

AN EMERGING WORLD POWER
Reading Strategy

Main Ideas and Details

The main idea is the main point in a paragraph or other text. To identify the main idea, first read any titles, headings, or subheadings. As you read the text that comes after a heading, ask yourself, "What is this mostly about?" Sometimes the main idea is stated clearly at the beginning of the passage. Other times it comes later or is only implied.

Details give information about the main idea and help you understand it better. They are sometimes called "supporting details" because they tell you more about, or support, the main idea. Details include facts, examples, and reasons. Being able to identify the main idea and supporting details will help you understand what you read.

Read the following paragraph:

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the United States began to increase its global involvement. In 1853, a U.S. naval fleet sailed into Tokyo Bay, Japan. A few years later, in 1867, the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. In 1893, the United States supported a revolt in Hawaii and the establishment of a pro-U.S. government.

The main idea of this paragraph is that the United States increased its global involvement at the end of the nineteenth century. The details about Japan, Alaska, and Hawaii support this main idea.

Directions: *Read the following paragraph. Then answer the questions below.*

For imperial powers such as the United States, colonies provided many benefits. Control of colonial ports gave important trade and military advantages to imperial powers. Colonies also were a source of raw materials for the factories at home. They provided markets for the finished goods produced in those factories. By the late 1800s, the U.S. economy was producing more goods than Americans could consume.

Hint: List the details in the paragraph. Then summarize them to determine the main idea.

1. What is the main idea of this paragraph?

2. List two details from the paragraph that support the main idea.

3. Underline the sentence from the paragraph that is NOT a supporting detail.