

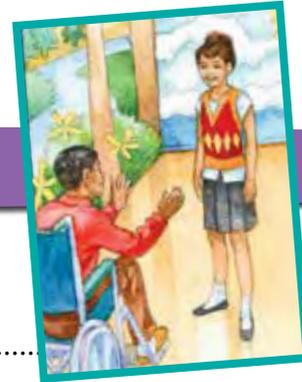
Reading Trends

Comprehension
Skills and Strategies



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Finding the Main Idea

UNIT 2



CATS ON THE HUNT

Some people think cats are just lazy pets. However, the cats in your neighborhood may be more like their wild cousins than you might think.



Work with a partner. Read each title and question. How are the questions alike? Then, pick one question and discuss your answers.

Finding the Main Idea

36

NONFICTION

Big Cats

39

What makes big cats special?

NONFICTION

Whiskers Gets a Job

47

What kinds of jobs can cats have?

FICTION

Mighty Mourka

55

How can a cat help a village?

Finding the Main Idea

What's the Big Idea?

The **main idea** is the most important idea in a paragraph, section, or article. **Supporting details** explain the main idea or give examples.

Some details do not add much to the main idea. These details tell more about supporting details, but they do not support the main idea.

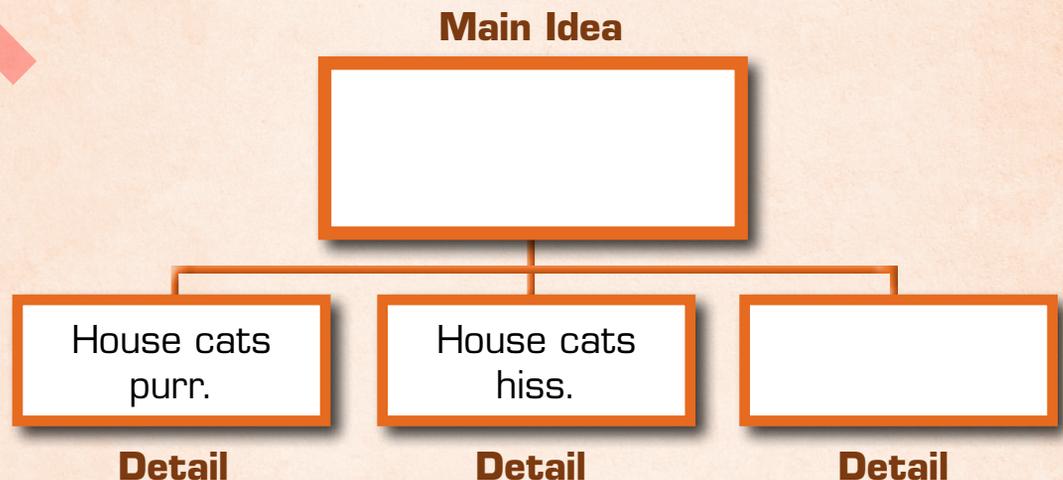
Read the diagram below. Now, add another detail that supports the main idea. Describe the coat of another big cat.



Try It Out

Now, you try. Read the details given below. What is the main idea? Write a sentence about the main idea in the large box.

Add a supporting detail in the small box.



Complete the diagram.

Then, on your own paper, make another diagram. Write a main idea about an animal. With your partner, add three details.

How to Find the Main Idea

1. First, find the **topic**. A topic is a person, animal, place, thing, or idea. Ben Franklin, tigers, New York City, a skateboard, and happiness are all topics. Sometimes titles, headings, photos, and captions tell you the topic or give you clues about the topic.
2. Then, figure out the **main idea**. The main idea is the most important thing the writer wants you to know about the topic. To find the main idea, ask, "What is the one idea that the writer keeps coming back to?" Answer that question in a complete sentence.

Example: Two men raised a lion and returned him to the wild.

3. **Supporting details** explain the main idea. Other details do not. As you read, look for details that support the main idea. Which of the following details supports the main idea stated in Step 2?

