

Lesson 1

Finding Main Ideas and Details



Learning Target



Identifying the biggest, most important idea about a topic and the details that tell more about that idea will help you understand an informational text.

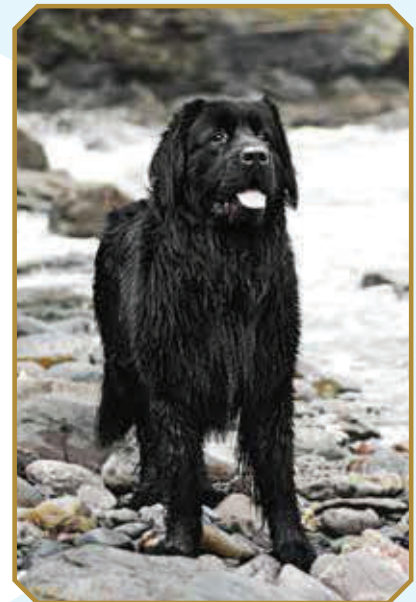
- ▶ **Read** As you read an informational text, figure out the point, or what the author wants you to understand about the topic. The **main idea**—the most important idea—is what the text mostly tells about a topic. **Key details** support the main idea by giving important facts, examples, and other information that explain more about it.

In an informational text, an author often states the main idea early in a paragraph or passage. Key details that say more about the main idea usually follow right after it.

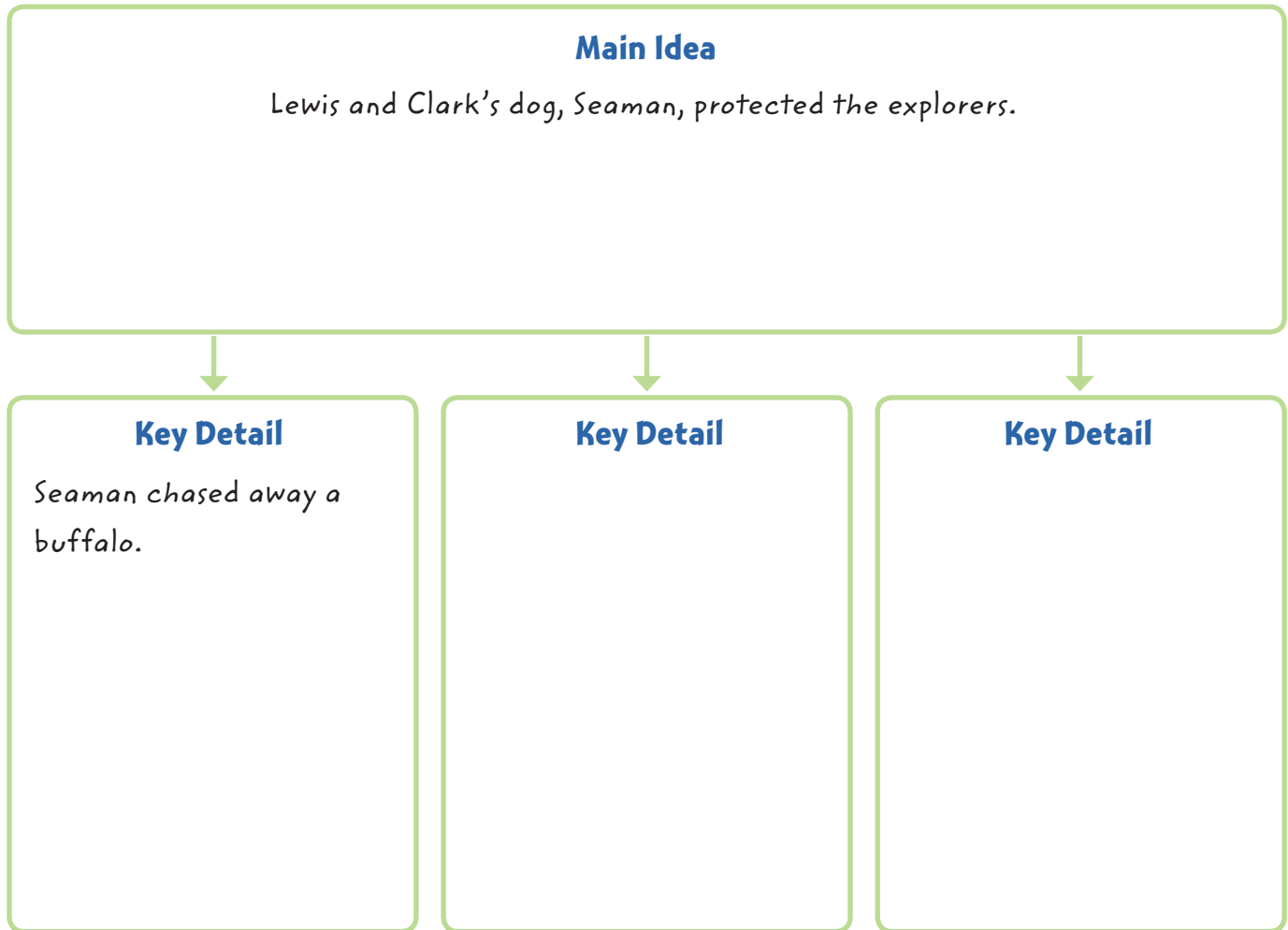
Read the passage below. Underline the main idea. What key details support the main idea?

