

Lincoln Parish: A Focus on Critical Academic Vocabulary

Noun: Central/Main Idea

Definition: most important point the author makes

Synonyms: chief, key, foremost

Jingle: *What's the big idea you will find next?*

The author's key point of his text!

Central Idea and Main Idea in the Louisiana Standards

The terms **central idea** and **main idea** are found throughout the Louisiana Student Standards and the exemplars in the ELA Guidebook.

Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5:

Determining the main idea begins in grade 3 for the reading standards, speaking and listening standards, and writing standards.

Grade 3: RI.3.2 – Determine the **main idea** of a text; recount the details and explain how they support the **main idea**.

Appendix B

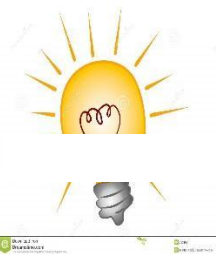
Kindergarten: Students (with prompting and support from the teacher) read “Garden Helpers” in *National Geographic Young Explorers* and demonstrate their understanding of the **main idea of a text**-not all bugs are bad-by **retelling key details**. [RI.K.2]

8th grade: Students provide an objective summary of Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative*. They analyze how the central idea regarding the evils of slavery is conveyed through supporting ideas and developed over the course of the text. [RI.8.2]

Learning Begins with Long-Term Memory

We are always asked to process prior knowledge when teaching a new concept. Prior knowledge is the information students have stored in their long-term memory. To get the **main idea** into their heads, begin with what they already know and like. What television shows do they watch? Ask them about **the main idea of a recent show**. You can also assign a show to watch if all your students have access to television. This may be a bit more difficult for your English language learners, so find out what they watch and see if you can make a connection.

So, What's the Big Idea?



Another way to reinforce this concept is to have children talk and write about what they know best: their family. Ask them what the “big idea” is about Grandma, Mom, Dad, a sibling, or another relative. Some of the following are responses from kindergarteners:

Jack: “*The big idea about Grandma is she loves to be with me.*”

Emily: “*The big idea about Mommy is she lets me bake with her!*”

Matthew: “*The big idea about Daddy is he gets so excited when he sees me!*”

Darius: “*The big idea about Uncle John is that he can fix anything.*”

As students learn the “big ideas” about people are the main things they know or like about them, you can start to transfer the idea to what they read and write.

Give Them a Hand



This idea is one that a teacher posted on the website Pinterest.

Have the students trace their hand. **In the palm of the hand write the main idea of a story, text, or poem.** One the fingers write the supporting details. The fingers need the hand to work, just as the details rely on the main idea, and the reverse is also true. It gives the students an opportunity for movement and creativity.

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At the Movies



After students have watched a movie, ask them to write one sentence to tell what the movie is about.
Question: Is this the main idea? Action Step: Then ask them to write some details.