

Elementary School Lesson Plan: Understanding Main Idea and Details

From the classroom of Angela Szakasits, 5th grade Reading and Social Studies teacher at North Topsail Elementary School in Hampstead, North Carolina.

Objective: The student will use main idea and supporting details to expand understanding of a variety of texts.

When determining weaknesses in comprehension, *Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies* (CARS) is an excellent resource. Each selection includes a comprehension question divided into skills. I assign students three lessons to read and then grade their papers. Using this information, I focus my instruction to meet their needs.

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Supporting details- information that is included to support the main idea by filling in background information or expanding on the topic.

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Main idea is often stated or implied in the first or last sentence of a paragraph or selection as the topic is introduced or summarized. Because struggling readers can be overwhelmed by the number of words in a paragraph, eliminate those words that are not important in the selection. Begin by providing students with a copy of a paragraph. Using a pencil or black marker, cross out the words that are not as important in the paragraph, such as articles or prepositions.

Example:

When Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press, he is unlikely to have foreseen how significant this invention would be in today's times. The printing press increased the speed at which books could be copied because instead of having to copy printed material by hand, whole pages of text could be printed at one time. Today, layouts for pages are done on the computer and copiers are able to print hundreds of papers per minute. Without such easy access to printed material, our lives would be dramatically different.