

299



READING
FOR
THE MAIN IDEA



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1983

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Eng. 212: Reading for the Main Idea

Course Description

Reading of selected passages which have more difficult vocabulary and more complicated syntactic structures than those given in Eng. 211. Students must be able to identify both the main idea and supporting details of any given passage.

Contents

1. Recognizing the topic of a paragraph
2. Recognizing the main idea
3. Where to find the main idea
4. How the main idea appears in a paragraph
5. Recognizing the main idea and its major details
6. Recognizing the main idea and its major and minor details
7. Recognizing the thesis of longer selections

Note

Course description for Eng. 211: Reading for Comprehension

Reading of selected passages. Students must be able to comprehend the various types of grammatical structures and know how to guess the meanings of difficult words from the context.

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READING FOR THE MAIN IDEA

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สำนักหอสมุดกลาง มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ

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Preface

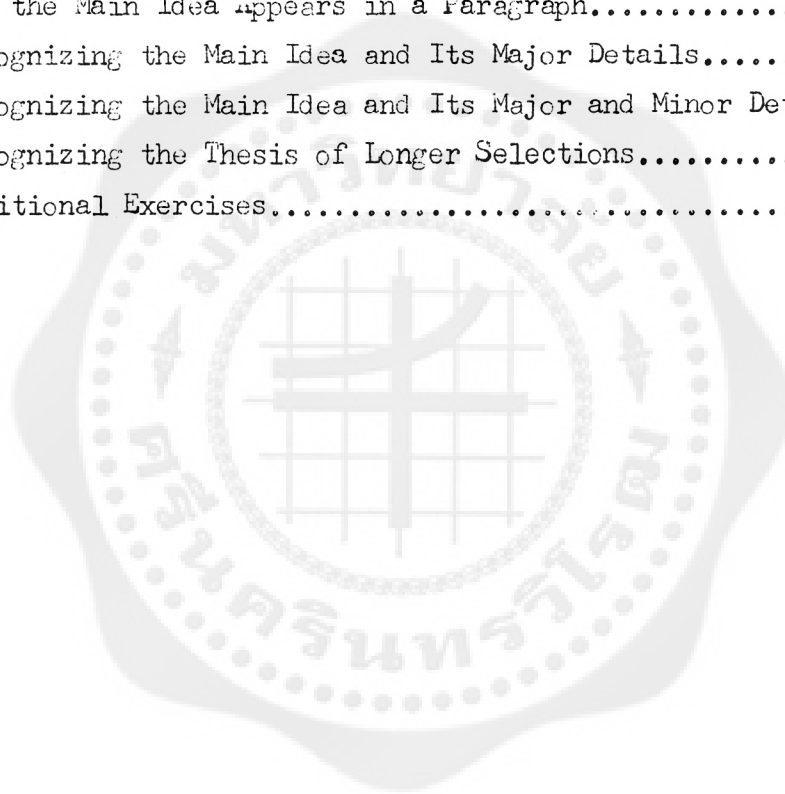
In our daily living, we encounter one kind or another of reading activities. We read for a variety of purposes: in some materials we merely glance through for general ideas; in others we look carefully for the focal points and their accompanying details. Still in others we read in order to make a critical evaluation and judgment. Each requires a different reading technique.

Reading for the main idea is one of the reading activities that we most frequently do in our reading. In this, we endeavor to look for the essential meaning or the general import of the reading material. The main idea of the reading material may be stated or it may be implied. If it is stated, it can be in any position in the paragraph. If it is implied, then the reader must read between the lines and make an inference. Helpful information is given in this book. Also exercises are given so that the reader can practice on his own. The materials have been taken from a wide variety of sources. Some have been adapted and modified; some are presented as in their originals. The compiler hopes this book will be of use, in one way or another, to the reader, and any suggestion for revision and improvement is gratefully welcome.

Kanchit Tagong

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	ii
I. Recognizing the Topic of a Paragraph.....	1
II. Recognizing the Main Idea.....	16
III. Where to Find the Main Idea.....	31
IV. How the Main Idea appears in a Paragraph.....	47
V. Recognizing the Main Idea and Its Major Details.....	62
VI. Recognizing the Main Idea and Its Major and Minor Details...	78
VII. Recognizing the Thesis of Longer Selections.....	95
VIII. Additional Exercises.....	111



I

RECOGNIZING THE TOPIC OF A PARAGRAPH

Every well-organized informative paragraph talks about only one thing or one subject. That one thing or one subject is called the topic of a paragraph. Every sentence in the paragraph tells or asks something about this topic.

In reading one should try to identify the topic of the reading material first because the topic will help one to understand the reading selection better. In finding the topic of a paragraph, one should glance through the material and try to determine what the topic is. The topic is usually inclusive, that is, it embraces or includes all of the information which is mentioned or which may not be mentioned in the paragraph. Usually an informative paragraph contains a sentence which announces or even names the topic of the paragraph as it says something about that topic. Such a sentence is called the topic sentence. Sometimes the topic sentence is the first one in the paragraph. Sometimes it is the last sentence; in some instances it is the one in or near the middle of the paragraph. Usually the word or phrase that appears most frequently in the paragraph will signify to us that the topic is going to be about the idea contained in that word or phrase.

Consider what is meant by the term the topic of a paragraph. As you read the following lines, think **what** each sentence is talking about:

(1) An elephant's foot is almost round. (2) Elephants found in India have five nails on each front foot and four on each hind foot. (3) Those found in Africa have four nails on each front foot and five on each hind foot. (4) Under the bones of each foot is a pad that acts as a cushion. (5) An elephant's great weight of several tons makes his foot swell as he stands, but when he holds a foot up or lies down, the swelling goes down.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. An Elephant | c. The Height of An Elephant |
| b. Nails of An Elephant | d. An Elephant's foot |

Sentence 1 of the above paragraph tells the shape of an elephant's foot. Sentences 2 and 3 tell the number of nails on an elephant's foot. Sentence 4 tells that there is a pad on an elephant's foot. Sentence 5 tells what makes an elephant's foot swell and when that swelling goes down. You can see that every sentence in the paragraph says something about an elephant's foot. Therefore, the topic of this paragraph is an elephant's foot. Choice a is not correct because it is too broad or too general. Choice b is too specific because it is mentioned as part of an elephant's foot only. Choice c is irrelevant because the paragraph does not mention about the height of an elephant at all.

In the example given above, the topic is contained in the first sentence. As mentioned above, the topic may occur in any other sentence in the paragraph; it may occur in the last sentence or in the one near the middle of the paragraph. Consider the following example:

Colonial children engaged in different games and sports. Boys and girls both played tag, croquet, and chess. The boys took part in wrestling, boxing, racing, and swimming contests. Young men and girls had time for fun too. They held husking bees at which, along with the husking of corn, there was much singing and dancing. During the winter, ice skating and sleighing were popular with these young folk. Indeed people of all ages in most of the colonies had various ways of amusing themselves. Even the adults found time for play. The men and women held dances and gave receptions, teas, and card parties. A favorite recreation of the older men was bowling or playing ten pins on smooth green lawns. One game that the boys played was much like the game we call soccer.

The topic of this paragraph is.....

- a. Amusements
- b. Colonial Children's Games and Sports
- c. Colonial Festivals
- d. Amusements of Colonial People

In the example given above, you will notice that the first three sentences tell us about the many different games and sports that colonial

children played. The next three sentences give us further information about the ways that young people in colonial days entertained themselves. The seventh sentence tells us that colonial people of all ages had various ways of amusing themselves, and the last two sentences which follow immediately give examples of what adults did to amuse or entertain themselves. Therefore, the topic sentence is the seventh sentence and the topic of the paragraph is the ways that colonial people entertained themselves or d. Choice a is not correct because it is too broad. Choice b is too specific since the paragraph also mentions the games and sports of young people and of the adults. Choice c is irrelevant since the paragraph does not say anything about festivals held by colonial people at all.

The topic of a paragraph may be expressed in the last sentence of the paragraph. In such cases, all the sentences preceding the topic sentence will give supporting details to the topic. Consider the example below:

Some settlers who moved from the East to the West many years ago came because they could get new rich land at little cost. Often this land was free, just for taking. Sometimes the price was no higher than one dollar an acre. Other settlers came to escape trouble. Such trouble may have been hard times that made it difficult to earn a living in the East. It may have been illness which could not be overcome in the eastern climate. A number of people joined the settlers to provide service to them. Among these were ministers and doctors. Then too there were traders who traveled from settlement to settlement selling all kinds of goods. Thus there were several reasons why people from the East settled in the West to make new homes for themselves.

The topic of this paragraph is.....

- a. How People Moved to the West
- b. Why People Settled in the West
- c. The Settlement in the West
- d. Why Ministers and Doctors Moved to the West

In the paragraph given above, the topic is contained in the last sentence. This sentence tells us that people moved from the East to settle in the West for many different reasons. All the sentences pre-

ceding this sentence tell us about those reasons. Therefore, the answer is b. Choice a is not correct because the paragraph does not tell us how the people got to the west. Choice c is too broad whereas choice d is too specific.

However, it is not always true that every paragraph has a topic sentence--the sentence that announces or names the topic of that paragraph. Some paragraphs may not have topic sentences in them. In such cases, we have to supply the topics to those paragraphs ourselves. Consider the following example:

Cats are from fourteen to sixteen inches long. They have soft fur, and they can see well in very dim light. They walk so quietly that you cannot hear them. They have five toes on each front foot and four on each hind foot. Each toe has a sharp claw that can be drawn back into a sheath. A full-grown cat has thirty teeth.

The topic of this paragraph is.....

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| a. Cats | c. Habits of Cats |
| b. How Cats Walk | d. The Physical Characteristics of Cats |

In the foregoing paragraph you can see that every sentence says something about cats, but the topic cats is too broad and it cannot be the topic of the paragraph. There is only one sentence that tells us about how cats walk; other sentences do not talk about the walking of cats. Therefore, "How Cats Walk" cannot be the topic of this paragraph because it is too specific. Similarly, there is no single sentence in the paragraph that describes the habits of a cat. It is irrelevant to say that the topic is "Habits of Cats". But the whole paragraph, we see, describes the characteristics of a cat. Thus, the topic is "The Physical Characteristics of Cats."

Exercise 1

Select the answer which best describes the phrase as a summary of the topic of the paragraph you have just read.

Paragraph 1

Why go to a university? Some people go to a university for specialized training. They go to learn about medicine or law or engineering

or nursing, and so on. They are preparing for particular jobs. Other people go to a university to learn as much as they can about the world and the people around them. They want a general education, and they hope that this education will make them better people. They want to enjoy and contribute to human civilization. Other people go to a university because they want the honor of a university degree. And, of course, there are some people who go to a university because they do not have anything else to do.

1. Attending a University

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

2. Why People Attend a University

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

3. Attending a University for Specialized Training

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

4. How to Study in a University

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

Paragraph 2

If a North American makes an appointment with someone in an office, such as a professor, a manager, or an official, for 11:00 A.M., she will probably arrive in the office early--maybe about five minutes before eleven. She will tell the secretary that she has arrived for her 11:00 appointment, and she will wait. She will wait comfortably for five or ten minutes. But, after ten minutes, she will become uncomfortable and a little annoyed. On the other hand, if a Latin American makes an appointment with someone for 11:00 A.M., he may not arrive in the office until 11:15 or 11:30. He will not be surprised if he has to wait until 11:45. The idea of what is early and what is late differs from culture to culture.

