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Using the CARS® and STARS® Series

**CARS® Series**
- Diagnose needs of the class by administering the Pretest
- Benchmark during instruction to monitor progress, using longer reading passages
- Assess mastery by administering the Post Test

**STARS® Series**
- Instruct the class in 1 to 8 strategies, based on students’ needs (differentiate instruction using Books K–H)

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**What are the CARS® and STARS® Series?**

The CARS® and STARS® Series are a comprehensive resource that allows you to identify and teach essential reading comprehension strategies. As the diagram above indicates, the CARS® Series is the assessment component, and the STARS® Series is the instruction component.

**CARS® Series**
The CARS® Series is a diagnostic reading series that allows you to identify and assess a student’s level of mastery for each of 8 reading strategies. It contains a Pretest, Benchmarks, and a Post Test. This ten-level series is designed for students in grades K through 8. The CARS® Series helps teachers place students in the companion STARS® Series for reading instruction and remediation.

**STARS® Series**
The STARS® Series is a prescriptive reading series that provides essential instruction in the same 8 reading strategies as the diagnostic CARS® Series. This ten-level series is also designed for students in grades K through 8. The STARS® Series provides precise instruction in and practice with the strategies students need to master in order to achieve reading success.

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Book A in both the CARS® and STARS® Series features the following 8 reading strategies:
- Finding Main Idea
- Recalling Facts and Details
- Understanding Sequence
- Recognizing Cause and Effect
- Making Predictions
- Finding Word Meaning in Context
- Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences
- Reading Pictures
How do I get started with the CARS® and STARS® Series?

As shown in the diagram on page 4, the CARS® Series is used to diagnose the needs of the class, monitor students’ progress, and assess students’ mastery of the strategies. The STARS® Series is used to instruct the class in targeted reading strategies, based on the diagnosis from the CARS® Series.

To get started, use the following steps:

1. Diagnose
   Administer the Pretest in the CARS® Series to diagnose the needs of the students in your class. (See the CARS® teacher guide for additional information.)

2. Instruct
   With One or More Strategy Lessons
   Based on the results of the CARS® diagnosis, assign students one or more strategy lessons in the STARS® Series to remediate specific areas that need improvement and reinforcement. Each strategy lesson can be completed in five 30–45 minute sessions.

   With All 8 Strategy Lessons
   Or, have students complete an entire STARS® student book in order to build and reinforce their basic knowledge of all 8 reading strategies. (See the Suggested Pacing Chart on page 9 for assigning all 8 strategies in the CARS® and STARS® Series.)

   For information about differentiating instruction, see pages 7 and 10–11.

3. Benchmark
   Use the five Benchmarks in the CARS® Series and the Review Lessons in the STARS® Series (see page 7) to monitor students’ progress.

4. Assess
   Use the Post Test in the CARS® Series and the Final Review in the STARS® Series (see page 7) to assess mastery of the strategies taught in the STARS® Series.

Using the CARS® and STARS® Series

Why do the CARS® and STARS® Series concentrate on 8 reading strategies?

The reading strategies in these series were based on reviews of the following:

- State standards and tests across the nation
- Current research on reading comprehension
- Gaps in basal or core reading programs

The strategies in both series cover a range of areas that lead to success in reading comprehension:

- Literal comprehension
- Inferential comprehension
- Text structure and organizational patterns
- Vocabulary and concept development
- Metacognitive strategies

Practice in these reading strategies leads to success on state tests as well as improves students’ overall reading comprehension.

How do researchers define the relationship between skills and strategies?

According to Regie Routman (2000), strategies are the thinking, problem-solving processes that the learner deliberately initiates, incorporates, and applies to construct meaning. At this point, the reading strategies become instinctively incorporated into one’s reading.

According to Afflerbach et al. (2008), when a reading strategy becomes effortless and automatic, the strategy has become a skill. Reading skills operate without the reader’s deliberate control or conscious awareness.
What is in the *STARS®* student book?

**Strategy Lessons**
Each student book contains 8 strategy lessons, one lesson for each reading strategy. Each ten-page lesson provides instruction and practice in the targeted reading strategy. Students read several passages and answer 16 strategy-based selected-response (multiple-choice) questions. The strategy lessons are scaffolded, providing a gradual release of support. Each lesson moves from modeled instruction to guided instruction to modeled practice to guided practice to independent practice. (See Features of a *STARS®* Lesson on pages 12–23 for more information about the strategy lessons.)

