

MAIN IDEA = THE TOPIC + WHAT ABOUT IT

A **main idea** is...

- It's a one-sentence summary of the original text, thus it is *even* shorter than the summary.
- It's a summary of the summary.
- It DOES include the topic of the text, but that is NOT the main idea. (Many texts are written about that same topic— but they all have different main ideas.)
- The main idea is a single sentence that names the topic AND reveals what about that topic this text is going to communicate.

...**what**...

Texts can be written about...

a *what*,
a *who*,
a *where*,
a *when*.

Specifically, the topic could be...

- An individual person (MLK, Thomas Edison) or a group of people (senators, settlers).
- A place (rural, Antarctica, Great Plains) or time period (Colonial time period/era).
- A thing (the printing press, a garden) or an idea/concept (electricity, seasons).
- An event from the past (First Thanksgiving, American Revolution) or a holiday (Veteran's Day) or a recurring event (Earth Day).

...the text is **mostly** about.

Mostly refers to quantity!

- Literally, the majority of the sentences and their details are about this specific, smaller facet of a broader subject.
- If the main idea is what a text is “mostly” about, then MOST of the sentences should fit it.
- However, “mostly” does not mean ALL. Therefore expect some details and a few sentences to NOT FIT or be represented by the main-idea sentence.
- *Mostly* also means “most of” the text as a whole. Sentences and details within the beginning and the middle and the end fit this main idea.