

Lesson Skill: Main idea

Strand Reading — Nonfiction

SOL 3.6

4.6

5.6

Materials

- One short nonfiction text displayed using available technology or enough copies for each student for shared reading
- Four short nonfiction texts (paper copies for group reading), posted in the four corners of the classroom
- Four pieces of chart paper, posted in the four corners of the classroom
- Four markers, one color for each group
- Tape

Lesson

1. Review previously discussed reading strategies with the class. Focus on the reasons good readers use comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge; making, confirming, and revising predictions; questioning; visualizing; and summarizing to help them comprehend texts. Conclude that good readers use these strategies to help them monitor their understanding of the main idea of the text they are reading.
2. Define *main idea* as the idea or concept of the entire text. Using the nonfiction text displayed for shared reading, read the text aloud (or direct students to read the text in groups). Model using the text features (specialized type, visual information, functional formats) to identify the main idea.
3. Divide the class into four cooperative groups to complete a Main Idea Carousel activity. Direct each group to a different corner of the classroom. Ask students to read the short, nonfiction text in their corner to identify the main idea of the text, and then record the main idea on the bottom of the chart paper in their group's color.
4. After an allotted amount of time, have groups fold the bottom of their paper up and secure it with tape so the next group will not be able to see their answer.
5. Direct cooperative groups to rotate (or "carousel") through the remaining three stations, reading to identify the main idea using the text format, recording the main idea, and concealing the main idea at each station. After each group has rotated through each station and returns to the first location, ask groups to carefully remove the tape, revealing the main idea responses. Direct groups to silently carousel through the four stations again, reading each group's response to the main idea. Ask groups to reflect upon their ability to identify the main idea in each passage by summarizing how text format helps locate the main idea.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Pair students, and provide prewritten main idea options on cards for students to see. One of the main idea cards is the correct one. Students can select the main idea based on the text features.
- Preteach the critical concepts of vocabulary, ie., specialized type, visual information, functional formats.
- Cooperative groups for the carousel activity may include students of differing readiness levels.
- When summarizing, provide cloze sentences to assist students with ideas for how to summarize. For example, “The pictures helped me by _____.”
- Have students highlight/color code the text features as they are in their cooperative groups.
- Use familiar readings when students are participating in the carousel activity, so they are familiar with the vocabulary and the content of the text.