1. Man's Idea Towards Time

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

2. The Idea Towards Time of North American People

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

3. The Differences In the Idea of Time between North and South American People

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

4. How to Make An Appointment

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

Paragraph 3

In the United States, most old people do not live with their children or relatives. If they have enough money, they buy houses or apartments in places where other old people live. If they are not healthy and strong enough to live alone, they live in special homes for old people. There, strangers take care of them. For many North Americans, old age is not a happy time. Most North Americans want to stay young. They try to stay thin and they act like young people as long as possible. They even try to speak the language of the young. They do not like to grow old because they will not get honor or respect or attention. Also, businesses do not want old people to work for them. So, old people usually live alone and they do not have many things to do. Old age can be a sad and lonely time for them.

1. Old age

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

2. Where Old People in North America Live

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

3. Old age in North America

- a. too general
- b. too specific
- c. the topic
- d. irrelevant

4. Jobs for Old People

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

Paragraph 4

Many people are concerned about the future because they know that it will be very different from the past. For thousands of years, the lives of human beings did not change much. People lived in small communities. The son did the same work as the father, and the father did the same work as the grandfather. In the past fifty years, however, life has changed dramatically. Today most people live in big cities. The son has a job that didn't exist a few years ago. The grandfather used a horse for transportation. The father uses a car. The son uses a plane. The grandfather got news when someone came on a horse and told him the news. The father got his news from the radio. The son watches television and sees the news as it happens. The grandfather grew his own food. The grandson gets his food frozen, canned, or dried. Because life has changed so dramatically, people are worried about a future that may bring even more change.

1. The Changes in Life

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

2. The concern for the Future

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

3. The Differences Between Life in the Past and Life at Present

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

4. Living in a Modern World

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

Paragraph 5

The robot is with us already. Robot devices have appeared quite innocently and we are so familiar with them that we no longer even notice their existence. We drive along the road and we obey the signals given to us by the robot traffic signals which replace the policeman waving his

arms. One thing that amuses foreigners when they are in England is that the Englishman still obeys the signals given by these robots at two a.m., when there is little or no traffic on the roads. In the kitchen the housewife passes on some of her chores to her robot washing machine and to her robot dish-washer. We make a telephone call to Europe, and the switching is completely handled by robots. In some cases programs produced by a computer are being used to control the operation of machine tools in the factory.

1. The Robots

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

2. Where Robots are Used

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

3. The Invention of Robot Machines

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

4. The Existence of Robots in Our Daily Living

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. too general | c. the topic |
| b. too specific | d. irrelevant |

Paragraph 6

The American custom of sending children away to camp during the vacation months is in complete contrast to the traditional British style of handling these early experiences away from home. For in England, parents who can afford to do so send their children to boarding school for what they regard as the cold and miserable, hard-working, character-forming part of the year, and they bring the children back to spend care-free holidays at home. In the United States, the parents keep their children at home during the winter months so that the children concentrate on their studying, and send them away during the pleasant summer holidays. The practice is different because the American and British ideas of "home" are different. In England home is where you want to be. Informality and familiarity are centered on home. Coming home is coming to the heart of things. For Americans, home is essentially the place from which you start

out. Home is a beginning. It is a place to eat and sleep and study and rest--and get ready. For children it is a kind of launching pad into the future.

1. The Custom of Sending Children to Camp
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. the topic
 - d. irrelevant
2. The American Custom of Sending Children to Camp
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. the topic
 - d. irrelevant
3. The Contrast between the American and the British Customs of Sending Children to Camp
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. the topic
 - d. irrelevant
4. American and British Child Rearing Practices
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. the topic
 - d. irrelevant

Exercise 2

Read each paragraph below and then answer the questions which follow it. Mark (X) on a, b, c, or d for question number 1; write the answer for the question number 2.

Paragraph 1

Researchers have discovered that eye movements are linked to dreaming. During a dream the dreamer's eyes usually move rapidly back and forth behind the closed eyelids. It is as if the dreamer were a spectator watching what goes on in his dream. Sometimes the eye movements are up and down; the dreamers then report dreams about people or objects moving up or down. When little or no eye movement is registered, the dreamers report they have been simply watching something stationary or talking in their dreams. In general, rapid eye movements indicate that the dreamer is taking an active part in his dreams.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The Dream
 - b. An Active Dreamer
 - c. Body Movements and Dreams
 - d. The Association between Dreaming and Eye Movements

2. The topic sentence is in sentence.....

Paragraph 2

Keeping people well and treating the sick is not all that doctors do. They help to run the hospitals in which they do their work. They help with many of the health activities in the community. It takes doctors to teach young people to become doctors. Physicians, along with other scientists, do research that will bring about new and better ways of diagnosing, treating, and preventing disease. They also try to spread knowledge. Doctors pass along knowledge to other doctors by giving talks at medical meetings and writing in medical journals. They try to help the public by explaining medicine in magazines and on radio and television. In short, studying, learning, and teaching never stop for the doctor.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....

- a. How to Get Help From Doctors
- b. What Doctors Do
- c. Why Doctors Work
- d. Running a Hospital

2. The topic sentence is sentence.....

Paragraph 3

Some children have to be adopted when one or both of their parents die. Sometimes when a parent has an illness that cannot be cured, a court decides it will be best for the child to be adopted. There are also parents who discover after a child is born that they are not able to care for him. So they place him with a family who wants to adopt him. Some natural parents are not grown up or are unmarried; they are not prepared to make a home for their child. These parents come from every social class and have varied backgrounds of education, race, religion, and economic position. These are some of the different reasons why children have to be adopted.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....

- a. The Adoption of Children
- b. Unwanted Children
- c. Why Children Need Adoption
- d. Why Illegitimate Child Needs Adoption

2. The topic sentence is sentence.....

Paragraph 4

One kind of match in common use is the "friction match". The first process in preparing this match is to treat the stick. The stick is first

soaked in a solution of some salt, such as ammonium phosphate, which prevents an afterglow when the blaze is extinguished. The end to be lighted is then dipped in paraffin or candle wax. The head is made next. The bulb of the head is made by dipping the paraffined end of the stick into a paste made by mixing a combustible sulphur compound, an oxidizing agent such as lead dioxide, some powdered chalk, and glue. The tip of the head contains phosphorous sulphide and some oxidizing agent such as potassium chlorate, $KClO_3$. The head, when dry, is coated with varnish to protect it from moisture.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. A Friction Match
 - b. How to Prepare a Friction match
 - c. How to Prevent an Afterglow
 - d. How to Mass-produce a Friction Match
2. The topic sentence of this paragraph is sentence.....

Paragraph 5

Plants were one of the earliest sources of drugs, and they are still used today. For over 1,000 years the snakeroot of India was believed to have a magic healing power. Scientists today have discovered the true nature of the snakeroot's healing powers. It has become a source of reserpine, a drug that helps people suffering from high blood pressure or mental illness. Digitalis is taken from the foxglove plant. This drug is used to treat heart conditions. Quinine, used in the treatment of malaria, is taken from cinchona, bark from a kind of tree that grows in South America and Java. Belladonna comes from one of the deadly nightshade plants. It is used to dilate or expand the pupils for eye examinations.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Different Kinds of Drugs
 - b. Sources of Drugs
 - c. Plants as a Source of Drugs
 - d. Healing Power of Drugs
2. The topic sentence is sentence.....

Paragraph 6

If you want to copy right a book, you must get it printed first. Then, you merely print what is called the "copyright notice" inside the book. This may look something like this: "Copyright, 1983 by Peter Barnhart". This is nothing more than a notice to the world that you wrote the book, the date and that you intend to have it copyrighted. Your next step is to send to the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., two copies of the book, together with an application for registration. The application must be accompanied by an affidavit from the publisher stating that the typesetting, printing, and binding of the book have been performed within the United States. Forms for this application may be secured from this office.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Copyright
 - b. How to Copyright a Book
 - c. Where to Apply for Copyright
 - d. Legal Procedure for Publishing
2. The topic sentence is stated in sentence.....

Paragraph 7

Dreaming is closely related to the rhythms of sleep. Everyone passes through periods that include both deep and light sleep. For most people each period of sleep lasts about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours. At the end of each, a person has a period of dreaming. Anyone who sleeps 8 hours a night has about five dream periods. Each dream period usually consists of several different episodes or adventures lasting 5 to 10 minutes. However, as the night goes on, dream periods become longer. The first dream period may last only a few minutes, while a dream period just before waking may last as long as 45 minutes. During 8 hours of sleep, a person dreams a total of about 1 or 2 hours.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Duration of Sleep
 - b. Characteristics of Dream
 - c. Episodes in a Dream
 - d. The Period of Dreaming
2. The topic sentence is stated in sentence.....

Paragraph 8

The sick person places himself completely in the doctor's hands. The physician has been trained in a complicated set of rules, called medical ethics, in order to protect that trusting sick person. He may learn many things about the patient from taking his history and examining him. He will not disclose what he learns to anyone unless the patient agrees. The only exceptions to this rule are members of the patient's close family or public health officials who need to know about contagious diseases so that other people can be protected. He will not give up treating a sick person unless another doctor takes over. It is not considered proper for a doctor to advertise or try to get patients by boasting of what he can do. A doctor will not criticize another doctor to a patient, but the doctors in a community or in a hospital will try to protect the public from a bad or dishonest doctor. They can make each other live up to the high standards of medicine better than anyone outside the profession can.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. How Patients Are Protected
 - b. Visiting a Doctor
 - c. Prohibitions For Doctors
 - d. Medical Ethics
2. The topic sentence is stated in sentence.....

Paragraph 9

We often judge people from other cultures incorrectly because we assume that they do things for the same reasons that we do. For example, Latin Americans shake hands a lot. They shake hands at the beginning of a conversation and at the end of a conversation. They shake hands with people that they know very well and with people they do not know very well. North Americans do not shake hands very much. They shake hands when they meet someone for the first time or in a formal situation. So when Latin Americans judge North Americans, they think that North Americans are not very friendly; in fact, they seem rude. On the other hand, North Americans think that Latin Americans are very formal. As a second example, let's consider the Japanese student who is studying at a North American university. He may come to his professor and say, "I'm very sorry, but I have to leave school. I have to go home to see my mother. She is very sick." While the student is saying this, he is smiling. The professor does

not understand why the student is smiling. She thinks that it is strange for the student to smile if his mother is so sick. The professor does not know that a smile may not always mean happiness. A smile may mean nervousness, also.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Judging People
 - b. Cultural Differences
 - c. Misjudging People From Different Culture
 - d. Differences in Handshaking Overture
2. The topic sentence is stated in sentence.....

Paragraph 10

Motorcycling is a sport in which motorcyclists are engaged in some sort of competitive race. Today five different categories of motorcycling exist and are popularized. In a flat-track racing, the event occurs on a dirt-surfaced oval measuring a mile, half mile, or quarter mile in length. The use of brakes is not permitted; instead the rider employs engine compression in slowing down. Another racing event is called road racing. It is held in a course which is hard-surfaced and closed, part or all of which may be a public road. In this event, which is of longer duration than that conducted on flat, dirt tracks, brakes are used. The events which are conducted on specially prepared dirt courses whose paths are not straight, and which include ascents and dips, is called T.T. (Tourist Trophy) racing. Brakes are used in this kind of racing. In hill climbs, contestants in a given event run their machines up a steep, specially prepared hill, running against time. The last type of motorcycling is called sportsmen events. Unlike the other categories these events are not conducted for prize money. Instead trophies are awarded to winners of such competitions sanctioned by the American Motorcycle Association, the governing body in U.S. competitive motorcycling. Sportsmen events include scrambles (conducted against time), endurance runs (events in which the driver travels over both surfaced road and rough terrain, and competes against time), hill climbs, economy runs (in which drivers strive for maximum distance on a specified amount of fuel), field meets (involving trick racing), and drag (acceleration) races.

