

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

REM 484

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Finding Topics in Sentences

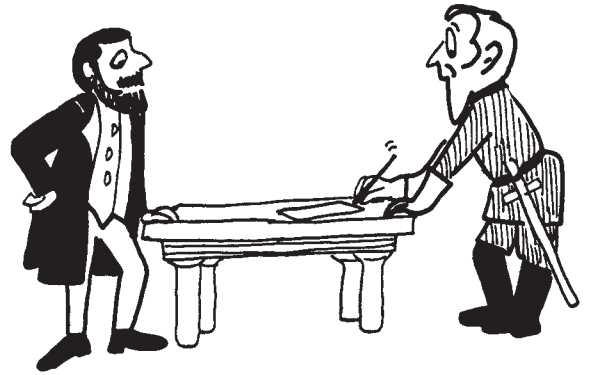
In each of the following sentences, find 1-3 words that tell the main idea of the sentence. Then circle the best choice given.

Example:

The Pilgrims left Plymouth, England, on the Mayflower in September of 1620.

- a. Mayflower **b. Pilgrim's trip** c. Plymouth

This sentence could have come from a paragraph about boats or old cities in England. However, it is most likely that it was talking about Pilgrims because it tells in the sentence what the Pilgrims *did*.



The Pilgrims are also people that you may know about. They are more important to our history than the town they came from or the ship on which they traveled. The important idea here is that the Pilgrims came to America, not where they came from or how they got here.

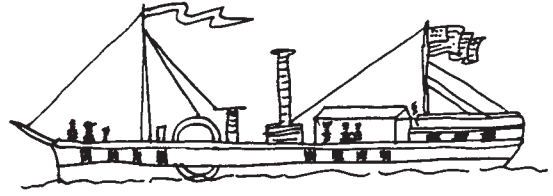
Your knowledge, along with the way the sentence is written, can help you tell what the topic of a sentence is. Use these ideas to work the following exercises.

1. President Lincoln was shot April 14, 1865, at Ford's Theater, by an actor named Booth.
a. Booth shoots b. Lincoln shot c. Ford's Theater
2. The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France to the United States, was dedicated by President Cleveland.
a. Statue of Liberty b. gift from France c. President Cleveland's dedication
3. President John Kennedy was shot and killed by an assassin in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.
a. Shooting in Texas b. Dallas, Texas c. President Kennedy killed
4. In 1865, Robert E. Lee surrendered 27,800 Confederate troops to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House.
a. Confederates surrender b. General Grant c. Appomattox Court House

Name _____

Finding Topics in Sentences

In each of the following sentences, find 1-4 words that tell the main idea of the sentence. Then circle the best choice given.

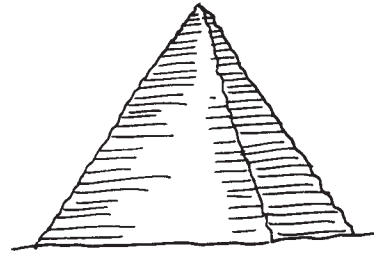


1. The first atomic bombs were dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945.
 - a. first atomic bombs
 - b. United States bomb
 - c. Japan
2. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, killing 2,300 people, the United States declared war on Japan.
 - a. war
 - b. Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
 - c. Japanese attack
3. In 1796, George Washington gave a farewell speech as President, warning about big public debt and a large military.
 - a. warnings
 - b. George Washington's farewell speech
 - c. large public debt and military
4. At Haymarket Square in Chicago, Illinois, a bomb killed seven policemen.
 - a. Haymarket Square
 - b. Chicago
 - c. Haymarket Square bombing
5. The first successful steamboat trip was made by Robert Fulton in the "Clermont."
 - a. Robert Fulton
 - b. the "Clermont"
 - c. first successful steamboat trip
6. In 1666, the Great Fire of London destroyed much of that city.
 - a. London
 - b. fires
 - c. Great Fire of London
7. During the American Revolution, Paul Revere warned people when the British were coming.
 - a. American Revolution
 - b. Paul Revere
 - c. British
8. St. Peter's Church in Rome, decorated by artists such as Michelangelo and da Vinci, was begun in 1506 and finished in 1626.
 - a. St. Peter's Church
 - b. Rome
 - c. artists

Name _____

Finding Topics in Sentences

In each of the following sentences, find 1-5 words that tell the main idea of the sentence. Then circle the best choice given.