The lion had big, dark eyes.

The lion had grown too big for the men to take care of.

TIP

Some details may add interesting information without supporting the main idea. To test for important details, ask, "Does this sentence tell about the main idea or about another detail?"

It's Up to You

Read the paragraph below. Sometimes the writer tells you the main idea. This writer does. Underline the sentence that tells the main idea. Circle details that support the main idea. Cross out details that do not.

Cats Can Escape

Cats can often escape danger. Perhaps that's why people say cats have nine lives. A cat can jump from a bookcase and just walk away. Sometimes, a cat will fall from a high window ledge. It usually lands on all four feet. A fast cat can run away from most dogs. The cat won't be hurt. However, the dog may be upset!



Use your own paper to make a diagram like the ones on page 36. Use the information in the paragraph to write the main idea and three supporting details.

Your Turn

Now, try a short article. Read the title and look at the photo.

What is the **topic**? _____

Read the article. As you read, look for the most important idea about the topic. That will be **main idea**. Then, look for **supporting details**. Remember that not all details support the main idea.

What is the **main idea** of the first paragraph?

The snow leopard's body
helps it stay alive in cold
weather.

Reread the second paragraph. Underline a **supporting detail**. Circle a detail that supports only another detail.

What is the **main idea** of the last paragraph?

Snow Leopards in Snow

The snow leopard's body helps it stay alive in cold weather. The snow leopard has thick, white fur. The fur keeps this big cat warm. The snow leopard sheds some fur during the summer.

The snow leopard has a long, furry tail. The tail is thick and warm. It has black rings. The snow leopard wraps its tail around its body to stay warm. Its tail keeps the cold wind off its face.

The snow leopard also has powerful legs. It can climb up and down snowy mountains to find food. Strong legs make it easy! The snow leopard is an excellent jumper. It can jump about fifty feet through the snow. That's the length of some classrooms!

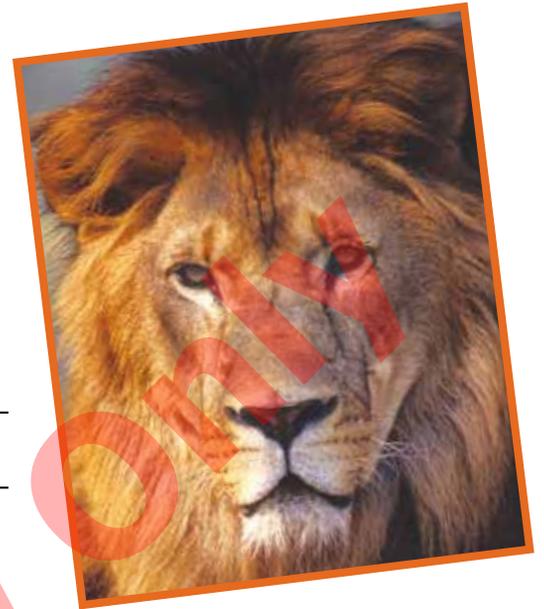


Reread "Snow Leopards in Snow" with a partner. Reread each paragraph. In each paragraph, circle one detail that supports another detail, but not the main idea. Discuss why each detail does not directly support the main idea.

BIG CATS

Look Ahead

Look at the photos on pages 39–42. What do you see in each photo? What do you think is the **topic** of the article?



Connect

Reread the headings. Choose an animal from one of the headings. Write two things you already know about the animal. Write two things you would like to learn about it.

Predict



Preview a text before you read it. When you preview a text, you study the photos, and read the title, headings, and captions. You try to figure out what the topic and **main idea** might be. Preview “Big Cats.” What do you think the main idea will be? Write the main idea in a sentence. Share your main idea with a partner.



Big cats and small cats are a lot alike.

BIG CATS

House cats, lions, and tigers belong to the same family. They are members of the cat family. When people talk about cats, they usually mean house cats. Big cats belong to a different group of cats. Lions, tigers, and leopards are big cats, but they are still part of the cat family.

