



## NJSLA Research Simulation Task Grade 9 Reading

### Lesson 3: Identifying the Main Idea

#### **Rationale**

- Paramount for students' success on the reading portion of the NJSLA assessments is their ability to identify and understand an author's main idea.

#### **Goals**

- To prepare students for the reading assessment by teaching them strategies to identify and understand an author's main idea.

#### **Task Foci**

- **CCSS RI.9-10.2:** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **CCSS RI.9-10.5:** Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

#### **Objectives**

- Students will learn strategies for reading to determine a main idea.
- Students will be able to identify the main idea of an informational text.

#### **Materials**

- Informational text
- Main Idea worksheet

#### **Procedures**

- Tell students that today they will explore the concept “main idea” and learn strategies for determining the main idea of a text.
- Start by defining “main idea.” You can define it in a couple ways: It is what the text is mostly about. It is the central point the writer makes.

- Explain to students, **“There are certain things you can do before, during, and after reading that will help you determine the main idea. Let’s go through some of them as we look at this text.”**
- Distribute the sample text and worksheet. In the following steps, pause to allow students time to fill out their worksheets as indicated.
- Start with the pre-reading strategy of examining text features: title, headings, pictures, charts, diagrams. Tell students, **“The first thing we want to do is figure out what the subject of the text is. The title can usually help us with this.”**
- Read the title aloud. Discuss how the title can tell us what the subject is. For example, a straightforward title like, “What is Earth?” tells us that this text will be about our home planet. (A title in the form of a question often indicates that the main idea will be the answer to that question.)
- Go through any other text features present. Ask students what they are and what they show about the subject.
- Allow students time to fill out the BEFORE READING section of their worksheets.
- Next, tell students that there are things you can do while you’re reading. One strategy is to be on the lookout for repeated terms and ideas, as these will often relate to the main idea.
- Read the text aloud or have students read independently. Allow students to annotate the text and fill out the DURING READING section.
- After students finish reading, ask them to share their answers to the “before reading” and “during reading” sections. Everyone’s answers should be similar, though some students may have noticed something that others missed.
- Next, direct students to look at the AFTER READING section. Explain that every writer has an opinion about the subject they’re writing about. But often, writers don’t present that opinion as one direct statement, but develop it throughout the text through tone, wording, reasoning, and examples.
- Have students answer the AFTER READING section of the worksheet.
- Reiterate that the “main idea” is “what the text is mostly about.” In other words, it is the biggest point the author makes about the subject.
- Ask your students to review their answers to each section of their worksheet.
- Then ask them, **“Using the information you’ve found, what do you think is the main idea of this text? Write your answer in the space provided on the worksheet.”**
- Ask students to share their answers. Discuss.
- Collect student worksheets.
- Keep students’ work for Lesson 4: Supporting Details

### **Check for Understanding**

- Check that students correctly identify the main idea and were able to articulate it in their own words on the worksheet.
- Check for evidence that the student’s answers on the worksheet provide evidence of his or her reasoning for determining the main idea.

## An Excerpt from **President John Kennedy's Inaugural Address**

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To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge--to convert our good words into good deeds--in a new alliance for progress--to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support--to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective--to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak--and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course--both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew--remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms--and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

# What's the Main Idea?

## BEFORE READING

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What is the title?

What is the subject?

## DURING READING

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What terms and ideas are repeated in the text? Explain each you found.

## AFTER READING

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What do you think is the author's opinion on the subject? How can you tell?

I think the main idea is...

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