1. Eric the Red established the first Viking colony in the icy country of Greenland in 982.
a. Greenland: first Viking colony b. Greenland: icy colony c. Eric the Red
2. In 1972, eleven Israeli athletes were killed by Arab terrorists at the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany.
a. Olympic Games b. terrorists c. Israeli athletes killed
3. In 1969, the Apollo 11 astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Ed Aldrin, and Michael Collins, were the first people to walk on the moon.
a. moon b. Apollo 11 c. first people on moon
4. John Glenn, who was the first person to orbit the earth in 1962, later became a member of Congress.
a. John Glenn b. orbiting the earth c. Congress
5. The voting age in the United States was lowered from 21 to 18 by the 26th Amendment to the Constitution.
a. Constitutional Amendments b. 26th Amendment lowers voting age c. voting age
6. The "Seven Wonders of the World" include the pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and a bronze statue of Helios called the "Colossus."
a. famous places b. Egyptian places to visit c. Seven Wonders of the World
7. The Taj Mahal in India was built by a Shah for his wife's tomb and is thought by many to be the most beautiful building in the world.
a. tombs b. India c. Taj Mahal
8. The 1,400-mile-long Great Wall of China was built over 2000 years ago to defend the Chinese against warring tribes.
a. Chinese b. Great Wall of China c. tribes

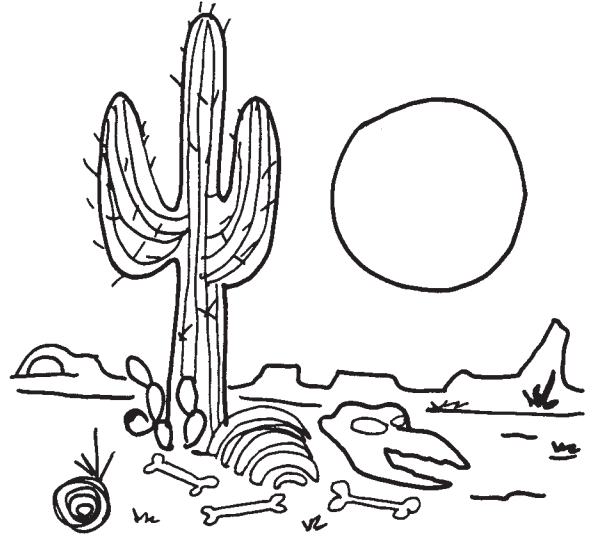
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Finding the Main Idea in a Sentence

In each of the following sentences, tell the main idea of the sentence in six words or less. Write your answer on the line below each sentence.

1. The first skyscraper, the Home Insurance Company building, was only 10 stories high, but was the first building to use the steel skeleton construction that made later skyscrapers possible.

2. The Vatican in Rome is a group of buildings in which the pope of the Catholic church lives.



3. The amphitheater called the Colosseum of Rome seated over 40,000 people and was used to watch the gladiators fight.

4. While China, with 1,221,000,000 people, had the largest population in 1997 it is expected that by the year 2100, India will have the greatest number of people — 1,631,800,000.

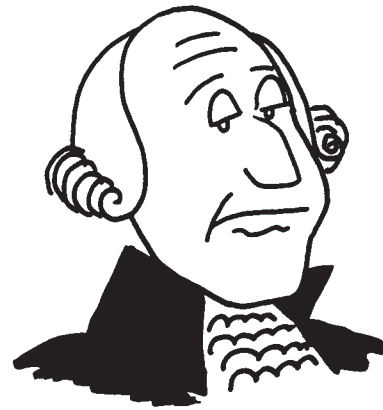
5. Cuba, the largest island in the West Indies, lies only 90 miles south of Florida and is ruled by the communist leader, Fidel Castro.

6. Botswana, like Arizona, is mostly desert or near-desert, but this African country is twice the size of Arizona and has only about one-third of the population of Arizona.

Name _____

Finding the Main Idea in a Sentence

In each of the following sentences, tell the main idea of the sentence in six words or less. Write your answer on the line below each sentence.



1. The United Kingdom is made up of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and is ruled by Queen Elizabeth II.

2. On January 28, 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded 73 seconds after lift-off, killing all seven crew members.

3. In 1867, the United States bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million.

4. George Washington was chosen to be the first President of the United States in 1867, after leading the colonists in their war against the British.

5. In June of 1924, Congress approved a law making all Indians citizens of the United States.

6. During the Civil War, many slaves escaped to the North through the Underground Railway, a series of safe houses in which slaves were hidden.

7. California was one of the first areas west of the Mississippi to be settled because it could be reached by water and because of its gold.