**Review Lessons**
A two-page review lesson follows every two strategy lessons. Students read one longer passage and answer 6 selected-response questions that focus on the target reading strategies in the two previous lessons.

**Final Review**
An eight-page final review gives practice in all 8 reading strategies. Students answer 32 selected-response questions that focus on all the reading strategies in the book.

What is in the *STARS®* teacher guide?

**Overview**
Information about using the *CARS®* and *STARS® Series* and the Curriculum Associates Classroom Reading System, including:
- Suggested Pacing Chart
- Features of a *STARS®* Lesson
- Research Summary
- Reproducible Strategy Bookmarks

**Lesson Plans**
Six-page guides for each *STARS®* student-book lesson, including a facsimile of each student-book page with correct answers, teacher tips, and these special features:
- ELL Support
- Genre Focus
- Teacher’s Corner
- Reteaching
- Connecting with Literature

**Reproducible Answer Form**
A reproducible bubble sheet that students may use to record their answers to Parts Two–Five of each lesson

**Completed Answer Form**
A filled-in bubble sheet that may be used for correction purposes

What is the reading level of the passages in the *STARS®* student book?
The reading passages in each *STARS®* student book lesson are at or below reading grade level, as determined by Flesch-Kincaid Readability Statistics. For example, no passage in Book A (grade 1) is above a reading level of 1.9.
How can I provide differentiated instruction using the STARS® Series?

There are two easy ways to provide differentiated instruction in the classroom using the STARS® Series.

By Reading Strategy

Use the results from the Pretest in the CARS® Series to diagnose the individual needs of the students in your classroom.

Then use STARS® Book A to provide targeted instruction in one specific strategy or in several strategies to remediate areas that need improvement and/or reinforcement.

Or, you may wish to provide instruction using the entire STARS® Book A to build students’ basic knowledge of all the reading strategies.

By Reading Level

Students in the same classroom are likely to be reading at different skill levels (below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level). You can use the leveled books in the STARS® Series (Books K–H) to meet this need.

To enable this type of differentiated instruction, the sequence of the strategies and the page numbers across the books in the STARS® Series are the same from lesson to lesson (with some exceptions in Books K–C). So all students in the classroom receive the same reading-strategy instruction but work with appropriately leveled reading passages.

For example, some first-grade students may work in the on-level Book A, which contains reading passages that don’t extend beyond a first-grade reading level. At the same time, other students in the class may be assigned an above-level book, while other students may be assigned a below-level book.

How can I assess students’ progress in the STARS® Series?

After students have been placed into the STARS® Series, based on the diagnosis from the CARS® Pretest, several methods may be used to assess students’ progress in the STARS® Series.

You may use classroom observation to monitor and informally assess students’ mastery of the strategies taught in each STARS® lesson.

You may also use the following to formally assess students’ mastery of the strategies:

STARS® Review Lessons

A review lesson follows every two strategy lessons. Each review lesson may be used to assess students’ mastery of one or both of the strategies covered in the review.

STARS® Final Review

The final review may be used upon completion of the strategy lessons to assess students’ mastery of all 8 reading strategies.

CARS® Benchmarks

These five tests may be used throughout instruction in the STARS® student book (after the CARS® Pretest and before the CARS® Post Test) as individual progress-monitoring tools to monitor students’ progress in applying all 8 reading strategies. You may space out the Benchmarks to best meet your classroom needs.

CARS® Post Test

The Post Test may be used upon completion of the STARS® strategy lessons to assess students’ overall mastery of all 8 reading strategies. The results of the CARS® Post Test may be compared with the results of the CARS® Pretest to assess students’ mastery of the reading strategies.
What instructional features in the **STARS® Series** can be helpful for students, especially ELL students?