Lewis and Clark's Faithful Companion

When Lewis and Clark explored the western United States, a dog named Seaman protected them. One night, a large buffalo came near their tent. Seaman chased the buffalo away. Another night, a grizzly bear entered their camp. Seaman barked and barked at the bear. He barked until the bear ran away. Seaman also protected Lewis and Clark by making sure they had food. Every day, Seaman hunted squirrels for the men to eat.



- **Think** Use what you've learned about reading informational texts to identify two key details that support the main idea of the passage. Complete the chart by adding two more key details.



- **Talk** Share the key details you added with a partner.
- Did you and your partner agree?
 - How do the key details support the main idea?

**Academic Talk**

Use these words to talk about the text.

• **main idea**

• **key detail**



The Snake

AND THE CHARMER

BY SYLVESTER CAPELLO

- 1 You have probably viewed the following scene in a movie or on TV: A snake charmer sits in front of a straw basket and plays a flute-like instrument. Suddenly, from inside the basket, a long, hooded cobra rises up. As the snake charmer plays the music, the cobra sways back and forth. It does not try to attack the snake charmer. Instead, the snake appears to be swaying in rhythm to the music.
- 2 In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The cobra can only sense vibrations in the ground. What the cobra sways to is not the music. It sways to the motion of the flute that the snake charmer moves back and forth as he plays. The cobra is trying to get into position to strike at the flute. However, as long as the snake charmer keeps the flute in motion, the snake cannot attack.
- 3 The Indian cobra is a favorite of snake charmers because daylight interferes with the snake's ability to strike. At night, however, the Indian cobra is extremely dangerous and more accurate. Cobras don't normally attack people, however. Instead, they go after frogs, fish, birds, and small mammals.

Close Reader Habits

Think about the main idea of the passage, or what it mostly tells about. Then **underline** key details that support the main idea.

