

Name: _____

Reading Comprehension

Main Idea Notes and Strategies

What is **MAIN IDEA**?

Everything you read has a **main idea** – books, short stories, and so on. A movie or television show tells a story that has a main idea.

How do you *locate* the **MAIN IDEA**?

You can find the main idea of *most* reading passages in the **first** or **last sentence** of the passage.

Read the passage below:

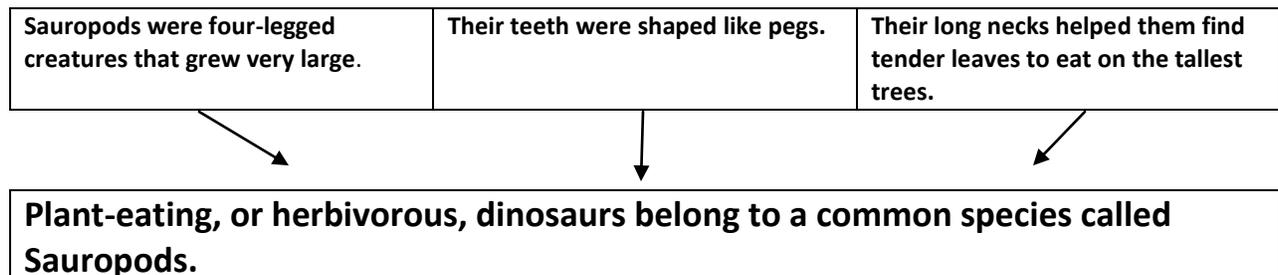
Plant-eating, or herbivorous, dinosaurs belong to a common species called Sauropods. Sauropods were four-legged creatures that grew very large. Their teeth were shaped like pegs. Their long necks helped them find tender leaves to eat on the tallest trees.



Think about the **most important** idea in the passage.

Let's find the main idea.

Look at the web below. The sentences in the small rectangles tell about the main idea, but they do not tell the **most important idea** in the passage.



Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea Map

MAIN IDEA

IDEA IDEA

Detail Detail Detail Detail

© This printable graphic organizer is from www.teachmeanalogy.com

The sentence in the large rectangle is the **most important idea**. This sentence tells what the passage is mostly about. The **main idea** is found in the **first sentence** of the passage.

REMEMBER: The main idea identifies the topic and states the most important idea about it.

- Read the **first sentence** of the paragraph. The main idea is sometimes found here.
- Read the **last sentence** of the paragraph. The main idea is sometimes found here.
- The main idea is sometimes not found in any one sentence. You can identify the main idea by thinking about all the different ideas you have read about. **Ask yourself, “Which idea is the most important in the paragraph?”**

WHAT ABOUT TEST QUESTIONS??

- A test question about the main idea may ask you what a reading passage is **mostly** or **mainly** about.
- A test question about the main idea may ask you to **identify** the main topic of a reading passage.
- A test question about the main idea may ask you to choose the best title for a reading passage. **A good title** often identifies the **main idea**.

Quick Example:

Kids who like to get muddy should visit Westland, Michigan. The city hosts an annual celebration called Mud Day in Hines Park. It must be a sloppy mess. The parks department mixes more than 200 tons of soil and 20,000 gallons of water to make mud. That’s a lot of mud! There are events such as a Mud Limbo contest, wheelbarrow races and just plain splashing around. Two participants are crowned Mr. and Miss Mud. When the fun is over firefighters hose down the dirty kids.

A title that **best summarizes** the **main idea** in this paragraph is

- a. What to Do in Westland, Michigan
- b. Muddy Day in Michigan
- c. Enter the Mud Limbo Contest
- d. Crowning Muddy Kid