The **STARS® Series** uses several effective instructional procedures that support all students, including:

- Opportunities to activate prior knowledge before beginning strategy instruction
- Explicit instruction in key English language concepts
- A step-by-step scaffolded approach, beginning with explicit instruction, to build a clear understanding of the reading strategies
- Opportunities to build and reinforce self-esteem
- Use of graphic organizers to visually depict the reading strategies
- Frequent reviews and restatements of concepts
- Allowances for students to work at their own pace
- Ample practice through a variety of high-interest reading passages
- Presentation of selections depicting real-life situations
- Encouragement of paired-learning experiences
- Student discussion of strategies to demonstrate conceptual understanding

In addition to these supports, the teacher guide also provides minilessons on English language topics that may be challenging for ELL students (called ELL Support). See pages 12–13 of this teacher guide for an example.

What is the correction procedure?

For best results, correct each part of the strategy lesson orally with students immediately following its completion. Explain concepts that students do not understand. Encourage students to participate in a discussion about the targeted strategy and how to apply it in everyday life experiences.

What are the Strategy Bookmarks?

The Strategy Bookmarks are a set of reproducible bookmarks for each of the strategies taught in the **STARS® Series**. You may wish to distribute the appropriate bookmark after students have completed each strategy lesson. The bookmarks serve as a helpful reminder, highlighting the essential points about the strategy that students have learned in the lesson.

Suggest that students use the bookmarks to support their application of the strategy to grade-level text, especially when completing the Connecting with Literature activity (see pages 22–23 for an example of this feature).

How much time is required to complete the **CARS®** and **STARS® Series**?

The **CARS®** and **STARS® Series** are designed for flexibility in the classroom and can be used effectively in several ways to fulfill your classroom needs.

The Suggested Pacing Chart on page 9 reflects the use of the **CARS®** Pretest, Benchmarks, and Post Test as well as the 8 **STARS®** strategy lessons, the review lessons, and the final review. You can adapt the Suggested Pacing Chart as needed to accommodate the actual number of strategy lessons you instruct. Which lessons you teach and how you choose to allocate the times are up to you, depending on the needs of your students.

Where do students record their answers?

Students may record their answers to Part One on a separate piece of paper or directly in their student book. The answers to Part One are discussed during partner or all-class discussions. Students may record their answers to Parts Two–Five on the reproducible Answer Form (on pages 82 and 83 of this teacher guide) or directly in the student book.
INTRODUCTION

This 12-page section guides teachers through a sample lesson plan from the teacher guide. Each lesson plan contains facsimiles of the student-book lesson. Numbered boxes call out and describe the key features in both the teacher guide and the student book.

Lesson Objectives

Students will learn to:
• Recognize cause and effect in a reading passage by understanding what happens and why it happens.
• Identify when test questions are asking them to recognize cause and effect.

Getting Started

Tell students that today they will learn how to find what happens in a story and why.

SAY: Good readers think about what happens in a story and why. Knowing what happens in a story and why it happens helps the reader understand the events in the story. You already know about why things happen because you see this in your everyday life.

Model the Strategy

Introduce the strategy by describing a situation and asking students to think about what is happening.

SAY: Today is a school day, but you have a fever. Your stomach doesn’t feel well. You stay home from school. Why do you stay home from school?

Students should say that they stayed home from school because they were sick. Point out staying home is what happened in this example. Being sick is why it happened. This is an example of recognizing cause and effect.

ELL Support

Past Tense of Irregular Verbs

Draw the chart below on the board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bake</th>
<th>play</th>
<th>feel</th>
<th>make</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baked</td>
<td>played</td>
<td>felt</td>
<td>made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Point out to students that the ending -ed or -ed is added to many words to show something that already happened. Explain that this rule of adding -ed or -ed is not true for all words, however. Two of these words are feel and made.

The sentence, “I feel sick” tells about something that is happening now. The sentence, “I felt sick yesterday” tells you about something that already happened. Point out that -ed cannot be added to feel to show what already happened. The same is true for the word make. Tell students that as they read the stories in this lesson, they will find the words feel and felt in one story (page 39) and the word made in another story (page 40).

Genre Focus

Fable

Define this genre for students. Explain that a fable is a story that usually, though not always, contains animals that can talk. A fable is told in order to teach a lesson. Discuss with students that examples of cause and effect show up in all kinds of stories, especially fables. For example, in the fable The Boy Who Cried Wolf, the boy cries “wolf” so many times that the townspeople don’t come to his aid when a real wolf appears. The lesson in this story is that no one believes a person who lies even when that person tells the truth. Students will read a fable on page 46.
Lesson Objectives: Presents two strategy-related goals for students to achieve as they complete the lesson.

