

Look for the Main Idea

Start Here!

A **summary** is a short statement that tells the main facts or ideas of a story.

To find the main idea in the story:

1. **READ** the story carefully.
2. **THINK** about the topic of the paragraph.
3. **DECIDE** what all the sentences are saying about the topic.



Circle one sentence in each story that gives the main idea.

1. Tony was having a wonderful birthday! He had a party at school; and his best friend, Marcus, gave him a remote-control airplane. His mother surprised him by inviting all of his cousins, aunts, and uncles over for a party. He was tired at the end of the day, but he knew his birthday celebration was not over yet. This weekend his dad had promised to take him to the amusement park to ride the big roller coaster.



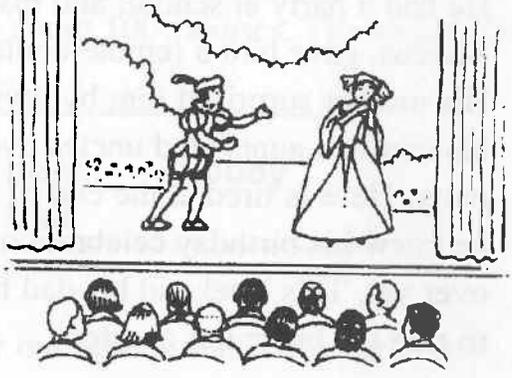
2. Sandy had lived in many places. Her dad had to move where the jobs were, so Sandy never stayed in one place very long. She was born in California, and they had stayed there until she was three years old. Her family moved to Oregon after that, followed by a move to Washington. Sandy started school there. They moved about once a year during the next five years. Sandy just recently moved to Texas. Her dad found a permanent job. She is looking forward to making friends and staying in one place.
3. No harbor is complete without buoys. Buoys are floating objects that help sailors and boaters steer safely through tricky waters near shore. Some buoys show that the water is too shallow for boats. Others warn of rocks or mark the path a boat should follow. Buoys may have bells, whistles, or flashing lights.

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Circle one sentence in each story that gives the main idea.

1. Brian ran to get the mail as soon as he heard the mail truck drive away down the street. He was expecting a letter from his best friend, Mike, who was on vacation. He looked through the bills, advertisements, and letters until he found the one that was addressed to him. He threw the rest of the mail on the table and ran up to his room. Brian read the letter from his friend. Mike wrote all about his fun at the beach. Brian missed Mike.
2. The school play was a huge success. The audience clapped for a long time when the play was over. Everyone said it had been a wonderful performance. The actors were proud that everyone had remembered their lines. They all felt tired but excited and hungry, too. No one was ready to go home yet. Mrs. Donovan noted that the Pizza Palace was still open.An illustration of a school play performance. On a stage, a boy in a jester's outfit is performing a dance or play, and a girl in a long, flowing dress is standing next to him. In the foreground, the backs of several audience members' heads are visible, watching the performance.
3. Myths and true stories have different kinds of characters, events, and messages. First, the characters in myths are not real. They might be monsters or sprites instead of people. Second, many events involving supernatural powers take place in myths. For example, a mythical character might lift a mountain, whereas a real person could not. Finally, myths often teach a lesson. For example, when a brave hero wins, the message might be that goodness is mighty. True stories, however, usually do not have a message or teach a lesson.
4. An alligator dozes on the bank of a stream or in shallow water, appearing to be asleep. Ducks, rabbits, and other small animals may come near it. Suddenly, the alligator lashes out with its tail to kill the creature. There is no doubt about it — the alligator is sly when it comes to catching food.