

The **main idea** is the **central**, or most important, idea in a paragraph or passage. It states the purpose and sets the direction of the paragraph or passage.

- The main idea may be stated or it may be implied.
- When the main idea of a paragraph is stated, **it is most often found in the first sentence of the paragraph**. However, the main idea may be found in any sentence of the paragraph.
- The main idea may be stated in the first sentence of a paragraph and then be repeated or restated at the end of the paragraph.
- The main idea may be split. The first sentence of a paragraph may present a point of view, while the last sentence presents a contrasting or opposite view.
- To find the main idea of any paragraph or passage, ask these questions:
 1. Who or what is the paragraph about?
 2. What aspect or idea about the 'who' or 'what' is the author concerned with?

Examples:

It is often said that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, but this isn't true. Go ask the forest rangers. Rangers who spend their summers as fire-fighters will tell you that every thundershower brings several bolts of lightning to their lookout stations.

There are great numbers of deer around here. This whole area is great country for hunters and fishermen. There are bears, mountain lions, and coyotes. To the east there are streams full of trout, and there are ducks and geese.

Penicillin is one of the greatest of the wonder drugs. It has saved thousands of lives already and will save many more in the future. Unfortunately, it has no effect at all on most of the ills of mankind. Penicillin is a very good drug, but it is certainly not a cure-all.