

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?



Identifying the Main Idea and Big Idea!

The reason we learn the comprehension strategies (schema, predicting, making connections, sequencing) is for the students to better understand the text they are reading and to construct meaning. Many students can read the words on the page (**decode**) but they must understand (**read for meaning**) the text itself. Identifying the **Main Idea** and the **Big Idea** will help the students remember as well as understand what they read while using the strategies.

THE MAIN IDEA

What is the text about?

The Main Idea of a text is the topic that the author has chosen to write about. Texts do not explicitly tell the reader what the **Main Idea** is. Identifying the main idea is easier to

do than the Big Idea as the main idea can be inferred by using the details of the text, title and pictures.

In our class I often prompt the students by providing the following sentence starter:

“Today, we read a book about...”

THE BIG IDEA

What should I learn from the text?

The Big Idea of a text is the lesson or theme that the author wants us to learn. Texts do not explicitly tell the reader what the Big Idea is. Once the reader has identified the Main Idea of the text then the reader can more easily identify the Big Idea. In Non-Fiction texts there may not be a Big Idea as the text is informational and only have a Main Idea (what the text is about).

Examples of Big Ideas:

Courage, Fairness, Goals, Honesty, Hope, Integrity, Kindness, Respect, Teamwork...

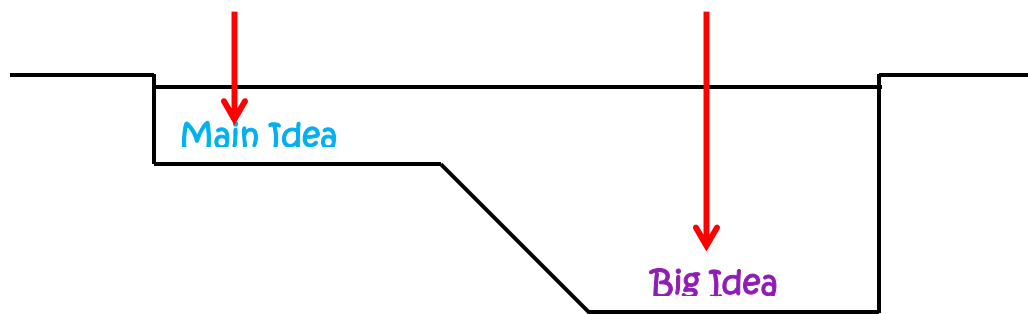
In our Class I often prompt the students by providing the following sentence starter:

“We are learning to have...”

Main Idea vs. Big Idea Shallow vs. Deep

When reading Fiction texts, using the **Big Idea** with our **comprehension strategies** (**schema, predictions, making connections**) we demonstrate a deeper understanding of the text.

In class, when using the **main idea**, we refer to that as the ‘shallow’ end of the pool and when using the **big idea**, we refer to it as the ‘deep’ end of the pool. We use the Big Idea to understand the book on a deeper level.



***Which connection shows that the student understands on a deeper level?**

Making a Connection to...

The Main Idea:

The text, The Terry Fox Story, is about running. In the text, Terry runs across some of Canada. Terry ran 26 miles every day. This reminds me of when I run a lot and get tired just like Terry did. It also reminds me of how we run for Terry Fox every year and I get tired after all the running!

Making a Connection to...

The Big Idea:

The text, The Terry Fox Story, is about courage. Courage means to never give up even when something is hard. In the text, Terry never gave up even when he was sick, he ran every day, even when he had trouble breathing when running. This reminds me of when I

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ never gave up trying to learn how to add and ★
★ subtract using strategies in math. It also ★
★ reminds me of how I try to improve my work ★
★ using the descriptive feedback I get from my ★
★ teacher to improve my work in math just like ★
★ Terry never gave up. ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **What's Can I Do At Home?** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ As demonstrated above, using the **Big Idea** ★
★ instead of the Main Idea demonstrates a ★
★ deeper understanding of the text instead of a ★
★ surface or shallow level of understanding that ★
★ the **Main Idea** provides. ★

★ Encourage your child, at home, to help ★
★ identify the Main and Big Idea with movies, ★
★ television, books, etc. Students can identify ★
★ the main idea more easily but require support ★
★ when identifying the **Big Idea** (lesson or ★
★ theme). ★

★ Both the **Big Idea and Main Idea** will ★
★ be present when using fictional texts. There ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★
★ may not be a Big Idea included in non-fiction ★
★ informational texts (descriptions, procedures, ★
★ explanations). ★

**Students are encouraged to use the
comprehension strategies learned in class
to help them understand and make
meaningful connections!**