Explore

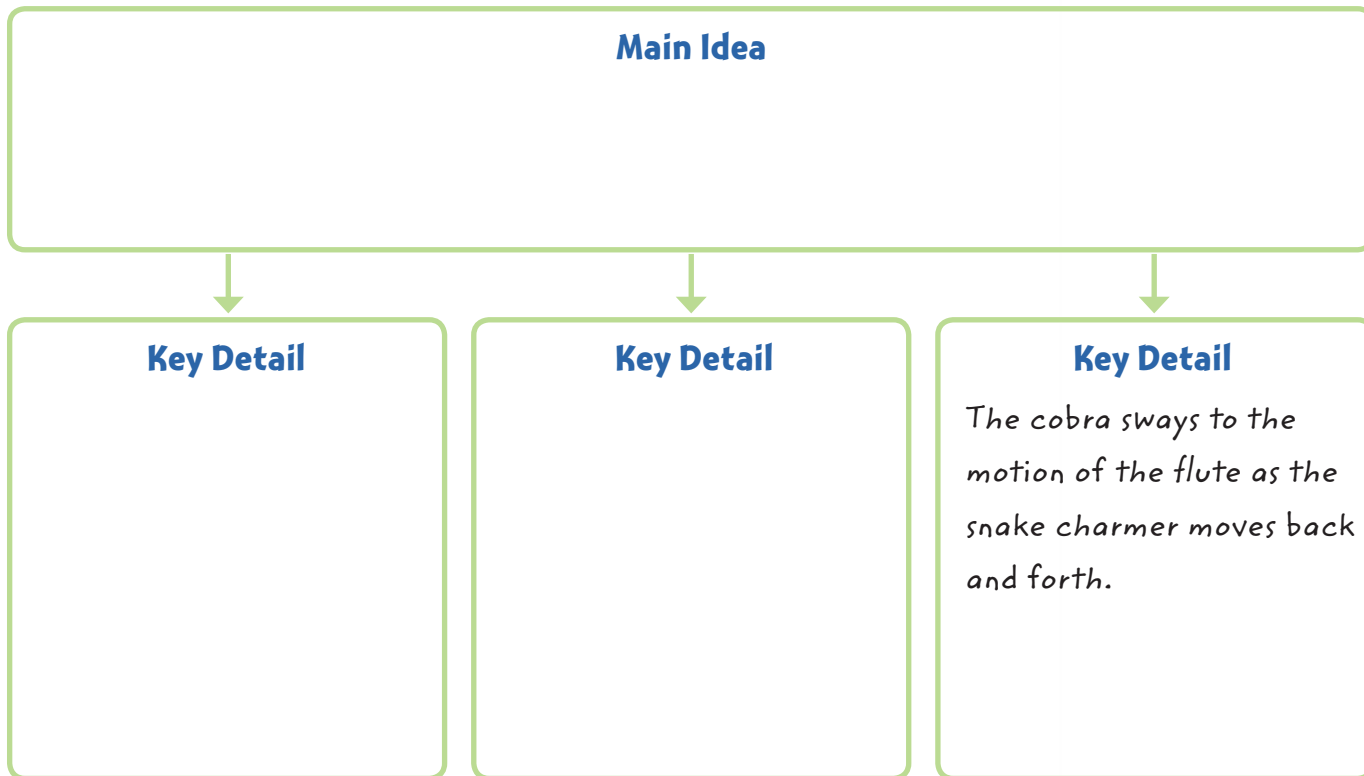
What is the main idea of the science article, and how is it supported by key details about the cobra?



Look for key details that give you information about the cobra's actions.

Think

- 1 Complete the chart below with information that shows that the cobra is not really "charmed" by the snake charmer.



Talk

- 2 Discuss how snake charmers use their knowledge of cobras to "charm" the snakes. Then make a list of important details about the trick.

Write

- 3 **Short Response** Explain how the key details about cobras help you understand the snake charmer's trick. Include details from your chart and your discussion in your answer. Use the space provided on page 16 to write your response.

HINT Think about how to tell details about the cobra in an order that makes sense.



Lending an Ear

by Michael Simon

- 1 Mitzi, a Labrador retriever, is always by Leah's side. Mitzi is more than a pet. She is Leah's hearing dog. Leah does not hear many sounds, and Mitzi is trained to alert her to them.
- 2 A hearing dog is trained to listen for certain sounds. When the dog hears a sound, it alerts its owner by touching the owner with its nose or paw. After the dog's gentle alert, it can lead its owner to the source of the sound, or away from it. Important household sounds include alarm clocks, kitchen timers, doorbells, and fire and smoke alarms. Many new doorbells and alarms use flashing lights and vibrations, but a hearing dog's touch adds an extra alert..
- 3 Dogs like Mitzi don't just help around the home. They also do their jobs outside and in public spaces. The dogs' responses to sounds help their owners become more aware of what is going on around them. You can usually spot a hearing dog because it often wears an orange jacket or has a brightly-colored leash. This "uniform" shows that it's a service dog and can go with its owner to all public spaces.
- 4 People are carefully matched with hearing dogs. The dogs and owners go through lots of training. Together, hearing dogs and their owners make great teams!



Close Reader Habits

How do hearing dogs help their owners? Reread the article. **Underline** the key details that explain what hearing dogs do.

Think Use what you learned from reading the magazine article to answer the following questions.



Each paragraph may give a main idea about the topic. Together, these ideas help develop the main idea of the passage.

- 1** This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Which statement below **best** describes the main idea in paragraph 2?

- A** Hearing dogs are trained to recognize the sounds of kitchen timers and smoke alarms.
- B** Hearing dogs alert their owners to important sounds in the home.
- C** Hearing dogs wear a “uniform” in public so that others know they are service dogs.
- D** Hearing dogs are happy, constant companions.

Part B

Which **two** key details **best** support your answer to Part A?

- A** Hearing dogs recognize many household sounds.
- B** Hearing dogs touch their owners with a paw or their noses to alert them to sounds.
- C** Hearing dogs go with their owners to public spaces.
- D** Hearing dogs lead their owners to or away from the source of a sound.
- E** Hearing dogs are not just pets.
- F** Hearing dogs’ “uniforms” make them stand out to others.