1. The topic of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Motorcycling
 - b. Flat-Track Racing
 - c. How to Win in Motorcycling
 - d. Different Types of Motorcycling
2. The topic sentence is stated in sentence.....



II

RECOGNIZING THE MAIN IDEA

The main idea of a paragraph is the central point that the author is trying to make in that paragraph. Normally if a paragraph has a topic sentence, the main idea is expressed in that topic sentence, that is, the main idea sentence and the topic sentence are the same. However, as is noted in the previous section, not every paragraph has a topic sentence. Sometimes all of the sentences in a given paragraph are of equal significance and no single sentence stands out from the rest of paragraph; the main idea of the paragraph is hidden or implied in all those sentences making up the paragraph, as in the case of an unstated topic. No single sentence in this type of paragraph can be taken as the main idea of the paragraph, but taken as a whole the main idea has to be inferred by reading between the lines.

Read and find the main idea of the following paragraph.

Throughout history, a variety of strange things has been used for money. In ancient times, the Romans bought and sold goods for cattle. Some Indians, when trading, used a strings of beads called "wampum." Sea shells, grindstones, coconuts, and feathers were other queer kinds of money. From ages past to the present, numerous peoples have employed various metals--iron, copper, silver, and gold--as money. Of course, one of the most common types of money, especially since the art of printing was invented, has been a piece of paper with the right kind of printing on it.

What is the main idea of this paragraph?

- a. Money plays an important role in trading from time immemorial.
- b. The Romans used cattle as money in their trading.
- c. A variety of strange things has been used as money since antiquity.
- d. Money has been used since antiquity.

If we consider each statement separately, we will see that choice (a) cannot be the main idea of the paragraph because there is no mention about this point in the paragraph at all. Therefore, it is irrelevant to the paragraph. Choice (b) is mentioned as part of the paragraph only and does not cover all of the points or ideas expressed in the paragraph. Therefore, it is too specific to be the main idea of the paragraph. Choice (c) is the main idea since the point made in it encompasses all the ideas expressed in the other sentences in the paragraph as well. Choice (d) is vague for it does not define the word "money". We don't know exactly what kind of money has been used. Therefore, it is too general to be taken as the main idea of the paragraph.

The main idea of the above paragraph is also the topic sentence. From this sentence, the topic 'Various Things Used as Money' is derived.

Here is another example of paragraph with no topic sentence. Read the paragraph and try to figure out the main idea.

An attack of malaria usually begins with chills. These chills become worse as the fever begins to rise, to 103° - 104°F (39.5°C) or even higher. At this period, a severe headache usually develops. After that the fever breaks and profuse sweating occurs. A single infection may be characterized by repeated bouts of chills, fever, and sweating before the disease runs its course.

The main idea of this paragraph is.....

- a. Malaria Infection
- b. The Symptoms of Malaria Attack
- c. How to Prevent Malaria Disease
- d. Chills as Signs of Malaria Attack

Finding the main idea of a paragraph with unstated topic sentence is like finding the topic of a paragraph written in the same manner. As a result, we find that both the topic and the main idea are the same. In the example above, the main idea is stated in (b). This can be taken as the topic of the paragraph too. Choice (a) is too general whereas choice (c) is irrelevant. Choice (d) is too specific.

Exercise 1

Read each paragraph below and then select the answer which best describes the statement as a summary of the main idea of the paragraph you have just read.

Paragraph 1

For almost eight thousand years men relied chiefly on wind power to drive their ships across the sea. Before the Egyptians began using sails, the Mediterranean Sea was a great barrier to travel between Africa and Europe. But sails and wind power turned the sea into a highway joining the many nations that lived on its shores. Wind power was the foundation of the flourishing commerce of Italian and Dutch cities of the Middle Ages. When Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean and discovered a new world, the sails of his small ships were the only engines he had. Wind power drove Magellan's ship when he took the first trip around the world in 1520. In the nineteenth century, when New England ships went out to hunt for whales, they counted on wind power to blow them to the far corners of the earth and then back home again.

1. Wind power made it possible for Magellan to travel around the world in 1520.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Wind power had been used to drive ships across the sea for almost eight thousand years.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Men had used wind power to do work for them for many centuries.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Wind power can be destructive to men and ships at sea.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 2

The early Greek water mill was not very efficient. The water wheel was horizontal, and in this position it could not take full advantage of the force of the flowing water. A Roman engineer turned the wheel upright, and made it possible for the wheel to capture more of the power of the moving water. The first vertical wheels were undershot wheels. The vanes at the bottom of the wheel dipped into a rapidly flowing stream. As the water flowed under the wheel, it pushed the vanes and made the wheel turn. The overshot wheel, used more widely in later centuries, did not need a swiftly flowing stream. With the overshot wheel even a slow and irregularly flowing stream could be put to work. A dam was placed across the stream, and the water trapped behind the dam piled up to a high level. Then the water flowing over the dam passed over the vertical wheel. The falling water pushed the vanes of the wheel down as it fell.

1. The early Greek water wheel was placed in a horizontal position.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. By turning the wheel upright, the Romans made the wheel able to capture more of the power of the moving water.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Both the Greek and the Roman water mills were similar in that they had a water wheel to capture the power of the moving water.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Without the Roman genius, the world today would not have known an efficient water wheel.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 3

When cold weather comes, many birds move to warmer places to find food. In the United States, for example, the robin lives in the north in the summertime, but it goes south in the wintertime. The beautiful Monarch butterfly also goes south for the winter; it spends the winter in

Mexico. The white stork goes all the way from Europe to Africa when the European winter arrives. The most famous migration is probably the migration of the salmon. This fish is born in fresh water, but it travels many miles to salt water. There it spends its life. When it is old, it returns to its birthplace in fresh water where it gives birth and dies. The whale breeds in warm water and moves to cold water to feed. In Scandinavia, the lemmings, which are small mice, leave their mountain homes when they become too crowded. They move down to the lowlands. Sometimes they move all the way to the edges of the sea, and many of them fall in and drown.

1. When cold weather comes, many birds move to warmer places to find food.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Animals have a migratory behavior.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Many kinds of animals are migratory.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Migratory animals will die if they do not migrate.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 4

Where are the people of the United States moving to? First, they are moving from the interior of the country to the seacoasts. The middle part of the country is losing people, and the places near the oceans are gaining people. Second, they are moving from the Northeast and the Midwest to the West and South west. The population of Pennsylvania is decreasing while the population of California is increasing. Third, they are moving from the North to the South. Boston is getting smaller, and Atlanta is getting bigger. Fourth, they are moving from the rural areas to the urban areas. There are fewer people on the farms and more people near the cities. They live near the cities, but not in the cities; the cities lost 1,700,000 in population between 1970 and 1974.

- 21 -

1. The American people are mobile.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. The American people are migrating from the rural areas to the urban areas.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. There are four main places where American people are moving to.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Because of their mobility, the American people have made much progress in scientific and technological field.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 5

Human beings have always liked to explore new places. People who live in cities like to explore the many different neighborhoods of their city. They enjoy finding new markets, new restaurants, and new entertainment. When they have a vacation, they often go to explore the countryside. People who live in the countryside like to explore that world, too. They often walk in the woods and along the rivers, and, when they have a vacation, they frequently go to the city. People who live in the mountains like to explore the valleys and the plains. And, of course, almost everyone likes to go up into the mountains. Someone asked a famous mountain climber, "Why do you climb these high mountains?" He answered, "Because they are there." And that is probably why human beings are explorers--they are curious. If they are in one place, they want to know about the places.

1. People have enjoyed exploring the world.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Urban dwellers like to explore the many different neighborhoods of their city.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

3. Man likes to explore new places in the world surrounding him.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Exploring the world surrounding him is one of man's innate traits.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 6

All over the world children learn to understand and speak their own language before they go to school. They acquire this wonderful skill by constant practice, by listening and talking it all the time to themselves, to their family and friends. At first the child only repeats words and phrases that he has heard and learned. But he finds that he has to put new sentences together to get what he wants. He tries the new sentences out on people. They accept some of his sentences but reject others because they are funny or because they don't make sense. The child keeps on trying until he works out a system for producing acceptable, understandable sentences. He assembles in his mind a simple model of the language, his own grammar of his language.

1. Children the world over learn to understand and speak their own language before they go to school.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. A child learns that in order to get what he wants he has to put words into sentences.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. A child learns to understand and speak a language through constant practice with people surrounding him.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Children who do not understand and speak a language well will have many problems in their early schooling.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. too specific
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 7

People migrate because they may not be able to live where they live because there is no food. The land may become dry; insects may destroy their food crop. They also migrate because they may want to improve their way of life. They may be poor in their own country, and there may be good jobs in another country. Some people migrate because they want to escape from their hardships and sufferings. There may be a war in their country, and they want to live in a peaceful country. In 1840's, the people of Ireland lost their potato crop and there wasn't enough food for the population; thousands of Irish people migrated to the United States in the 1840's and 1850's. In the 1890's there were many poor people in the villages of southern and eastern Europe. They heard that there were good jobs in the United States and in Latin American. Millions migrated. In the twentieth century, millions of people migrated across Europe and Asia to escape the world wars. From the above, we see that several different reasons can be held accountable for the migration of people.

1. People migrate to settle in another country.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. People migrate because they want to avoid sufferings and hardships.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. There are many different reasons why people migrate.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Migration is a way of life for the human race.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 8

Many countries are happy to accept immigrants. The United States, in particular, is a nation of immigrants. Between 1840 and 1968, approximately 37,000,000 people migrated to the United States, with the largest numbers coming from Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Ireland, Austria-Hungary, Canada, Russia, Mexico, Sweden, and the West Indies. As a result, in the

United States now, about 20,000,000 residents do not speak English as their native language. Another 50,000,000 have parents who do not speak English as their native language, and about 70,000,000 have grandparents who do not speak English as their native language. There are not many citizens of the United States with ancestors who were in the United States in the eighteenth century. The United States is indeed a country of newcomers.

1. Many countries have many immigrants as their citizens.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Between 1840 and 1968, a large numbers of European people immigrated to the United States.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. The United States is a nation of immigrants.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Without the immigrants, the United States would not have progressed thus far.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 9

No continent equals Asia in its variety of natural features. Asia has some of the world's highest mountains; longest rivers; largest deserts, plains and plateaus; and thickest forests and jungles. The highest and lowest places on earth are in Asia. Mount Everest, the highest, rises 29,028 feet (8,848 metres) above sea level along the Nepal-Tibet border. The Dead Sea shore, the world's lowest land, lies 1,299 feet (396 metres) below sea level on the border between Israel and Jordan.

1. Asia has more kinds of natural features than any other continent.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Asia is different from any other continent in the world.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

3. The highest and lowest places on earth are in Asia.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 9

To welcome a guest, a Kurdish tribe meets him on the outskirts of the village. There a delegation of men hold a steer ready for the slaughter, and, as the guest approaches, one of the tribesmen stabs the animal in the throat. There is the last agonizing moment when the steer lets loose a bloody, gurgling bellow before it is dragged across the road, leaving a stream of blood in its wake. The guest then steps across the blood. The executioner saws vigorously on the neck of the beast until the head is severed and then heaves it to the side of the road. The khan, or other ranking host, turns to the guest, takes him by the hand, and says in a loud, ringing voice, "May that happen to the heads of all your enemies."

