



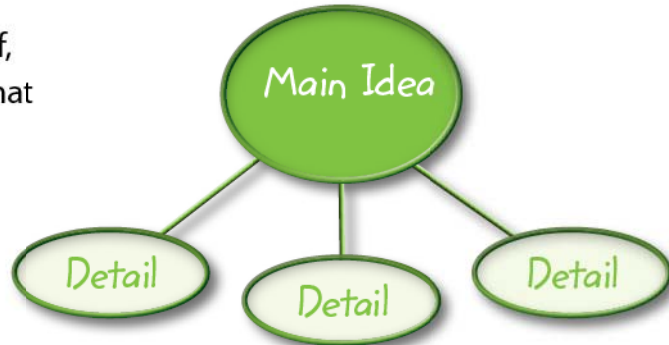
Identify Main Ideas and Details

To find the main idea of a text, ask yourself, “What is the big idea?” The main idea is what the text is all about. The details support, explain, and/or describe the main idea.

As you read, these questions can help you identify the main idea of the text.

- ✓ **What is the passage mostly about?**
- ✓ **What does the author want me to know or think about this topic?**
- ✓ **What details does the author use to back up his or her main point?**

The main idea can be a topic sentence in a paragraph. Details supporting that main idea follow the topic sentence. Finally, the paragraph ends with a sentence that restates the main idea. When you read a longer passage, the organization is much the same.



Don't Forget!

Pay close attention to text features such as:

- ✓ **titles, headings, and subheadings**
- ✓ **bold, italic, and underlined print**
- ✓ **graphics such as pictures, charts, and other diagrams**

These features can help you zoom in on the main idea of the passage!

Explore More

You have been assigned to read about an event that is of interest to you. Reading about the caged tiger in *The Tiger Rising* has sparked your interest. You decide to find out more about animals kept in zoos and circuses.

Do It!

One interesting article you find is on the next page. If you identify the main idea of the article and the important details, you will feel better prepared to present this current event to the class.

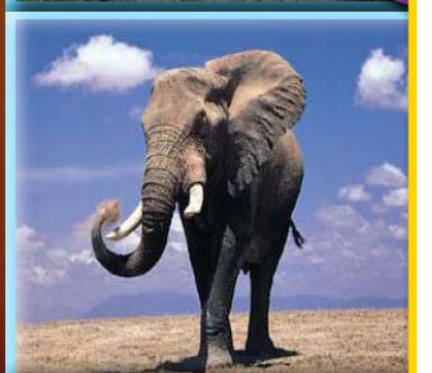


Read the web article carefully. Then, answer the questions that follow on the next page.



THE GREAT ZOO DEBATE:

Farewell to the Elephants?



Many zoos around the country and around the world are thinking about closing their elephant exhibits, if they have not already done so. It's not that these great animals fail to bring in crowds at the zoo. In fact, elephants have always seemed to be some of the most popular animals at the zoo! But many people are asking themselves an important question. Should we keep elephants confined in zoos?

Over the years, zoo workers and scientists have worked together to create homes that are as close to the natural habitats of their animals as possible. But the fact is, at least for elephants, they just don't have enough space—or, enough elephants—to copy their homes in the wild. In the wild, elephants live in large groups, surrounded by lots of wide open space. They roam together over long distances. Those who support the closing of elephant exhibits argue that elephants should not have to live as they do in zoos. Compared to the wild, they say, their zoo homes are small and cramped.

Nearly 300 Asian and African elephants now live in zoos across the United States. But, studies have shown that the population of elephants in zoos is in decline. This means that not enough elephants are being born in zoos to replace the elephants that die. Many people who study and work with elephants worry about whether their zoo homes give these animals what they need in order to breed.

Not everyone agrees with the view that we should say goodbye to elephants at the zoo. Many believe that with improvements made to zoo homes, breeding programs, and care, elephants can continue to live in zoos across the world. They also argue that elephants in the zoo live in safe homes. In addition to being cared for, people are there to study and learn more about elephants. In the wild, both Asian and African elephants are endangered. But their lives are probably happier.

If some of these zoo exhibits are closed, where will the elephants go? Elephants could be sent to live at large open reserves and conservation centers. There, in these protected environments, the elephants could be studied, bred, and have plenty of wide open space in which to roam. They could live much more like they would in their natural homes in the wild. Perhaps elephants could have the best of both worlds!



Answer the following questions about the article you just read.

1. Using three or four words only, tell what the passage is mostly about.

2. Number each paragraph in the article. Now, go through the article and underline 1-2 sentences in each paragraph that you think represent the main idea of that paragraph. Put a star next to 1-2 important details that support each main idea.

3. In which paragraph did you find the main idea of the entire article? _____

4. What do you think is the main idea that the author is trying to get across in the entire article?

5. Which paragraph talks about those who do not believe that elephants should leave zoos? _____

6. Which paragraph talks about how elephants' homes in zoos are different from the natural habitats of elephants in the wild? _____

7. List one detail in paragraph 4 that is NOT important to supporting the main idea in this paragraph.

Write the main idea of the article "The Great Zoo Debate: Farewell to the Elephants?" in the center. Then write the important details that support the main ideas.