Talk

- 2** Explain how hearing dogs help their owners at home and outside the home. Use the chart on page 17 to organize your thoughts.

Write

- 3 Short Response** Use the information in your chart to explain how hearing dogs help their owners. Tell why people and their dogs make great teams. Use at least **two** details from the passage in your answer. Use the space provided on page 17 to write your response.

HINT Think about how the dog’s training helps its owner at home and outside.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 13.

The Snake

AND THE CHARMER

3 Short Response Explain how the key details about cobras help you understand the snake charmer’s trick. Include details from your chart and your discussion in your answer.

HINT Think about how to tell details about the cobra in an order that makes sense.



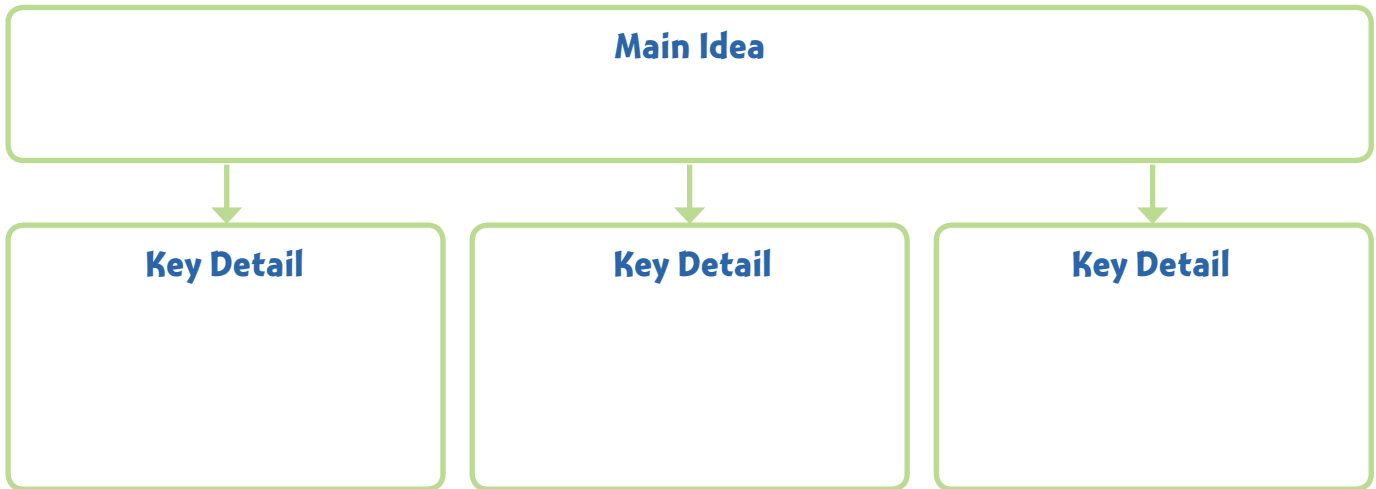
Don't forget to check your writing.

Check Your Writing

- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

Lending an Ear

2 Use the chart below to organize your ideas.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 15.

3 Short Response Use the information in your chart to explain how hearing dogs help their owners. Tell why people and their dogs make great teams. Include at least two details from the passage in your answer.

HINT Think about how the dog's training helps its owner at home and outside.

WORDS TO KNOW

As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- **cooperated**
- **declining**
- **endangered**



Flying with a Tiger

by Elana Kopel, *Highlights*

- 1 I am a zookeeper at the Dallas Zoo in Texas. One of my jobs is to care for Sumatran tigers.
- 2 These tigers live in the wild on the island of Sumatra and in some other parts of Asia. They are endangered, and their numbers are declining. But zoos around the world keep a few of the big cats to teach people about tigers and to let the tigers have cubs.



3 When a zoo wants a new tiger, it tries to get one from another zoo. That way, more tigers can stay in the wild. Some animals travel from zoo to zoo by truck, and some go by airplane. When we moved one of our tigers, a female named Skylar, to the San Francisco Zoo in California, she went by plane. I went along to help keep her safe.

Skylar in the Sky

4 Skylar spent the first two years of her life wrestling with her sister and stalking and pouncing on her brother. This is how tigers learn to hunt. By the age of three, Skylar was old enough to leave her siblings and start her own family. That's what she would have done in the wild.