1. Each cultural group has a different welcoming ceremony from the others.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Slaughtering is part of the Kurdish welcoming ceremony.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. This is how the Kurds welcome the guest.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. The Kurds will help their friend to fight against his enemies.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 10

When facial tissues were first put on the market in 1924, they were made in limited quantities and sold at 65 cents per box of 200. People liked these facial tissues immediately and began asking for them when they went into different stores. Because there was such a demand for the product,

manufacturers began making tissues in larger and larger quantities. Because the manufacturers were making tissues in greater quantities, their production costs were lowered, so that the cost of tissues went down. In the meanwhile, the quality of facial tissues was constantly improving, because more manufacturers went into the business of making tissues, and each manufacturer strove to make his product better than his competitors'. Today, instead of costing 65 cents, a box of 200 facial tissues costs around one-third of that price, and they are both softer and stronger.

1. When facial tissues were first put on the market in 1924, they were more expensive than they are today.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Because at first the facial tissues were produced in limited quantities and the production costs were high, so they were sold at 65 cents per box of 200.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Because of the mass production method and because of the competition among manufacturers, the facial tissues today are both cheaper in price and higher in quality than those in the past.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Facial tissues are indispensable to life in today's world.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 11

Some people buy automobiles not for a convenient and reliable means of transportation (though this is the reason they will usually give if asked), but because they secretly feel that a certain make of car will make them look important. In the same way, many smokers secretly hope that the particular brand of cigarette they use will make them look manly or sophisticated as it is advertised in a magazine and newspapers. Similarly, a large number of housewives buy a certain brand of face cream because they secretly hope it will make them look like the beautiful girl in the adver-

tisement. Many young girls secretly hope to look beautiful when they buy clothes which are advertised by a well-known beauty queen. Many people do not give the real reasons when they buy a particular product, and many of their true motives are not reasonable at all.

1. People buy a particular product for many different reasons.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. Some people buy a certain make of car because they want to look important and sophisticated.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Many people have unreasonable motives when they buy a particular product.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. People tend to emulate one another.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 12

A person infected with shingles may notice chills and fever for three or four days before the rash appears. There is often a dull, constant pain in the spine, later spreading along the course of the affected nerves. The intense itching rash is always seen on one side, perhaps between the ribs, down near the groin, around the waist, or over the eye. As the patient scratches himself, the skin becomes infected so that scabs form over the small blisters. There is a burning pain in the area due to involvement of the nerve cells. Pus may form within these blisters, adding to the patient's misery. Most patients recover fairly rapidly. Some may suffer with hepetic neuralgia for years, long after the skin lesions have completely cleared.

1. Shingles is a skin disease forming a band of inflamed spots, often around the groin or the waist.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

2. A few days before the rash begins, a person infected with shingles may experience chills and fever.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. These are the symptoms of shingles as revealed in an infected person.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. Some people may die of shingles if the burning pain does not cease.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 13

A "dead letter" is one that cannot be delivered because the address cannot be read. It cannot be returned because the sender did not put his own address on the envelope. A "dead letter" goes to the specific office where it is opened by examiners, who try to figure out where it came from and where it should be sent. Every year they deal with more than twenty two million incorrectly addressed pieces of mail.

1. A "dead letter" is addressed to a person who is already dead.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. A "dead letter" is a letter that cannot be delivered because the address is illegible.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. A "dead letter" is dealt with by examiners from a specific office.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. A "dead letter" is dead because it is stuck in the post office.
- a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 14

The tallest living thing in the world is a redwood growing in California. In 1964 it measured 367.8 feet in height. Placed bumper to bumper, 21 average-size automobiles would reach almost as far as this tree is high. The larging living things, that is, the living thing with the greatest volume, is the General Sherman Sequoia in California's Sequoia National Park. It is about 272 feet tall and has a trunk diameter of 37 feet at the base. Two average-size automobiles, bumper to bumper, could fit inside the trunk with room to spare. Until recently, the sequoias were considered the oldest living things. The oldest precisely dated sequoia, cut down in 1892, was 3,212 years old. Certain bristlecone pines, also in California, however, have beaten this record: one of them is reported to be 4,600 years old. It is clearly seen that the world's tallest, largest, and oldest living things are trees.

1. Many living things are taller, larger, and older than the others.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. A redwood growing in California is the world's tallest living thing.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. Trees are the world's tallest, largest, and oldest living things.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. The oldest tree in the world was cut down to make room for the highway.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

Paragraph 15

In the front of a torpedo is the warhead, which carries the explosive and an exploder mechanism to set it off. Any homing device is attached to the front of the warhead. Next to the warhead is the air flask if it is a steam torpedo or the battery compartment if it is an electric torpedo. The air flask contains fuel, compressed air, and water for making steam. The next section is the afterbody, where the engine, the gyroscopes, and the depth-controlling device are installed. The afterbody of the steam torpedo

contains the combustion flasks, which convert water into steam. Last is the tail section, which carries the tail fins, the rudders, and the propellers. These four major sections make up a torpedo.

1. A torpedo is used to destroy the enemy's warships during the war.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
2. A torpedo has a warhead in the front.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
3. A torpedo consists of four major sections.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant
4. A torpedo is a kind of weapon that is used in military operation.
 - a. too general
 - b. too specific
 - c. main idea
 - d. irrelevant

III

WHERE TO FIND THE MAIN IDEA

The main idea of a paragraph may appear anywhere in a paragraph. It can be in the first sentence, in the second sentence, in the middle of a paragraph, at the end of the paragraph or any place else. For convenience's sake, we will deal with some of the positions where the main idea of a paragraph is commonly located.

1. The Main Idea in the First Sentence. The main idea of a paragraph most often falls at the beginning of the paragraph. If this is the case, the first sentence will act as a guide to the sentences that follow and help the reader to see how the details are organized and related to the main idea. Consider the example below.

The democratic administrator makes the fullest possible use of the formal power of the position and the informal power of personal leadership. He respects the personalities of subordinates and relates to each staff member to obtain maximum contribution to the objectives of the organization. This type of administrator solicits the opinions of staff members and involves them in decision making on certain issues. Group participation is encouraged. Freedom of action prevails. Regular staff meetings are scheduled. Periodic evaluation of programs and progress toward goals is made. Effective communication is provided. Good human relations stressed.

In the paragraph above, the gist of the thought expressed in the entire paragraph is that "The democratic administrator makes the fullest possible use of the formal power of the position and the informal power of personal leadership." The other sentences in the paragraph simply tell more about this main idea and are incidental to it.

2. The Main Idea at the End of a Paragraph. In some paragraphs, the main idea appears in the last sentences. When this happens, the main idea sentence acts as a summary of the other sentences in the paragraph. It ties them all together. A good reader can figure out the main idea as he

reads before this final sentence appears. Study the following example.

Arachne, the lovely daughter of an expert weaver, unwisely challenged the goddess Athena to a contest. So beautiful was the tapestry she wove, telling pictured stories of the gods and their adventures, that Athena, in jealous rage, tore it asunder. Her masterpiece destroyed, Arachne hanged herself, but Athena, as quick to show mercy as anger, turned the maiden into a spider and her rope into a thread of silk. The descendants of this changed Arachne have continued ever since to weave their tiny tapestries. And thus spiders got their scientific name, arachnids.

In the example just mentioned above, the last sentence is a summary of the whole paragraph. All the other sentences before this tell us about the story of how a spider obtains its scientific name.

3. The Main Idea Within the Paragraph. When the main idea is buried somewhere inside the paragraph, all the sentences before and following it are supporting sentences. They clarify or illustrate the main idea. Study the example below:

Until recently most historians tended to speak very critically of the Industrial Revolution. They admitted that in the long run industrialization greatly raised the standard of living for the common man. **But** they insisted that its immediate results during the period from 1750 to 1850 were widespread poverty and misery for the bulk of the English population. By contrast, they saw in the preceding hundred years from 1650 to 1750, when England was still a completely agricultural country, a period of great abundance and prosperity. This view, however, is now generally thought to be wrong. Specialists in history and economics and experts in the new science of demography, or population measurement, have shown two things: 1) that the period from 1650 to 1750 was marked by great poverty and 2) that industrialization certainly did not worsen and may have actually improved conditions for the majority of the populace.

In this paragraph, the main idea is contained in the sentence: "This view, however, is now generally thought to be wrong." All the sentences before this are discredited by this main point. The sentence following it

gives a different version from the first. Thus, it gives support to the main idea sentence or the topic sentence.

4. The Split Main Idea. This types of paragraph presents part of the main thought in the first sentence and then, after expanding it, introduces the second aspect of the idea and the conclusion. Consider the example below:

The atomic test was scheduled for May tenth. All the necessary apparatus was in readiness, with each man trained to his job. Some five hundred scientists, government officials, and newspaper reporters were on hand to witness the spectacle. But at the last minute unfavorable weather conditions developed and the test was postponed.

In the example above, we see that part of the main idea is contained in the first sentence and the other is stated in the last one. This type of paragraph may occasionally begin with the main idea and conclude with the repetition of the main idea in the last sentence.

5. Unstated Main Idea. This type of paragraph presents a group of sentences of approximately the same value, with all contributing to the central idea and none standing forth as the topic sentence. The main idea is implied in all these sentences comprising the paragraph. If this is the case, the main idea must be inferred. Look at the following example:

The soil in this coastal area is not favorable to orange culture. It is largely glacial rubble with insufficient nutriment to support even the sturdiest seedlings. Fog and rain are with us at all seasons of the year and there is little good, warm sunshine to ripen the fruit. Migrant workers are numerous, but they are used to digging for beets and know nothing of the care of citrus groves.

In the example just given above, it is clearly seen that no single sentence stands out to become the main idea of the paragraph. Every sentence has the same value of significance and relates to one another. The main idea is hidden in these sentences and can be inferred as follows: "Oranges cannot be grown in this area."

Although the main idea of a paragraph can be in any position within the paragraph, the most common ones are found in the first sentence and in the last.

Exercise 1

Read each paragraph below and then answer the questions which follow. Mark (X) on a, b, c, or d according to your choice.

Paragraph 1

Band and orchestra instruments require various physical abilities of the player. One ten-year-old boy decided that the trumpet was the instrument for him. However, his lips and teeth were not those that permit the best results on this instrument. Although he had a good ear and excellent rhythm, he made little progress in six months of lessons. Finally his teacher convinced him that another instrument might be better suited to him. Because his fingers were strong and his hands span wide, his teacher recommended the piano or a stringed instrument. Such instruments were more in keeping with his aptitudes.

1. The main idea of the paragraph above is.....
 - a. Band and orchestra instruments require various physical abilities of the player.
 - b. A ten-year-old boy failed in his trumpet lessons.
 - c. The piano or a stringed instrument is the right musical instrument for a ten-year-old boy.
 - d. A ten-year-old boy could not play the trumpet.
2. The main idea is stated.....
 - a. in the first sentence
 - b. at the end of the paragraph
 - c. in the middle of the paragraph
 - d. unstated

Paragraph 2

Huge trees had been uprooted by the gale and lay in a dense tangle across the road. Telephone wires and electric wires dangled from their poles. Suddenly, we came upon part of the roof of a house, but we know that there was no house within half a mile.