Getting Started: Introduces the strategy to students and models how good readers use the strategy when reading.

- Scripted text provides a model for using the strategy in a real-world scenario to tap students’ background knowledge.
- A familiar context builds students’ confidence for interacting with the strategy.

ELL Support: Targets a language concept that students may need reinforcement with.

- The language concept is briefly defined. The teacher then guides students through examples and tells them where they will encounter the concept in the upcoming lesson.
- Language concepts in the series include:
  - compound words
  - proper nouns
  - pronouns
  - contractions
  - multiple-meaning words
  - plural nouns
  - regular and irregular past tense verbs
  - homophones

Genre Focus: Previews key characteristics of a specific genre.

- Understanding a genre can aid students’ comprehension of a reading passage.
- Genres in the series include:
  - journal entry
  - fable
  - short fiction
  - poem
  - folktales
  - friendly letter
  - nonfiction
  - tall tale

In STARS® Books A and B, the term story is applied to reading passages that are both fiction and nonfiction because this is how these writing forms are often identified for emerging readers, primarily on standardized tests. If you choose, you may distinguish between these two genres with your students in two ways:

1) Expand on the Genre Focus on pages 32 and 38 in the Teacher Guide, which discusses fiction and nonfiction. 2) Point out the varying border designs in the student book for these two genres:

fiction and nonfiction

Features of a STARS® Lesson
Many stories tell about cause and effect. You can find examples of cause and effect by thinking about what happens in a story and why it happens.

Read the story. Think about what happens and why.

My brother and I were playing catch. My brother threw the ball very far. We heard a crash. The ball broke our neighbor’s window.

1. Let’s find a cause and an effect.
2. Look at the boxes below.
3. The first box tells what happened. This is the effect.
4. The second box tells why it happened. This is the cause. Finish writing the cause in the second box.

What happened?
The balloon gets bigger.

Why did it happen?
My brother threw the ball very far.

**AT A GLANCE**

Students activate their background knowledge about recognizing cause and effect and then learn how to apply this strategy to a short reading passage.

**STEP BY STEP**

- Tell students that today they will practice finding examples of cause and effect.
- Read aloud the information that precedes the reading passage.
- Have students follow along as you read the passage in the box.
- Guide students through steps 1–4 for completing the graphic organizer. Have students follow along as you read the steps aloud.
- Direct students to complete the sentence in the box.
- Discuss student responses.
- Be sure students have a clear understanding that what happens is the effect and why it happens is the cause.

**Tip:** Point out to students that there is another example of cause and effect in the reading passage: How did it happen? “We heard a crash.” Why did it happen? “The ball broke our neighbor’s window.” Explaining cause and effect in this sequence (with the effect first and the cause second) will later help students as they read and process these questions as they read: What happened? Why did it happen?
Student Book

1. **Introduction:** Describes the strategy. Open-ended questions prompt students to explore what they already know about the strategy from their daily lives.

2. **Work with a Partner:** Gives student partners the opportunity to discuss ways to use the strategy.

3. **Reading Passage:** Provides the opportunity for students to work with the strategy in the context of real-world reading.

4. **Steps:** Guides students through completing the strategy-based graphic organizer.

5. **Graphic Organizer:** Visually depicts how to apply the strategy.

Teacher Guide

6. **At a Glance:** Provides a brief overview of what students do in each lesson part.

7. **Step by Step:** Provides an explicit walk-through of the steps for guiding students through each lesson part.

8. **Tip:** Provides additional information for the teacher to assist student partners as they discuss the strategy in the Work with a Partner activity.

9. **Tip:** Provides additional information for the teacher to assist students as they apply the strategy.

Modeled Instruction

**Teacher Led**

After prompting students to tap into their prior knowledge, the teacher uses step-by-step examples to model how to use the strategy, with the support of a strategy-based graphic organizer.