5 Before Skylar could take to the skies, we needed to prepare her for the journey. We trained her to go into a shipping crate and let us close the door behind her. When she cooperated, we gave her an uncooked meatball, her favorite treat. . . .

Meatballs Galore

6 When moving day arrived, we put lots of meatballs inside Skylar's crate. Once Skylar was inside, the crate was loaded into the back of a truck. Skylar turned around in the crate to see what was happening, but she was quiet and calm the whole way to the airport.

7 Skylar and I flew on an airplane that carries packages, not people. Skylar's crate was loaded on with other large packages. . . . The plane left at midnight, and we stopped in Indiana to change aircraft. While we waited at the Indiana airport, I peeked into Skylar's crate. I was happy to see her sleeping peacefully.



8 Our second plane landed in San Francisco at eight o'clock in the morning. A zookeeper from the San Francisco Zoo met us and took us to Skylar's new home. . . . I knew Skylar was nervous. She did not come out of the crate as quickly as she had gone in. She growled at her new zookeepers. We left her alone to calm down.

9 Skylar's new keepers took me to see the tiger exhibit where Skylar would be living. I told them that Skylar liked to take a dip in her swimming pool and to play with plastic barrels, giant plastic balls, empty plastic flowerpots, perfume-scented logs, and ice. . . . By the next day, Skylar had calmed down a little.

10 After my last visit with Skylar, I returned to Dallas on a regular airplane. I knew I would miss Skylar, but I hoped that she would like her new zoo and teach the people of San Francisco about the wildlife of Asia. I hoped she would start a new family, too.

More Tigers in the World

11 Months later, Skylar gave birth to three male cubs. She is a good mom, and she has brought more Sumatran tigers into the world. Maybe one day her cubs will be dads and there will be even more of these beautiful creatures.

Think Use what you have learned from reading the science article to respond to the following questions.

1 Read the following sentence from the passage.

Before Skylar could take to the skies, we needed to prepare her for the journey.

Which dictionary entry **best** defines prepare?

- A** get ready
- B** make a meal
- C** deal with
- D** turn down

2 The main idea of paragraphs 2 and 3 is that zoos help protect wildlife and teach people about wild animals such as Sumatran tigers. Draw Xs next to the **two** key details in the chart that **best** support the main idea of those paragraphs.

Detail from the Article	Supports the Main Idea
"Some animals travel from zoo to zoo by truck, and some go by airplane."	
"When a zoo wants a new tiger, it tries to get one from another zoo. That way, more tigers can stay in the wild."	
"These tigers live in the wild on the island of Sumatra and in some other parts of Asia. They are endangered, . . ."	
"But zoos around the world keep a few of the big cats to teach people about the tigers. . . ."	

- 3** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Which sentence **best** explains the main idea of the passage?

- A** Zoos often help increase the number of wild animals by raising and setting free animals that were born in a zoo.
- B** Transporting animals from zoo to zoo must be done carefully so that the animals are kept healthy and safe.
- C** The number of Sumatran tigers has been declining quickly.
- D** Skylar’s keeper hopes that Skylar will start a new family.

Part B

Pick the **three** details from the passage that **best** support your answer in Part A.

- A** “They are endangered, and their numbers are declining.”
- B** “When we moved one of our tigers, a female named Skylar, to the San Francisco Zoo in California. . . . I went along to help keep her safe.”
- C** “By the age of three, Skylar was old enough to leave her siblings and start her own family.”
- D** “We trained her to go into a shipping crate and let us close the door behind her.”
- E** “While we waited at the Indiana airport, I peeked into Skylar’s crate. I was happy to see her sleeping peacefully.”
- F** “She growled at her new zookeepers. We left her alone to calm down.”
- G** “I knew I would miss Skylar, but I hoped that she would like her new zoo and teach the people of San Francisco about the wildlife of Asia.”

- 4** Which sentence **best** explains why Skylar’s keeper gave her raw meatballs?

- A** Skylar liked to eat human food more than food meant for tigers.
- B** Skylar’s keeper wanted to travel with Skylar to San Francisco.
- C** It is the only food Skylar would eat when she was traveling.
- D** Skylar’s keeper wanted to reward her for going in the crate.



Write

5 Short Response The author states in paragraph 3, “When a zoo wants a new tiger, it tries to get one from another zoo.” Reread paragraphs 2 and 3. Then explain how this statement supports the main idea of the text. Use details from the text in your answer.



Learning Target

You’ve learned how to identify the main idea and key details about a topic. Explain how this can help you develop a deeper understanding of informational text.