1. The main idea of this short paragraph is.....
 - a. The road was blocked with huge trees.
 - b. Telephone wires and electric wires were out of order.
 - c. We found part of the roof of a house far from the village.
 - d. There was a storm in the area before we arrived.
2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the third sentence
 - d. not stated

Paragraph 3

In the very young branch of a maple there is at first no rough bark. The surface of the shoot is nearly smooth. As the twig forms more wood and grows in size, the outer portions may be split open. The injury caused in this way is healed from the inside. Some of the outer portions become dry and die. The dead broken portions give the bark a rough appearance. Some of the dry pieces are shed or broken off as the twig grows larger and older. The process by which bark is formed may go on year after year.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. A young maple tree does not have a bark.
 - b. Bark is an outer portion of a tree by which an inner portion is protected.
 - c. A bark-forming process has no ending.
 - d. This shows how a bark of a tree is developed.
2. The main idea is stated.....
 - a. in the first sentence
 - b. in the last sentence
 - c. in the middle of the paragraph
 - d. not stated.

Paragraph 4

Ghost towns have appeared wherever men have exploited our natural resources. There are ghost towns from Maine to Montana, left by the lumber industry. There are 17 ghost towns in Colorado, left behind by gold and silver miners. One of our most famous ghost towns is in Pithole, Pennsylv-

vania, a relic of the oil industry. In four months it grew from nothing to a town of 15,000 people. Twelve months later, there was not a living soul left, for the oil had given out.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. There are ghost towns from Maine to Montana, left by the lumber industry.
 - b. Seventeen ghost towns in Colorado are a result of gold and silver mining.
 - c. The ghost town in Pithole, Pennsylvania, is famous because it was left by the oil workers.
 - d. Ghost towns have appeared wherever men have used up the natural resources.
2. The main idea of the paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the third sentence
 - d. the fourth sentence

Paragraph 5

These days we hear a lot of nonsense about the "great classless society". The idea that the twentieth century is the age of the common man has become one of the great cliches of our time. The same old arguments are put forward in evidence. Here are some of them: monarchy as a system of government has been completely discredited. The monarchies that survive have been deprived of all political power. Inherited wealth has been savagely reduced by taxation and, in time, the great fortunes will disappear altogether. In a number of countries the victory has been complete. The people rule; the great millennium has become a political reality. But has it? Close examination does not bear out the claim.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. There is no such a thing as a classless society in the world today.
 - b. The twentieth century is the age of the common man in which democracy flourishes.
 - c. All the kings ruling in the world today have no real political power at all.
 - d. Plutocracy will soon disappear from the arena of world politics.

2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the fifth sentence
 - d. the last sentence

Paragraph 6

The path to peace lies through the thickets of conflict. And the biggest obstacle in the path, the most overwhelming danger of all is the onrushing arms race. Every day it gathers momentum as the nuclear powers and others, large and small, enlarge their arsenals. Some of us continue to invent and test frightful new weapons. We feel obliged to do this for the sake of our separate national interests--at a time in history when the national interest of all nations; those with nuclear weapons and those without, demands not the expansion but the abolition of the power to wage war.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. In order to have peace, we must go through the thickets of conflict.
 - b. The arms race is the biggest barrier to peace.
 - c. Everyday each country enlarges its arsenals to protect its interests.
 - d. Countries with and without nuclear weapons should get rid of their nuclear weapons.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the third sentence
 - d. the last sentence

Paragraph 7

Many years ago people believed that green plants obtain all of their food from the soil. They thought that the plants draw the food up through their roots. This seemed to be true because most green plants are not able to move about in search of food as animals do. Even today many people still believe that green plants secure all of their food from the soil. However, about 300 years ago a Belgian scientist, Jan van Helmon, performed an experiment with green plants. His experiment proved that green plants manufacture most of their own food.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. People in the past believed that green plants obtain all of their food from the soil.
 - b. The plants cannot move about in search of food as animals do.
 - c. Today many people still believe that green plants get all of their own food from the soil.
 - d. Helmon's experiment proved that green plants manufacture most of their own food.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated.....
 - a. at the beginning of the paragraph
 - b. at the end of the paragraph
 - c. somewhere between the first and the last sentences
 - d. implied and not stated.

Paragraph 8

The earth, our home planet, is explored. Since the explorer has made the airplane his chief tool, the last blank spaces on the world's map have melted away swiftly. Today, comfortable airliners cross continents and oceans in regularly scheduled flights, and indifferent passengers ride safely over forbidding territory where courageous explorers perished of hunger, thirst, cold or exhaustion only a few decades ago. From his conquered home planet man now looks expectantly toward the stars. Other, strangely alien worlds lure a new Columbus. Man would not be true to himself were he deaf to their call. The moon and the neighboring planets, Venus and Mars, irresistibly challenge his fancy with the same old spell that seven seas once cast over their explorers.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The modern map of the world is filled up as a result of man's exploration of the earth.
 - b. Apart from exploring the planet Earth, man also investigates the worlds in outer territories.
 - c. Today's expedition is much safer and more comfortable than that of the past.
 - d. Man would not be man if he did not respond to his inquisitive motives.

2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the third sentence
 - d. the sixth sentence

Paragraph 9

The most dangerous microorganism from the standpoint of food poisoning is the bacterium Clostridium botulinum. It produces a toxin that causes the disease botulism, which can be fatal. In non-acid foods such as corn, peas, and meat, the causative agent of spoilage is often a putrefactive bacterium known as C. sporogenes. This microorganism is not toxic to man but causes economic spoilage. There are also a number of microorganisms that cause spoilage of specific canned foods. These can be species of yeasts, molds, and bacteria that produce undesirable textures, colors, flavors, and odors in foods. Spoilage is also caused by autolytic enzymes, which act to disintegrate dead cells. This action, called autolysis, is allowed to proceed to a limited extent in the aging or tenderizing of meat. Autolysis and the destruction of food by microorganism is prevented by heat in the canning process.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The bacteria Clostridium botulinum and C. sporogenes are the main causes of food poisoning.
 - b. Autolysis causes the disintegration of dead cells in canned foods.
 - c. Autolysis and the destruction of food by microorganism can be prevented by heat in the canning process.
 - d. Spoilage in canned food is caused by both microorganisms and autolysis.
2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the beginning of the paragraph
 - b. the middle of the paragraph
 - c. the end of the paragraph
 - d. implied and not stated

Paragraph 10

Forests are of vital importance in preventing floods and erosion. Rain falls gently on land that is covered with trees and grass. The leaves break the force of the rain. Grass roots and fallen leaves form a soft bed that absorbs the water like a sponge. Some of this water runs off gradually, finding its way to springs and streams. But when rain falls on bare earth, it strikes with great force and runs off swiftly, carrying the fertile top soil with it. The water fills up the streams and rivers too fast for the banks to hold it in. Costly and often tragic floods result.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Forests are very important in preventing floods and erosion.
 - b. Rain falls more gently on forested land than on the bare earth.
 - c. Heavy rainfall causes the water to overflow the banks of a river.
 - d. Floods are often costly and tragic.
2. The main idea of the paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the middle of the paragraph
 - c. the last sentence
 - d. implied and not stated

Paragraph 11

The camel is a very phlegmatic animal and has a reputation for stupidity and obstinacy. The males are quarrelsome during the rutting season and bite savagely when they fight. The single-humped camel or the dromedary has a pronounced rutting season at the time of the rains in winter; pregnancy is prolonged for nearly a year until the following rainfall. The two-humped or the Bactrian has an even longer gestation period of 370 to 440 days. In both species the young are born singly and suckled for three or four months, and the interval between births is two years. Camels are full-grown at 16 or 17 years; the normal life span is about 25 years.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The camel is phlegmatic, stupid, and obstinate.
 - b. There are two kinds of camel: the dromedary and the Bactrian.
 - c. Camels usually die at the age of 25.
 - d. The behaviors of camels.

2. The main idea is stated in,.....

- a. the first sentence
- b. the middle of the paragraph
- c. the last sentence
- d. implied and not stated

Paragraph 12

Old people are always saying that the young are not what they were. The same comment is made from generation to generation and it is always true. It has never been truer than it is today. The young are better educated. They have a lot more money to spend and enjoy more freedom. They grow up more quickly and are not so dependent on their parents. They think more for themselves and do not blindly accept the ideals of their elders. Events which the older generation remembers vividly are nothing more than past history. This is as it should be. Every new generation is different from the one that preceded it. Today the difference is very marked indeed.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....

- a. The older people always think that the young are different from them when they themselves were young.
- b. The young today are better educated than the young people in the past.
- c. The young today take care of themselves better and are not dependent upon their parents than the young in the past.
- d. Every new generation is different from the one that comes before it.

2. The main idea is stated in,.....

- a. the first sentence
- b. the fourth sentence
- c. the fifth sentence
- d. the eighth sentence

Paragraph 13

Since the behavior of people is at the very heart of the administrative process, it follows that the administrator must understand human beings. People are very complex and a genuine understanding of them is invaluable in getting them to work together to accomplish the organization's purposes. Some administrators develop an excellent insight into human

nature by broad and varied experience with people, but even this is not a substitute for an academic preparation in the behavioral sciences. For the physical education administrator, a strong background in psychology and sociology is as important as an adequate preparation in human anatomy and physiology. The study of administration depends upon nothing less than the study of man.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. It is important for the administrator to understand human beings.
 - b. People are very complex and difficult to understand.
 - c. The physical education administrator must have a strong background in psychology and sociology.
 - d. The study of administration depends upon nothing less than the study of man.
2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the fourth sentence
 - d. the last sentence

Paragraph 14

You don't have to be a genius to spot them. The men of the species are often uncombed; their ties never knotted squarely beneath their collars. The women of the species always manage to smear lipstick on their faces as well as their lips; in one hand they carry handbags which are stuffed full of accumulated rubbish; with the other, they drag a horde of neglected children behind them. With a sort of happy unconcern, both the male and female species litter railway stations, streets parks, etc., with sweet wrappings, banana-skins, egg-shells and cast-off shoes. Who are they? That great untidy band of people that make up about three-quarters of the human race. An unending trail of rubbish pursues them wherever they go.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Both men and women are prone to untidiness.
 - b. Untidy people comprise about three-quarters of the human race.
 - c. Untidy people always litter wherever they go.
 - d. It is very easy to spot untidy people.

2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the sixth sentence
 - c. the last sentence
 - d. implied and not stated

Paragraph 15

Believe it or not, the Swiss were once a warlike people. There is still evidence of this. To this day, the guards at the Vatican are Swiss. But the Swiss discovered long ago that constant warfare brought them nothing but suffering and poverty. They adopted a policy of neutrality, and while the rest of the world seethed in turmoil, Switzerland, a country with hardly any natural resources, enjoyed peace and prosperity. The rest of the world is still not ready to accept this simple and obvious solution. Most countries not only maintain permanent armies but require all their young men to do a period of compulsory military service. Everybody has a lot to say about the desirability of peace, but no one does anything about it. An obvious thing to do would be to abolish conscription everywhere. This would be the first step towards universal peace.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The Swiss used to be a warlike people.
 - b. The adoption of a policy of neutrality causes Switzerland to prosper.
 - c. Conscription is still practiced in many countries in the world.
 - d. The first step towards world peace is to abolish conscription.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the middle of the paragraph
 - c. sentence six
 - d. the last sentence

Paragraph 16

When we think of the tremendous technological progress we have made, it's amazing how little we have developed in other respects. We may speak contemptuously of the poor old Romans because they relished the orgies of slaughter that went on in their arenas. We may despise them because they

mistook these goings on for entertainment. We may forgive them condescendingly because they lived 2000 years ago and obviously knew no better. But are our feelings of superiority really justified? Are we any less blood-thirsty? Why do boxing match, for instance, attract such universal interest? Don't the spectators who attend them hope they will see some violence? Human beings remain as blood-thirsty as ever they were. The only difference between ourselves and the Romans is that while they were honest enough to admit that they enjoyed watching hungry lions tearing people apart and eating them alive, we find all sorts of sophisticated arguments to defend sports which should have been banned long ago; sports which are quite as barbarous as, say, public hangings or bearbaiting.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Man has made great progress in some areas and very little in the other areas.
 - b. The people today are no different from the Roman of 2000 years ago.
 - c. Man through the ages has never changed his blood-thirstiness.
 - d. The Romans were more sincere in their gladiatorial fight than the people today in their sports contests.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the beginning of the paragraph
 - b. the middle of the paragraph
 - c. the last sentence of the paragraph
 - d. implied and not stated

Paragraph 17

From the health point of view we are living in a marvellous age. We are immunised from birth against many of the most dangerous diseases. A large number of once fatal illnesses can now be cured by modern drugs and surgery. It is almost certain that one day remedies will be found for the most stubborn remaining diseases. The **expectation** of life has increased enormously. But though the possibility of living a long and happy life is greater than ever before, every day we witness the incredible slaughter of men, women and children on the roads. Man versus the motor-car! It is a never-ending battle which man is losing. Thousands of

people the world over are killed or horribly mutilated each year and we are quietly sitting back and letting it happen.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. From the health point of view we are living in a marvellous age.
 - b. With the discovery of modern drugs and medical techniques life is greatly extended.
 - c. Though man overcomes many fatal diseases, he loses in the field of road accidents.
 - d. The battle between man and automobiles will never come to an end.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the fifth sentence
 - c. the sixth sentence
 - d. implied and not stated.