Management Tips

- Personalize examples so they make sense for your students. Draw on your own experiences and your knowledge of your students to make sure examples are relevant.
- Plan carefully when grouping students for the Work with a Partner activity. Consider skill levels, social skills, and English language proficiency.
- Circulate and provide tips or encouragement as student pairs work together.
The **STARS® Series** is an instructional program that is solidly grounded in areas of important reading research. Scaffolded strategy-based instruction serves as the organizational framework, while metacognitive strategies foster student self-monitoring and self-assessment. The lessons are carefully planned and sequenced to promote individual understanding and application of reading strategies. With the **STARS® Series**, students build on their capacity to analyze, reason, and communicate ideas effectively by applying specified reading strategies in a variety of contexts. The **STARS® Series** is a comprehensive reading program designed to meet a broad spectrum of individual needs in the classroom. The full research report for this title may be downloaded from the Research Internet page at http://www.casamples.com/downloads/STARS-research.pdf.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This series uses . . .</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Research says . . .</th>
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</table>
| **Answer Analysis for Students** | SB: Books K and AA  
- Included in teacher and student discussions  
SB: Books A–H  
- In each lesson, Part Three: Check Your Understanding | Research (Pashler et al, 2007) has shown that when students receive direct instruction about the reasons why an answer is correct or incorrect, they demonstrate long-term retention and understanding of newly learned content. |
| **Cooperative Learning** | SB: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Work with a Partner feature | “Having peers instruct or interact over the use of reading strategies leads to an increase in the learning of the strategies, promotes intellectual discussion and increases reading comprehension” (NICHD, 2000, pp. 4–45). |
| **Differentiated Instruction** | SB: Books C–H  
- In each lesson, Part One through Part Five, modeled, guided, and independent practice and instruction  
TG: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Part One through Part Five, teachers are given paired and whole-group instruction options | “‘Multiple paths’ does not mean that students are given free rein; it means that teachers must find that sweet spot between structure and choice that makes student learning possible….By allowing options that accommodate different thinking patterns, teachers help all students not only achieve planned learning goals but also own these goals in a way that’s all theirs” (Carolan & Guinn, 2007, p. 45). |
| **Direct Instruction** | SB: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Part Two: Learn About the Strategy | “The research demonstrates that the type of questions, the detailed step-by-step breakdowns, and the extensive practice with a range of examples . . . will significantly benefit students’ comprehension” (Gersten & Carnine, 1986, p. 72). |
| **ELL Accommodations** | SB: Books A–H  
- In each lesson, graphic organizers, explicit instruction, scaffolded instruction, shared reading, and theme-based reading passages are key ELL instructional accommodations.  
TG: Books A–H  
- See section entitled, “What instructional features in the STARS® Series can be helpful for students, especially ELL students?”  
- Introduction, ELL Support | “In virtually every part of the country, middle and high schools are now seeing expanding enrollments of students whose primary language is not English. Rising numbers of immigrants, other demographic trends, and the demands of an increasingly global economy make it clear that the nation can no longer afford to ignore the pressing needs of the ELLs in its middle and high schools who are struggling with reading, writing, and oral discourse in a new language” (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This series uses . . .</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Research says . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explicit Instruction | SB: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Part Two: Learn About the Strategy | Researchers Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) explain, “explicit instruction involves the overt, teacher-directed instruction of strategies, including direct explanation, modeling, and guided practice in the application of strategies” (p. 62). |
| Genre Instruction    | TG: Books C–H  
- In each lesson, Introduction, Genre Focus | “The instruction of the content and organization of stories thus improves comprehension of stories as measured by the ability of the reader to answer questions and recall what was read. This improvement is more marked for less able readers” (NICHD, 2000, pp. 4–45). |
| Graphic Organizers   | SB: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Part One: Think About the Strategy  
TG: Books K and AA  
- Refer to Part One: Skill Development section  