Big cats are fierce and fast, but each kind of cat is special. Lions hunt together in groups. Tigers are the largest cats. Leopards are the strongest climbers. Cheetahs are the fastest cats in the world.

What is the **main idea** of the second paragraph?

A Lion Pride

A loud roar thunders across the African plains. It is a mighty roar. You can hear it five miles away. It is the roar of a male lion.

A male lion roars for many reasons. It roars to warn other animals to stay away. It roars so lost members can find the **pride** again. It roars to keep female lions and cubs safe. Males also roar when they are hunting.

Lions spend most of the day resting. They need energy to hunt at night. Lions are the only big cats that hunt together. The females are the main hunters. They work in groups to catch antelopes and zebras. It takes many lions to catch a fast animal.

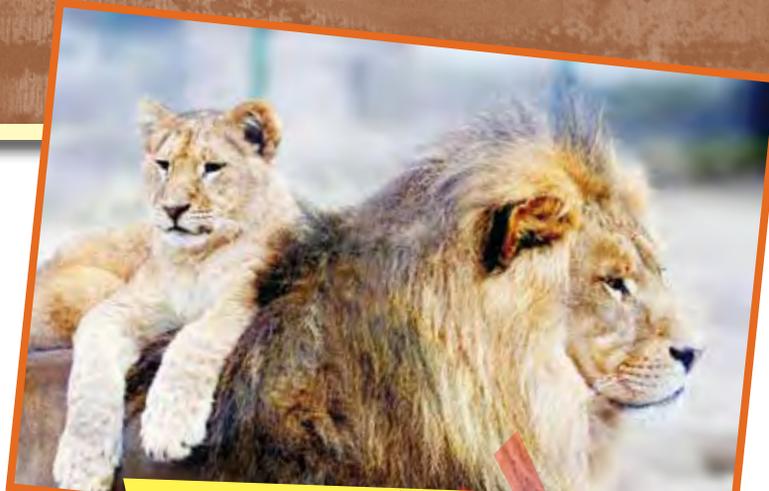
Big Striped Cats

Tigers are the largest of all cats. Some tigers weigh 800 pounds. They use their large size and strength to hunt. Tigers eat about 60 pounds of food in one night. Tigers hunt all kinds of animals.

A tiger's stripes can help it hide. The stripes help it blend into the grass. Then, it can sneak up on its **prey**.

Leaping Leopard

Leopards are the strongest tree climbers of all big cats. A leopard will chase its prey up a tree. Then, the leopard will trap and kill it. Leopards also hunt and kill animals on the ground. They often drag their prey up a tree. Leopards can drag animals twice their own weight. They keep the prey in the tree. They climb the tree when they are ready to eat it. Lions cannot steal the leopard's food from the tree.



Lions keep their cubs safe from danger.

What is the **main idea** of this paragraph?

STRATEGY

Reread "Big Striped Cats." Rereading can help you find the main idea. Underline the **main idea** of the first paragraph.

Write one **supporting detail** about tigers.

pride – a group of lions that live and hunt together

prey – an animal that is hunted

STRATEGY

Reread "Run, Cheetah, Run." **Make notes** or **draw a picture** that shows how the cheetah's body helps it run fast.



Cheetahs can run at speeds up to 70 miles per hour.

What is the **main idea** of the article?

nostrils – openings in the nose that let humans and animals breathe

Run, Cheetah, Run

The cheetah has a body built for speed. It can go from 0 to 60 miles per hour in three seconds. That's really fast!

The cheetah has long, thin legs. Its legs help it run at surprising speeds. A cheetah can run about 70 miles per hour. That's as fast as a car on the highway.

The cheetah's tail is perfect for running. It helps the cheetah run at fast speeds. The cheetah steers with its tail. The tail also helps the cheetah keep its balance. The cheetah won't tip over at high speeds.