Paragraph 18

Since the Arabian camel, or dromedary, can go without drinking for a long while, it is commonly believed that its hump can store water for its own use. But this is not the case. The real secret of the animal's unusual ability to store water lies in the fact that very little of the camel's water is lost by evaporation through the skin. Instead of sweating out great quantities of water, the camel's body temperature rises, sometimes as much as eleven degrees, to compensate for external heat. When a camel does require water, it replaces only the amount lost since its last drink.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. It is commonly believed that the Arabian camel stores the water in its hump.
 - b. It is not true that the Arabian camel stores the water in its hump.
 - c. The Arabian camel can go without drinking for a long time because it evaporates very little water through its skin.
 - d. The amount of the water the camel takes in is the same as that lost since its last drink.

2. The main idea of this paragraph is stated in.....
- a. the first sentence
 - b. the second sentence
 - c. the third sentence
 - d. the last sentence



HOW THE MAIN IDEA APPEARS IN A PARAGRAPH

In the previous sections, it is noted that a good paragraph expresses one focal point and that main thought may or may not be stated. If it is stated, the main idea sentence stands out from the rest. However, the other sentences give support, in one way or another, to the main idea sentence. On the contrary, if the main idea is not stated, there is no single sentence standing out in the paragraph. Each sentence is of equal value and each leads to the thought implicit in the paragraph.

In this section, we will consider how sentences are related to form the main idea of a paragraph as the writer intended. The main idea in a paragraph may occur in different ways. It may be repeated throughout the paragraph, or it may be stated only once and the rest of the paragraph merely expand it and render supporting details to the main idea. Still in some paragraphs the main idea are implied, that is, they are developed step-by-step as a process or as a descriptive explication.

The Repeated Main Idea

Study the following paragraph. Notice the repetition in it and point out the main idea of the paragraph.

Radio is very useful to ships at sea. It is used to tell ships how to keep away from icebergs, bad fogs, and storms. Ships also use a radio to send messages to other ships and to places on land. If someone on the ship becomes ill, radio is used to call for help. Sometimes it is used to send for a helicopter to bring a doctor to the ship or to take the ill person to a hospital on land. Radio is still very useful though ships now carry radar too.

The main idea of this paragraph is.....

- a. Ships use radios and radar as a means of communication.
- b. Ships at sea send several kinds of message to places on land.
- c. Radio is very useful to ships at sea.
- d. Most ships carry radar as well as radio.

In the above example, the main idea is stated in the first sentence. The other sentences give details to show radio is useful to ships at sea. The key word --"useful"-- is repeated in every sentence. This includes the word "used".

The Paragraph Without Repeated Idea

In this type of paragraph, the main idea is stated only once and not repeated as in the first type. Though the main idea is not repeated, all the rest of the sentences in the paragraph are related to the main idea. Study the following paragraph and notice how each sentence refers back to the main idea in the topic sentence.

The precondition of any civilization, old or new, is energy. Agricultural societies drew their energy from "living batteries"-- **human and** animal muscle--power--or from sun, wind, and water. Forests were cut for cooking and heating. Waterwheels, some of them using tidal power, turned millstones. Windmills creaked in the fields. Animals pulled the plough. As late as the French Revolution, it has been estimated, Europe drew energy from an estimated 14 million horses and 24 million oxen. All agricultural societies thus exploited energy sources that were renewable. Nature could eventually replenish the forests they cut, the wind that filled their sails, the rivers that turned their paddle wheels. Even animals and people were replaceable "energy slaves". All industrialized societies, by contrast, began to draw their energy from coal, gas, and oil--from irreplaceable fossil fuels. Each year these fossil fuels are being consumed in greater volumes.

In the example above, sentence 1 is the topic sentence. **The rest of the paragraph** give examples of different kinds of energy used by agricultural and industrialized societies. The main idea is stated only once in the paragraph.

The Paragraph With a Step-by-Step Idea

In this kind of paragraph, there is no **topic sentence**; the central idea itself has to be inferred from all the sentences in the paragraph. The sentences in the paragraph are related to each other. The idea in one

sentence leads to the one in the next sentence. This kind of paragraph is often found in explanation of process, story-telling, and chronological description. Consider the example below.

The first stage in the manufacture of chocolate is the making of chocolate liquor out of the cocoa beans. The beans are first roasted in large metal drums or cylinders at a heat of 400 degrees. Then they are cooled rapidly. In the next step they are crushed into tiny bits the size of grains of sand. Although these sandlike bits appear to be dry, they contain a large proportion of oil, called coco butter. This oil cannot be seen but amounts to about 50 per cent or more of the weight. When the tiny bits are further crushed under heavy grinding stones the oil is squeezed out and mixed with the powder. The result is a thick, dark-brown, pleasant-smelling liquid known as chocolate liquor.

In the paragraph above, it should be noticed that no single sentence says that it is about the method of making chocolate liquor. Yet we know that the whole paragraph is about this idea. A closer look at the paragraph will also reveal that the details in the paragraph are about roasting beans, cooling them, crushing them, the oil in the tiny pieces, grinding the pieces, the powder mixing with the oil. Each detail by itself does not support the main thought, but taken together they do explain how chocolate liquor is made. Therefore, the main idea of this paragraph is about the way in which chocolate liquor is made. The idea is hidden or implied in the paragraph.

Exercise 1

Read each of the paragraphs below and then answer the questions which follow.

Paragraph 1

All human groups, from primitive times to today, depend on face-to-face, person-to-person communication. But each group uses a different means of sending messages across time and space. The ancient Persians are said to have set up towers or "call-posts", placing men with shrill, loud voices atop them to relay messages by shouting from one tower to the next. The Romans operated an extensive messenger service called the cursus

publicus. Between 1305 and the early 1800s, the House of Taxis ran a form of pony express service all over Europe. By 1628 it employed twenty thousand men. Its couriers, clad in blue and silver uniforms, crisscrossed the continent carrying messages between princes and generals, merchants and money lenders.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. All human groups, from primitive times to today, depend on face-to-face communication.
 - b. The means of communications of each cultural group is different.
 - c. Call-posts were used by the ancient Persians to convey messages across space and time.
 - d. The means of communications today is much better than that of the past.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. stated only once
 - b. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - c. not stated but implied
 - d. none of the above

Paragraph 2

When the baking powder is added to cake or muffin batter, it starts to dissolve in the liquid. Then the chemistry begins. The acid reacts with the alkaline soda. This produces hundreds of tiny bubbles of gas, like those in soda water. The gas is carbon dioxide. These bubbles rise through the mixture and expand when heated, so they lift up the batter. By the time the food is baked, bubbles have formed a network of little holes all through it. This makes the food light and spongy.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The baking powder starts to dissolve in the liquid after it is added to cake or muffin batter.
 - b. The reason that the food is light and spongy is because of a network of little holes formed by bubbles.
 - c. How the baking powder makes the baked food light and spongy.
 - d. The baking powder is an indispensable ingredient of baked food.

2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated more than once in the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly stated in a step-by-step description

Paragraph 3

Candy has long been one of man's favorite foods. Because of its high sugar content, candy is also a high-energy food. However, although candy is rich in sugar and sometimes also contains large amounts of fats, it contains only very small amounts of vitamins and minerals and usually has very little protein. Thus, candy cannot be considered a wholesome substitute for more nutritious foods. In addition, some candies, because of their high sugar content, can cause dental cavities. It is also believed that eating too much candy can cause acne, particularly in adolescents.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Candy has long been one of man's favorite foods.
 - b. Candy is a high-energy food because it contains high sugar content.
 - c. Candy contains only very small amounts of vitamin , minerals, and protein.
 - d. Candy cannot be considered a wholesome substitute for more nutritious foods.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. not stated but implied in the paragraap.

Paragraph 4

On land, nature is imitated by use of netting, artificial foliage, paint, dummies, and substitutes. Troops may wear green jungle uniforms, without metal rank badges, that blend with the natural background. Polished metal may be made dull. Equipment may be painted with dots, stripes, or patches. Dummy airfields and cities may be built. Guns are usually difficult to conceal because of the blash marks they leave in front of their muzzles. Installations such as airfields cannot be hidden, but the number and types

of aircraft present may be falsified with dummies. Materiel may be housed in buildings that are not what they seem.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. On land, nature is imitated by use of netting, artificial foliage, paint, dummies, and substitutes.
 - b. Troops may wear green jungle uniforms, without metal rank badges, that blend with the natural background.
 - c. Installations cannot be hidden, but the number and types of air craft present may be falsified.
 - d. The description of various kinds of military camouflage on land.
2. The main idea is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implied and not stated
 - d. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step-manner

Paragraph 5

As anxiety-makers, examinations are second to none. That is because so much depends on them. They are the mark of success or failure in our society. Your whole future may be decided in one fateful day. It doesn't matter that you weren't feeling very well, or that your mother died. Little things like that don't count: the exam goes on. No one can give of his best when he is in mortal terror, or after a sleepless night, yet this is precisely what the examination system expects him to do. The moment a child begins school, he enters a world of vicious competition where success and failure are clearly defined and measured. Can we wonder at the increasing number of "drop-outs": young people who are written off as utter failures before they have even embarked on a career? Can we be surprised at the suicide rate among students?

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Examinations are the most important cause of anxiety.
 - b. Examinations are the indicator of success and failure.
 - c. Man enters a world of vicious competition the moment he begins school.
 - d. Examinations are inevitable for examinees.