- In each lesson, Part Four: Build on What You Have Learned, Reteaching feature | “When students learn how to use and construct graphic organizers, they are in control of a study strategy that allows them to identify what parts of a text are important, how the ideas and concepts are related, and where they can find specific information to support more important ideas” (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 399). |
| Listening Comprehension | Series:  
- Book K uses listening activities and a selected few reading activities to teach reading strategies.  
- Books AA–H use both listening and reading activities, including the “shared reading” strategy to teach reading strategies. | “Teachers should emphasize text comprehension from the beginning, rather than waiting until students have mastered “the basics” of reading. Instruction at all grade levels can benefit from showing students how reading is a process of making sense out of text, or constructing meaning” (Armbruster & Lehr, 2001). |
| Multiple-Strategy Instruction | SB: Books C–H  
- After every third lesson, and at the end of each book, Review and Final Review sections | “Skilled reading involves the coordinated use of several cognitive strategies. Readers can learn and flexibly coordinate these strategies to construct meaning from text” (NICHD, 2000, pp. 4–77). |
| Prior-knowledge Activation | SB: Books AA–H  
- In each lesson, Part One: Think About the Strategy  
TG: Book K  
- In Part One: Skill Development section  
- Lesson Opener, Getting Started section | “Several meta-analyses and reviews of the research have found that direct, explicit instruction in such specific strategies as summarizing, identifying text structure and visual clues, calling on prior knowledge, and using graphic organizers improves students’ reading comprehension” (Biancarosa, 2005). |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Example</th>
<th>Research says . . .</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading-Strategy Instruction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Explicit and direct instruction of each core reading strategy occurs in order to gain meaning from text.</td>
<td>Series:&lt;br&gt;• Books K and AA introduce 6 core reading strategies.&lt;br&gt;• Book A introduces 8 core reading strategies.&lt;br&gt;• Books B–H introduce 12 core reading strategies.&lt;br&gt;TG:&lt;br&gt;• Understanding the Strategies&lt;br&gt;• Teacher’s Corner</td>
<td>Afllerbach, Pearson, &amp; Paris, (2008) explain that reading strategies are “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode texts, understand words, and construct meanings” (p. 368).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scaffolded Instruction</strong>&lt;br&gt;An instructional strategy in which gradual withdrawal of support occurs through modeled, guided, and independent instruction and practice.</td>
<td>SB: Books AA–H&lt;br&gt;• Part One: Think About the Strategy (Modeled Instruction)&lt;br&gt;• Part Two: Learn About the Strategy (Guided Instruction)&lt;br&gt;• Part Three: Check Your Understanding (Modeled Practice)&lt;br&gt;• Part Four: Build on What You Have Learned (Guided Practice)&lt;br&gt;• Part Five: Prepare for a Test (Independent Practice)</td>
<td>“There is virtually universal agreement that scaffolding plays an essential and vital role in fostering comprehension” (Clark &amp; Graves, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Reading</strong>&lt;br&gt;This is a reading activity where a teacher reads a story while students look at the text being read and follow along.</td>
<td>Series:&lt;br&gt;• Book K has several activities where students read silently as the teacher reads orally.&lt;br&gt;• Book AA uses shared reading as one of its core teaching strategies.</td>
<td>Routman (2000) lists several benefits of shared reading, especially for ELL students. Shared reading teaches multiple reading strategies; provides supportive context for reading; and helps children participate as readers (p. 34).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Test-taking Practice</strong>&lt;br&gt;Selected-response and constructed-response test questions are often used on state and national standardized tests.</td>
<td>SB: Books A–H, in each lesson, Part Five: Prepare for a Test&lt;br&gt;• Books A–H, Review and Final Reviews</td>
<td>Supon (2004) cites that researchers have determined that “Students of all levels of academic achievement and intellectual abilities can be affected by test anxiety.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme-based Instruction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Theme-based instruction integrates instruction of language and concepts with real-world scenarios and with cross-curricular subjects, such as social studies, science, and literature.</td>
<td>SB:&lt;br&gt;• In each lesson, the reading passages have social studies, science, or literary themes.&lt;br&gt;TG:&lt;br&gt;• Books K–H, Introduction&lt;br&gt;• Books A–H, Genre Focus&lt;br&gt;• Books K–H, Connecting with Literature</td>
<td>Bergeron, Wermuth, and Rudenga (1996) summarized that theme-based, integrated learning experiences engage young children in meaningful and functional literacy events, focus on real-life experiences by providing socially interactive settings, and provide an organizational framework for language acquisition.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

