES
3RD CYCLE — PRIMARY

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Purpose of the activity

When you read a story, a novel or a magazine, you will often want to share what you read with someone. At school, your child's teacher regularly asks them to react to what they have read, to give their opinion and rate their appreciation of a text ... because that's also what reading is!



Relevance of the activity

To talk about a text they have read, a child needs to be able to remember the most important ideas. These ideas are called **main ideas**. Identifying them helps the child better understand the text and talk about it more easily.



Supplies

- Text *Discovering Frogs: Fascinating Creatures in Our Ecosystems* (see Appendix)

To do this activity, you can also use:

- informational texts your child has to read for school;
- an informational book at your child's reading level.



LET'S GO!

What?



Today, I am going to explain to your child how to identify the main ideas of a text.

Why?



Identifying the main ideas of a text ensures that we understand the text, in addition to helping us remember important elements! We can then reuse these ideas to discuss with our classmates and use them to appreciate or react to the text.

When?



After reading a paragraph, you can stop and ask yourself: What did I understand? What is important? If I had to explain what I just read to a friend, what would I tell them?

How?



Informational texts are often divided into several parts called paragraphs. Each **paragraph** presents different information, but all the information is about the same topic.

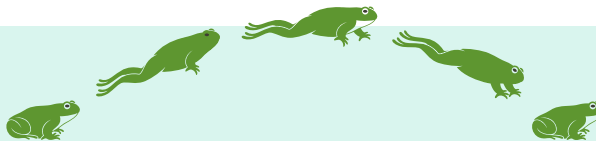
For example, in the text *Discovering Frogs*, the topic is **frogs**. That is what the whole text is about.

Each paragraph gives different information about frogs. To understand and remember the key ideas, you need to identify the **main idea** of each paragraph.

The main idea is the most important idea in the paragraph—the one that sums up the essential information related to the topic of the text.

To find it, you can:

- read the paragraph carefully;
- pause for a moment to think about what you read;
- ask yourself: What is this paragraph about? What is the author trying to tell me?



Authors often leave clues to help you. Look at the subheadings, images, and the first sentences of the paragraphs—the main idea is often found there.

Then, check if all these clues fit together. Do they help you understand the most important idea of the paragraph?

*You can now practise this strategy using the text *Discovering Frogs* in the Appendix, or with a book that matches your child's reading level.*

Don't forget!

To check your main idea, ask yourself: Would this idea help a friend understand the paragraph if they had never read it?



Discovering Frogs: Fascinating Creatures in Our Ecosystems

Frogs, the small amphibians often found in our yards and near ponds or streams, play a crucial role in balancing our ecosystems. Their presence is an indicator of the health of our local environment.

A Surprising Variety

There is an incredible diversity of frogs around the world, ranging from the tiny poison arrow frog, no bigger than a fingernail, to the impressive bull frog, which can measure up to 15-centimetre long. Each species has developed unique adaptations to its habitat, whether tropical, humid, or cool temperate.

Surviving Winter

During the winter months, frogs face considerable survival challenges. They go into hibernation, a form of dormancy where their metabolism slows considerably. Some species bury themselves in mud or under dead leaves, while others can even survive under a layer of ice, thanks to natural antifreeze substances in their blood that prevent their tissues from freezing.

An Essential Ecological Role

Frogs are effective predators that regulate insect populations, which helps limit disease transmission and crop damage. They are also a food source for numerous other species, playing a central role in the food chain. Their decline could therefore have cascading effects on the entire ecosystem.