2. The main idea is stated in.....
 - a. the first sentence
 - b. the middle of the paragraph
 - c. the last sentence
 - d. implied and not stated
3. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner

Paragraph 6

At a large milk bottling plant, one machine washes the bottles. Another machine pours milk into the bottle. Before the milk is bottled, it is pasteurized. When milk is pasteurized it is made safe to drink by killing all the harmful germs in it. The milk is heated to a certain temperature, which is hot enough to kill the harmful germs but is less than boiling temperature. It is held at this temperature for a certain length of time. Then it is cooled rapidly. In this way the harmful germs are killed but the taste of the milk is not changed very much. It would be possible to make milk safe by boiling, but boiling changes its taste. After the milk has been cooled, it is put into large, round steel cans or into clean bottles.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. How milk is bottled
 - b. Why milk is pasteurized
 - c. How milk is made safe for drinking
 - d. How germs are killed
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly expressed in a descriptive explanation

Paragraph 7

Because a little baby seems helpless, many people believe he does not think. Actually a baby thinks from birth. No one knows how a baby thinks or what he thinks. He listens to sounds. He makes soft noises which are not crying. He is aware of being picked up, of being cuddled, or of being talked to softly, and of music. He is also aware of the nearness of milk, for he turns his mouth toward milk and tries to find it with his hands. A baby can tell his mother his troubles by the way he cries, for a baby has five different cries. One cry means he is hungry. Another means he is in pain. The others mean he is uncomfortable, is frightened by a loud noise, or thinks he is about to fall.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Many people believed that a baby does not think because it is helpless.
 - b. A little baby does think from birth.
 - c. No one knows how a baby thinks or what he thinks.
 - d. A baby tells his mother about his troubles through his cries.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated several times in the paragraph.
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner.
 - d. explicitly expressed in a descriptive explanation

Paragraph 7

Almost all products we eat, wear, or use, travel at some times by truck. A chair first is carried on a truck as a newly-cut tree, then on another truck as lumber or plywood, then to a factory, and finally on other trucks to a store and the buyer. A dress is carried in a truck first as cotton, silk or man-made fibre, then as a bolt of cloth, then as a finished garment, and finally to a store and home. Most foods, in the same way, are carried by trucks many times before they reach the table. The trucks that perform these services and the thousands of home delivery trucks are all part of the huge trucking industry.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Almost all products we consume travel at some times by truck.
 - b. Service trucks and home delivery **trucks** are part of the huge trucking industry.
 - c. A chair is carried to the home of the buyer in a truck.
 - d. Without trucks, commercial transactions cannot be done efficiently.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. stated only once in the paragraph
 - b. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - c. implicitly stated in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner

Paragraph 8

A baby is born ready for life. For nine months he has been preparing for this great test. At once, the minute he is born, he breathes, he cries, he coughs, sneezes, and kicks. He does not wait for the world to come to him. He seeks it out. As soon as he is strong enough, he turns his head and looks. As soon as he can control his arms and hands, he feels and touches. As soon as his back and legs and feet will support him, he walks. He does not have to be taught any of this. He does it all when he is ready. Everything a baby does, every movement he makes, is part of getting ready. All his movements have a purpose or a goal. That goal is to be a mature human being who can walk, talk, eat, and think for himself.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. A baby is born ready for life.
 - b. The goal of getting ready for a baby is to become a mature human being.
 - c. A baby grows up when he is ready to do so.
 - d. For nine months, a baby has been preparing himself in the womb of the mother.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. **stated** only once in the paragraph
 - b. repeated several times in the paragraph
 - c. stated in a step-by-step manner
 - d. stated in a descriptive manner

Paragraph 9

The child infected by measles feels tired, uncomfortable, feverish, and at times chilly. Tearing, light sensitivity of the eyes, sneezing and coughing follow. Tiny red spots called Koplik's spots, which appear in the mouth, are diagnostic of measles. The rash starts around the hairline of the face late in the third or early in the fourth day and then descends, becoming generalized in 36 hours. The rash, which is pink at first, becomes red, elevated, blotchy, and itching. The child is sickest, the fever highest, and the cough most annoying during the early rash state. The rash fades quickly, leaving a staining which lasts about two weeks. The skin peels in fine branny scales. Measles is most often confused with German measles, scarlet fever, and some drug eruptions.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The child infected by measles feels tired, uncomfortable, feverish, and at times chilly.
 - b. The rash starts around the hairline of the face late in the third or early in the fourth day and then descends in 36 hours.
 - c. Measles is most often confused with German measles, scarlet fever, and some drug eruptions.
 - d. The symptoms of measles as revealed in an infected victim.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. implicitly expressed in the description

Paragraph 10

The earthworm is a useful animal. Out of the ground, it is food for other animals. In the ground, it makes rich soil for fields and gardens. Earthworms dig tunnels that loosen the soil and make it easy for air and water to reach the roots of plants. These tunnels help keep the soil well drained. Earthworms drag dead leaves, grass, and flowers into their burrows. When this plant material decays, it makes the soil more fertile. No other animal is so useful in building up good topsoil. It is estimated that in one year fifty thousand earthworms carry about eighteen tons of

fine soil to the surface of an acre of land. One worm may add three quarters of a pound of earth to the topsoil.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. The earthworm is a useful animal.
 - b. The earthworm makes rich soil for fields and gardens.
 - c. The earthworm digs tunnels that loosen the soil.
 - d. One earthworm may add three quarters of a pound of earth to the topsoil.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. not stated but implied
 - d. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner

Paragraph 11

You know that air conditioning makes you feel cool. But air conditioning is more than just cooling. It means keeping the temperature and humidity (moisture content) of air in an enclosed space, whether it is one room or an entire building, at just the right level for the comfort of the people inside. It also means circulating the air with fans and removing dust from it with filters. In winter it means heating the air and adding moisture if necessary. In summer it means removing moisture by passing the air over cold pipes that collect water from the air, much as drops of water condense on a cold water glass on a hot, damp day. In fact, we might almost say that air conditioning means creating an artificial, comfortable climate.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Air conditioning is a way of cooling the temperature of air.
 - b. Air conditioning means keeping the temperature and humidity of air in an enclosed space at just the right level for the comfort of the people inside it.
 - c. Air conditioning removes moisture of air by passing the air over over cold pipes that collect water from the air.
 - d. An air conditioner circulates the air by fanning it and removes dust particles from the air with filters.

2. The main idea of the above paragraph is.....
- a. repeated throughout the the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner

Paragraph 12

Needles are made from a long steel wire. The wire is cut into lengths that are two needles long. They become pointed at both ends as they roll over a grindstone on the way through the machine. After this the center of the double-length needle is slightly flattened, and the eyes are punched out. The double needles are broken apart between the heads. The heads are ground to the required shape. The needles are then hardened and tempered (toughened) by being dipped in cold oil after they have been heated over a flame to blue heat. By now the needles have become discolored, so they are given a polishing and a plating of nickel to make them smooth and resistant to rusting. The needles that are packaged at the end of the process are shiny, perfect specimens.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
- a. How a hand sewing needle is made.
 - b. Why a hand sewing needle is dipped in cold oil.
 - c. How a hand sewing needle is nickel-plated.
 - d. Needles are made from a long steel wire.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
- a. stated only once in the paragraph
 - b. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly expressed in a step-by-step description

Paragraph 13

Propaganda is a perennial weapon of diplomacy. All states appeal to various publics (ethnic, religious, economic, linguistic, etc.) in other nations in order to influence their attitudes and hopefully those of public officials in desired directions. The use of propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy has been intensified by the revolution in the media of

communications. The use of information agencies, libraries, radio broadcasts, films, newspapers, and newsreels has become universal. For example, Radio Moscow beams regular broadcasts to the Arab Middle East and North Africa denouncing Western "imperialism" and Israel's expansionist aims, while supporting Arab demands and aspirations. Another example is the Voice of America which broadcasts to Iron Curtain countries and other parts of the world presenting the policies of the United States in favorable light. Likewise, Radio Cairo (the Voice of the Arabs) aims extensive broadcasts at the Arab Middle East and Africa depicting Israel as a tool of the Western powers and praising Arab policies. Interestingly, Radio Cairo has also carried propaganda broadcasts against Arab states such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, depicting the governments of these states as "reactionary" and "corrupt."

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Propaganda is a perennial weapon of diplomacy.
 - b. The use of propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy has been intensified by the revolution in the media of communications.
 - c. Radio Moscow beams regular broadcasts to the Arab Middle East and North Africa denouncing western imperialism.
 - d. The use of information agencies, libraries, radio broadcasts, films, newspapers, and newsreels has become universal.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. repeated more than once in the paragraph
 - b. stated only once in the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. explicitly expressed in a descriptive explanation

Paragraph 14

Burglars, and robbers should not be sent to prison on their first offense; instead, they should be given suspended sentences and put on parole. Of all criminals, first offenders are most likely to reform. Having been caught once usually frightens anyone who might think of taking up crime as a way of life. Sometimes first offenders are in need of help. They might be starving or victims of blackmail or extortion. The law, then, could be a real help to such people. It could prevent them from continuing

as criminals. Prisons are really not the best place for first offenders because prisons are schools taught by the most hardened professional criminals. First offenders are like raw recruits who can be taught the trade and come out real professionals. The best chance we have of reforming first offenders is to keep them out of prison entirely.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. If the crime isn't serious, first offenders have a good chance of reforming.
 - b. First offenders should be paroled and not **be sent to prison**
 - c. Some first offenders commit a crime because they need help.
 - d. Prisons are filled with professional criminals who might train first offenders and make them into professionals.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. stated only once in the paragraph
 - b. repeated throughout the paragraph
 - c. implicitly expressed in a step-by-step manner
 - d. expressed explicitly in a step-by-step manner

Paragraph 15

The method of comparison is explaining an unknown person, place, or idea in terms of something familiar by identifying their shared qualities. To compare is to point out similarities, usually by employing words such as "like," "as," "similar," and their compounds, "likewise," "similarly," and so forth. The Latin word, "similis" means "like" or "as"; and the figure of speech called a simile is a direct comparison between two things. In this way, the distinctive qualities of something--say, a zircon--can be identified by listing better known objects that share these qualities; it has a shining surface like glass, can be cut like a diamond, reflects light as a diamond or prism does, and so on. Or a ziggurat is a tower that looks like an inverted cone with a spiralling, snakelike ramp around it. Comparison is also a basic way of conceiving abstract or intangible qualities--for instance, radio "waves," or "dirty" jokes. In this condensed, covert form, the comparison becomes a metaphor.

1. The main idea of this paragraph is.....
 - a. Comparison is a method of explaining an unknown person, place, or idea in terms of something familiar by identifying their shared qualities.
 - b. To compare is to point out similarities, by using words such as "like", and "as" and so forth.
 - c. The figure of speech "simile" comes from the Latin root "similis" meaning "like" or "as".
 - d. Comparison is also a basic way of conceiving abstract or intangible qualities called a metaphor.
2. The main idea of the above paragraph is.....
 - a. **stated more than once** in the paragraph
 - b. not repeated in the paragraph
 - c. stated in a step-by-step manner
 - d. not stated but implied

RECOGNIZING THE MAIN IDEA AND ITS MAJOR DETAILS

The main idea of a paragraph is always supported by a cluster of sentences called the detailed sentences. These sentences may either expand, explain, clarify, or illustrate the focal point made in the paragraph. The main idea of a paragraph may be thought of as the trunk of a tree while its accompanying details may be compared to the branches and twigs of the tree. The branches budding out of the trunk represent the larger details, and the twigs coming out of each branch may represent the smaller details that are given about the larger details. Both the larger and the smaller details all give support to the main idea.

In order to grasp the details of a paragraph, the reader must first find the trunk or the main idea of the paragraph. Then he must find the main branches that bud out of the trunk, expanding and telling more about the main idea. These larger branches or ideas belonging to the main idea are called major details. The smaller branch or twig ideas that stick out of the major detail branches are called minor details.

Study the organization of the main idea and its accompanying supporting details in the following example.