Students will learn to:
- Find the main idea by figuring out the most important idea in a reading passage.
- Identify when test questions are asking them to find main idea.

**GETTING STARTED**

**Introduce the Strategy**

Tell students that today they will learn how to find the main idea of a story.

**SAY:** Good readers know that the most important idea of a story tells what the story is mostly about. The most important idea is the main idea. You already know about main idea because you think about what is most important in the things that happen to you every day.

**Model the Strategy**

Introduce the strategy by describing a situation and asking students to think about what is happening.

**SAY:** You had a fun at a friend’s birthday party. You played games, got treats, and ate cake. Later, someone asks you, “How was the party?” What would you say?

Students will probably respond, “The party was fun,” or something similar. Point out to students that answer tells mostly about the party. Explain that this is an example of finding the main idea.

**ELL Support**

**Contractions**

Draw the chart below on the board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cannot</th>
<th>Do not</th>
<th>Did not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can’t</td>
<td>don’t</td>
<td>didn’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read aloud the words in each column. Point out to students that words in each column have the same meaning. The words on the bottom are called contractions. Contractions are usually two words that have been joined together to form one (cannot is one exception to this rule). The two words are shortened by an apostrophe.

For each contraction in the chart, show where letters have been dropped and an apostrophe put in its place. Tell students that as they read the stories in this lesson, they will find the contractions can’t (page 7), don’t, (page 11) and didn’t (page 13).

**Genre Focus**

**Short Fiction**

Define this genre for students. Explain that some stories are made up by the writer. The people and events that happen come from the writer’s imagination. Explain that every story has three parts—a beginning, a middle, and an ending.

You may choose to illustrate the story parts using a familiar tale, such as *The Three Little Pigs*. Explain that the beginning of a story tells something about the main characters. (The three pigs each build a house, one of straw, one of sticks, and one of bricks.) Explain that the middle part of the story is where most of the action takes place. (A wolf blows down the house of sticks and the house of straw. The frightened pigs all go to the house of bricks.) The ending of the story tells what finally happened. (The wolf couldn’t blow down the house of bricks and the pigs were safe.)

Students will read short fiction on pages 7, 10, 11, and 13.
Modeled Instruction

**FINDING MAIN IDEA**

**PART ONE: Think About the Strategy**

**What Is Main Idea?**
Stories and books all have a main idea. Movies and TV shows also have a main idea. The main idea is the most important idea. It tells what something is mostly about.

1. Write the name of your favorite book.
   **Sample response:** Nate the Great

2. Write one thing that happens in the book.
   **Sample response:** Nate’s friend asks him to find a missing picture.

3. Write what the book is mostly about.
   **Sample response:** Nate and his dog solve a mystery about a missing picture.

**Work with a Partner**
- Tell your partner about a TV show you have watched.
- Take turns telling each other what the TV show was mostly about.

**AT A GLANCE**
Students activate their background knowledge about finding main idea and then learn how to apply this strategy to a short reading passage.

**STEP BY STEP**

**Page 4**
- Tell students that today they will practice finding main idea.
- Read aloud the information at the top of the page.
- Direct students to respond to items 1–3.
- Discuss the student responses as a class.

**Work with a Partner**
- Organize students to work in pairs to complete the Work with a Partner activity.
- Encourage volunteers to share their main ideas with the class.

**Tip:** Tell students that they should be able to tell their partner what the TV show was mostly about using just one or two sentences.

**Page 5**
- Read aloud the information that precedes the reading passage.
- Have students follow along as you read the passage in the box.
- Guide students through steps 1–4 for completing the graphic organizer. Have students follow along as you read the steps aloud.
- Direct students to finish the main idea sentence.
- Discuss student responses.
- Be sure students have a clear understanding that the main idea of a passage tells what the passage is mostly about.

**Tip:** If students are having trouble completing the main idea sentence, read the three sentences in the boxes of the graphic organizer. Ask students when people usually wear these types of clothes. Guide them through completing the main idea sentence.
PART TWO: Learn About the Strategy

The most important idea in a story is called the main idea.

The main idea tells what a story is mostly or mainly about.

- The main idea is sometimes in the first sentence of a story.
- The main idea is sometimes in the last sentence of a story.

Read this story about dogs. As you read, think about the most important idea in the story.

A pet dog needs many things. A dog needs a soft bed. It also needs special food made for dogs and a dish for water. You might also want to give your dog a toy to play with. Dogs love to play.

The most important idea in the first sentence of the story.

The most important idea in the story is:

A pet dog needs many things.

Work with a Partner

• Talk about your answers to the questions.
• Tell why you chose your answers.
• Then talk about what you have learned so far about finding main idea.

