

## Grades 1-3 Identifying a Main Idea and Supporting Details Interactive Read Aloud or Guided Reading Lesson

### OBJECTIVE

The student will listen to a nonfiction text read aloud (or read the text with guidance) and synthesize, orally and in writing, the ideas in the text including identifying one or more of the author's main ideas and supporting details.

### MATERIALS

- one copy (or set for group) of *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (Jenkins & Page, 2008)
- blank piece of paper and pencil for each student

### PROCEDURES

<b>PHASE 1 MEET THE SOURCE</b>
<b>1. Introduce source and preview.</b> Introduce the book's title and present the cover. Pose the question, "What do you think this book will be about?" and "What on the cover page makes you think so?" If needed, engage in similar questioning as you present the first couple of pages of the book.
<b>2. Read aloud or coach students as they read.</b> If you are reading aloud the book, you might stop at various points and ask, "What did you learn on this page?" Lean in to small groups as they discuss. If your students are reading this book on their own, listen to individuals read and then check their comprehension with a similar question. If a student or small group is not recalling details or thinking about the bigger ideas in the text, engage in a shared think aloud, where you make sense of the text together.
<b>3. Discuss.</b> Pose a question like one of the following: "What did you learn about animals that is new information to you?" and "Why do you think the author wrote this book?" Notice whether the students seem to have a firm grasp on the details and whether they are able to articulate a central idea in the book. This will help you determine whether the Phase 2 plan below is needed or which sections of the book you might use during that lesson.

<b>PHASE 2 MEET THE STRATEGIES</b>
<b>1. Introduce the strategies and model.</b> Introduce the concept of synthesis (specifically, identifying a main idea) by stating the <i>what</i> , <i>why</i> , and <i>how</i> of synthesis. You might say the following: <i>In this lesson, we are going to revisit the book "What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?" by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page and think about it in a special way. Let me explain.</i> (The WHAT) <i>Readers know that a main idea is the most important point or thought in a source or a section of a source. A main idea may be stated clearly by the author or the main idea may be revealed in important details the author includes.</i>  (The WHY) <i>Identifying the main idea can help you remember what you read, heard, or saw in a source that is important. This knowledge can help you change or add to what you know about the world.</i>  (The HOW) <i>You can figure out an author's main idea by asking yourself three questions as you read, view, listen to a source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What are important details in this source?</i></li><li>• <i>How are these details all connected?</i></li><li>• <i>What does this make me think the main idea is?</i></li></ul>

*You might have to use information from the source and your background knowledge about the world to help you answer these questions. This process is called synthesis!*

*Let's think about the book now.*

At this point, post or share a two-page layout from the book and **think aloud** about what you learned, the connections between the details and what you think the main idea is OR move into a **shared think aloud** and say the following: *Let's start by just thinking about some of the facts we learned in the book. What did you learn that was interesting?*

Engage the students in a discussion about facts they learned. Return to a particular page, read aloud (or ask students to reread independently) and then talk about their learning.

Then pose the question, *How are all of these details connected? What do they reveal about the animals?* As you discuss, lead into the next question: *So what does this make us think is a main idea in this book?*

**Examples of main ideas in this book include:**

- Animals use physical features like their feet and tails in different ways. (Stated on the first page of text.)
- Animals use physical features to help them survive.
- Animals use physical features in ways that might be unexpected or different from how humans use the same feature.
- Animals share similar physical features. Sometimes they use these features in similar ways and sometimes they do not.

If your students need an **additional scaffold** for what it means to “synthesize” information, see my explanation of the [framed photo analogy](#) in a blog entry I wrote.

**2. Guided and independent practice.** If you are reading aloud this book, present another two-page layout from the book. Read the text aloud. Ask students to turn and talk first about what they learned. Then ask them to talk about what they think the author's main idea is and why they think so. Lean in to listen to partners discuss. Ask a few pairs to share out. (They may be repeating the same main idea from the previous step in this lesson. That's okay.) Follow this same procedure for an additional two-page layout. If students are rereading their own copy of this book, follow a similar procedure, engaging in conferences with individual students as they read.

**3. Discuss.** Pose a question like one of the following: “What else did you learn about animals today?” and “What did you learn about how we identify main ideas?”

**PHASE 3 MEET THE RESPONSE**

**1. Introduce the prompt and plan.** Pose the prompt, “What do you think one of the author's main ideas is in this book?” Provide a sticky note for each student to jot down a main idea. (An alternative is to generate a main idea statement together.) Ask students to share with a partner some of the details they think they will include in their response.

**2. Coach students as they write and illustrate a response.**  
See sample student response and analysis.

**3. Provide an opportunity for students to share their responses in small groups.**