Runners need lots of air to keep up speed. The cheetah has wide **nostrils**. They take in lots of air. The cheetah also has large lungs. The lungs hold and release the air. The cheetah also has a large heart. The heart keeps blood pumping. Cheetahs need to stay strong so they can run fast. Run, cheetah, run!

Big and Bold

Lions roar, and leopards leap. Tigers are strong, and cheetahs can run fast. They are all members of the cat family. However, each big cat is special in its own way.

Fast Land Animals

Animal	Miles Per Hour
Cheetah	70
Antelope	60
Horse	50
Greyhound	40
Ostrich	40
Human	25
Iguana	20

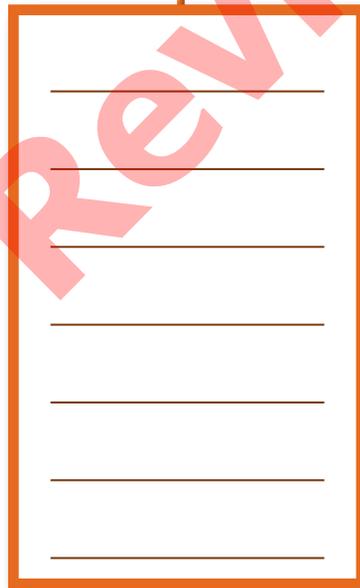
FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

Look at the diagram below. Write the main idea of “Big Cats” in the large box. Write the main idea in a complete sentence. Then, write two supporting details in the small boxes.

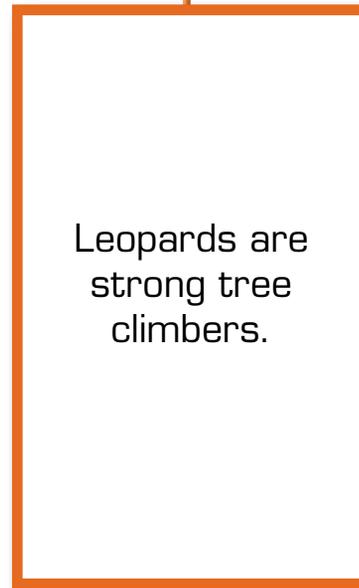
Main Idea



Detail



Detail



Leopards are strong tree climbers.

Detail



Share your diagram with a partner. Discuss your main idea sentences. Compare your supporting details. Discuss how you know that these details support the main idea.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Circle the correct answer.

1. What makes leopards special?
 - A They can run fast.
 - B They have a loud roar.
 - C They are big and heavy.
 - D They are strong climbers.

2. Based on the details in the chart on page 42, which animal runs faster than a horse?
 - A iguana
 - B ostrich
 - C antelope
 - D human



SUMMARIZING

Write a summary of “Big Cats.” Use your main idea and detail diagram on page 43 to help you. Write the main idea in a complete sentence. Then, write one important detail about each animal. In a summary, use only the details that support the main idea.

Main idea + Supporting details = Summary

Main Idea: _____

Details about each animal: _____

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Write your answers on the lines below.

1. Which animal did you know the least about?
Write one thing you learned.



2. If you could ask a question about one of these animals, what would you ask?

3. Look at the chart on page 42. What does it tell you about cheetahs?

4. How are house cats like big cats? How are they different?

WRITE ON!

Write from the Start

Visitors can see big cats in wildlife parks. They can read information about each cat on a sign. Work with a partner to choose a big cat. Then, write a paragraph about the cat for visitors to read.

1. Which big cat did you choose?

2. What does the big cat look like?

3. What makes it special?

4. What details tell more about the big cat?

Write Now

Think about the big cat you chose. On your own paper, draw a sign for park visitors to read. Write the information about the big cat on the sign. Use the questions and your answers to help you. Then, draw a picture of the cat on the sign.



All the Write Stuff

- Give facts about the big cat.
Add supporting details.
- Draw a picture.
- Tell what makes it special.