Page 7

- Direct students to read the passage and answer the questions. Guide students as needed.
- Organize students to work in pairs to complete the Work with a Partner activity at the bottom of the page.
- When students have finished working in pairs, discuss the answers as a class.

Tip: If students are having trouble answering the questions, remind them to think about what the story is mostly about. Then point out that the main idea is often found in the first or last sentence.

Tip: Have students underline the main idea of the passage, which is found in the last sentence.
PART THREE: Check Your Understanding

Review

The main idea tells what a story is mostly or mainly about.
- The main idea is sometimes in the first sentence of a story.
- The main idea is sometimes in the last sentence of a story.

Read this story about cats. As you read, ask yourself, “What is the story mostly about?” Then answer the questions.

Cats come in many shapes and sizes. Some cats are wild cats. Other cats are house cats. Lions and tigers are wild cats. Wild cats live outside. House cats live inside with people.

Some house cats are gray, and some are white. Some are dark and some are light.
Many cats have stripes or patches.

3. What is the story mostly about?
   - Many cats have stripes or patches.
   - Cats come in many shapes and sizes.
   - Some cats are wild cats.

4. Where did you find the main idea?
   - in the first sentence
   - in the second sentence
   - in the last sentence

Tip: Explain that all of the ideas in the reading passage tell about the main idea: Cats come in many shapes and sizes. Point out one or two sentences from the story to illustrate this.

Teachers’ Corner

Readers may think that the most interesting idea in a passage is the main idea. This is not so. The most interesting idea of a passage can vary from person to person. What one person thinks is most interesting could be very different from what another person thinks. Main idea does not change from person to person. There can only be one main idea. Main idea always tells the same thing, no matter what the passage is about.
Guided Practice

Read the next part of the story about Max. Then answer the questions.

“Do you want my help?” Tim said, sadly.
“No,” Max said. He dipped his brush into some red paint.
“But if you want, you can paint a picture of your own.”
“Really?” said Tim. He was much happier now.
“Sure,” said Max. “I have lots of paper and extra brushes.”
“This sounds like fun,” said Tim. He sat down next to Max.
“It’s a lot more fun than painting a house,” said Max.

11. What is the main idea of this part of the story?
   - Tim asks if he can help Max paint.
   - Max asks if Tim wants to paint.
   - Tim feels sad that his friend does not need his help.

12. What is a good title for this part of the story?
   - “Left Out”
   - “Helping a Friend”
   - “Let’s Paint Together”

9: The ideas in the story tell mostly about how Max shares his things with Tim.
10: The ideas in the story tell you that Max is kind.
11: This part of the story is mostly about how Max lets Tim paint.
12: Since this part of the story is about the two boys, the best title is Let’s Paint Together.
Independent Practice

PART FIVE: Prepare for a Test

Test Tips
- A test question about the main idea may ask you what a story is mostly or mainly about.
- A test question about the main idea may ask you to choose the best name or the best title for a story. A good title tells something about the main idea of a story.

Read this story about feathers. Then answer questions about the story. Choose the best answer for Numbers 13 and 14.

Feathers are important for birds. Feathers are warmer than fur. Birds fluff up their feathers on cold days. This keeps them warm.

About once a year, birds get new feathers. The old feathers fall out. New ones grow in their place.

13. The story tells mainly about
   - how birds keep warm.
   - why feathers are important.
   - what kind of animals have fur.

14. What is the best title for the story?
   - “All About Birds”
   - “Feathers and Fur”
   - “Birds and Their Feathers”

15. What is the main idea of the story?
   - Not all fish come from a lake.
   - New pets need a lot of care.
   - A girl gets a fish for a pet.

16. What is another good name for the story?
   - “The New Pet”
   - “The Silly Question”
   - “The Fish from the Lake”

Finding Main Idea

AT A GLANCE

Students practice answering questions about finding main idea that might appear on a reading test.

STEP BY STEP

Pages 12–13
- Point out the Test Tips to students and explain that these tips will help them answer test questions.
- Tell students to read and complete pages 12–13.
- Discuss correct responses as a class.

Connecting with Literature

Read a short picture book with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. Ask students to use one sentence to describe what happens in the beginning of the story, one sentence to describe what happens in the middle, and one sentence to describe what happens in the ending. (You may even have students draw what happens in these story parts.) Together, use what happens in these three story parts to figure out the main idea of the story.