The most popular kind of beer in the United States is lager beer. This beer originated in Germany. It gets its name from the German word for "storage" (lager) because it is stored before it is used. Lager beer makes up about 90 per cent of the beer produced in the United States. It is usually pale in color and has an alcoholic content of about 3 to 4 per cent.

No doubt the main idea of this paragraph is in the first sentence. And this main idea is accompanied by four details of about equal importance. Both the main idea and its details represent a cluster of related meanings, which can be shown below.

Main Idea: The most popular kind of beer in the United States is lager beer.

- Details: A: This beer originated in Germany.
B: It gets its name from the German word for "storage" because it is stored before it is used.
C: Lager beer makes up about 90 per cent of the beer produced in the United States.
D: Lager beer is usually pale in color and has an alcoholic content of about 3 to 4 per cent.

Exercise 1

Read each paragraph below. Then write the main idea and the major details in the space provided.

Paragraph 1

Passport is a travel document issued to nationals of a country by the government of that country. A national is either a citizen or a person who, although not a citizen, owes permanent allegiance to and is entitled to the protection of a country. A Thailand passport identifies the bearer as a national and entitles him to the protection of the Thai government while abroad. The passport requests officials of foreign governments to permit the bearer to travel or stay in their countries and, in case of need, to give him all lawful aid and protection.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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Paragraph 2

The Pacific Ocean is the largest and deepest of the world's oceans. It has an area of 64,000,000 square miles. The Pacific and its adjacent seas cover more than one-third of the surface of the earth. Its area is greater than the total of all land surfaces in the world. At its greatest width, from Panama to Mindanau, the Pacific measures 10,600 miles--almost half the distance around the earth. It extends from the Bering Straits to Antarctica, a distance of 9,060 miles.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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D:
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E:
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Paragraph 3

To care for one's hair properly, one should massage the scalp for at least a few minutes every day. Brush the hair thoroughly with a clean brush. Wash it often enough to keep it free of dust and soot. Except in certain cases in which the scalp is very dry, it should be shampooed at least once every two weeks in the country and more frequently in the city. Any pure soap may be used, but it should be carefully rinsed out of the hair after shampooing. Where the scalp is very dry, it is best to rub it with olive oil before shampooing. A good hair tonic may stipulate the growth of hair. Dyes may be generally harmful to hair.

Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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Paragraph 4

The United States harbour at New York City is one of the safest and most perfect natural harbours in the world. It is protected on one side by the New Jersey shore and on the other by Long Island. It is narrow enough to keep even a strong wind from stirring up a rough sea. The entrance is also narrow and is well-protected from ocean storms. Finally, the channels which lead out to the Atlantic Ocean do not become badly blocked by silt and sand. New York Harbour is convenient and safe. It was necessary only to deepen the channels so the large ships could enter, to keep the channels clear by dredging, and to build wharves and docks for loading and unloading ships.

- Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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- G:
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Paragraph 5

The red-shouldered hawk has a hooked beak, the keen eye, and the fierce manner of its larger cousin, the eagle. The male measures about 20 inches in length. His mate is larger by about 2 inches. The male's wingspread is about 4 feet. It is a handsome bird. The head and neck and back are a deep brownish-red with hints of bright red. Every feather is edged and marked in darker shade. It is a slow-flying hawk and usually perches, often on a limb, as it tries to sight its prey. When it spies a small animal, it strikes with deadly swiftness.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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- B:
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- C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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- G:
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Paragraph 6

To make a bowl or jar, begin by rolling out a flat round base $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness and the size you want it. Then place a piece of clay on the table and with palms roll it back and forth into a long coil. Put the coil on the edge of the base and wind it round the base. With a tool or your fingers work the coil into the base. Roll out another coil, place it end to end with the first coil and wind it around on top of it. Shape the jar as you keep adding more coils. Place one hand on the inside of the jar to support the sides as you work. Carefully smooth over the inside and outside. When the jar is high enough, place it between two stacks of books. With a thin wire held tight, trim the top of the jar. Cut it off the bat. Sandpaper when it is dry.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
- B:
- C:
- D:
- E:
- F:
- G:
- H:
- I:
- J:

Paragraph 7

There are six basic types of cookie dough--drop, bar, rolled, molded, pressed, and refrigerator doughs. Drop-cookie dough is usually mixed in one bowl and dropped by spoonfuls onto a baking sheet. Bar-cookie dough is baked in a shallow squared or rectangular pan and the cookies may be chewy or cake-like in texture. Rolled cookie dough is rolled thin and cut with cookie cutters, a knife, or a pastry wheel. Molded-cookie dough can be shaped by hand into balls, sticks, or crescents; the shapes may be flattened with the bottom of a glass or tines or a fork. Pressed-cookie press into a variety of shapes. Refrigerator-cookie dough is shaped into rolls and well chilled before it is thinly sliced and baked.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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D:
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E:
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F:
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Paragraph 8

To ensure safety and happiness, a camper should confine all camp fires to fireplaces and extinguish them completely each time he leaves the area. Before leaving a campsite, he should burn his waste and bury his cans or put them in a space set aside for trash disposal. He should check all swimming areas for hazards. He should protect his ax and paddle so that porcupines cannot chew the handles. He should keep his food supply safe from animals. He should purify questionable water with halazone tablets or boil it. A camper should also make certain that he assembles a first-aid kit adequately for common emergencies such as blisters, burns, cuts, poison ivy, and toothache. During camping, a camper's health and happiness depend largely on cleanliness and safety precautions.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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- G:
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Paragraph 9

Because of the slow methods of transportation over country roads, life before 1900 was quite different from that of today. Farmers and their families lived mostly by themselves. Food had to be stored for the winter months when it was not possible to travel over the snow-covered, rutted dirt highways. In time of sickness it was very difficult to get a doctor. Fire could burn a barn to the ground before a fire engine could get to the building. A thief could steal and be on his way before policemen could reach the scene of the crime. Most people spent their evenings, weekends, and vacations at home. It took too long to drive a horse to a town, the beach, or an amusement park.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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- B:
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- C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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- G:
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Paragraph 10

Nowadays farmers can travel to large towns or cities in a very short time. People living in cities can depend upon swift moving trucks to bring them fresh vegetables and dairy products from the distant farms. Doctors can quickly reach patients who are ill. Fire fighting equipment can be rushed to the scene of a fire. All of us can expect police protection in a matter of minutes because of the speed of the automobile. In addition, parents and children, riding in the family car, can get to town, country, shore, or amusement park quickly and have time left to enjoy their recreation. Life today is much pleasanter and more convenient because we have automobiles which shorten the time it takes to travel from one place to another.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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- B:
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- C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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Paragraph 11

To plant carrots, seeds are put in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep in a light or medium soil, in a sunny location. Sow more seeds than you need--about 30 for each foot of row--we allow for a certain amount of non-germination. Leave 12 inches between rows. Soaking the seed or mixing it with moist sand prior to sowing helps to speed germination and maintain moisture because it takes the seed a long period to germinate (2 to 3 weeks). Keep the soil in contact with the seed moist at all times throughout the germinating

period. Most varieties of carrot take between 65 to 75 days from seed to full maturity.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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D:
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Paragraph 12

To ensure its own survival, a tapeworm that inhabits the intestines of a fox sheds its minute eggs into the intestinal tract of the host. These eggs fall to the ground in the fox's faeces, waiting to be taken inside another fox. This is accomplished when a rabbit, an immediate host, nibbles a plant on which the tapeworm eggs have fallen. Inside the rabbit, the eggs hatch into larvae that bore their way into the host's tissues, where they go into a resting stage, or cyst. If the rabbit is then eaten by a fox, the cysts eventually reach the fox's intestines and there develop into young tapeworms, which begin the cycle all over again. Each parasite has its own way of getting from one host to another in order to ensure survival of its own species.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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D:
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E:
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Paragraph 13

As inhabitants of arid regions where there is little to pick up during the dry months, harvester ants collect the seeds of various grasses at the end of the growing season and store them in special underground grain-aries in their nest. Unfortunately, these reserve supplies are the object of ant warfare between different groups of harvesters. The inhabitants of one nest set out deliberately to raid and ransack the supplies of another group. The ants may employ quite elaborate military tactics in the fighting, and the battles generally result in heavy casualties. If the attackers win, they remove the stores grain by grain to their own nest. According to the myrmecologists, ant wars may last from a few hours to 6½ weeks.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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C:
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D:
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E:
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Paragraph 14

Bacteria are distinctly different in their body plan from either plants or animals. Most bacteria, like plants, have thick cell walls outside the cell membrane, but the material in the cell walls of bacteria differs chemically from that in plants. Bacteria have nuclear material, but it is not separated from the rest of the cell by a membrane as it is in plants and animals. In this way bacteria resemble certain blue-green algae. Bacteria are much smaller than protozoans, fungi, or algae they can only be seen with a high-powered microscope. Many can move and have flagella, but those are very different from the flagella seen on flagellates.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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C:
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D:
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E:
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Paragraph 15

Tea is the greatest money earning crop for India which is the world's leading producer. Her annual production of 375,000 tons is about 35 per cent of the world total. This crop attained great commercial importance only after the decline of coffee in India, and when the Europeans took to tea-drinking. Large-scale cultivation of tea in plantation began only in 1850 in the Assam Hills, where the high relief, heavy rainfall and good drainage all contribute to its rapid growth. Tea planting then extended into Bengal and Punjab and soon became a major agricultural industry. In the south, the Nilgiri and Travancore Hills are also major tea-growing areas. For more than a century, the tea gardens were mainly owned by the Europeans but worked by Indian labour. After independence, there has been greater local participation in the industry with many wealthy Indians owning and managing the tea plantations. India's international trade in this commodity is entirely in black or Ceylong tea, though the more aromatic "gree" or China tea is now also grown in southern India.

Main Idea:
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Details: A:
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B:
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- D:
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Paragraph 16

By the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was faced with heavy losses. She had to surrender her navy, disband her army (Germany was allowed henceforth to maintain an army of only 100,000 men, enlisted for long periods of service), and give up her merchant marine. She had to part with all her colonies. She restored Alsace-Lorraine to France and lost other small territories to Belgium and Denmark. She lost large slices of West Prussia to Poland. She lost the ports of Memel and Danzig and consented to international control of her chief rivers. She lost her coal mines in Upper Silesia and the Saar. In addition, Germany had to consent to military occupation of the west bank of the Rhine until the terms of the treaty were carried out. She had to agree to pay an indemnity, the amount of which was not fixed but was to be based on the total losses of the war.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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- B:
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- C:
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- D:
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- E:
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- F:
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- G:
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Paragraph 17

In the twentieth century, changes in technology made possible a vast increase in the size of cities. Previously, industry and commerce had located along water and rail routes; city-dwellers relied on horse cars, suburban trains or foot to get to work. The development of the automobile freed both employer and employee. Factories could be established away from rail lines, utilizing truck transport; workers could drive to their jobs. The automobile's mode of production, the horizontal assembly line, became standard throughout industry. The new system required much larger amounts of space for its operation than did earlier means of production, so manufacturers gravitated to suburbs, where land was cheaper. The development of heavy duty transmission lines for electricity enabled the building of factories hundreds of miles away from power sources.

Main Idea:

- Details: A:
- B:
 - C:
 - D:
 - E:
 - F:

Paragraph 18

When a seed falls on a suitable piece of ground, it does nothing until there is moisture and favorable temperature. The tough coat keeps out the cold and protects the seed until the conditions are right, when the seed begins to germinate. The warmth and the moisture start the auxins working, and the cells inside the seed begin to divide. The first outward sign of germination is the appearance of the root-like radicle which grows downwards. The next part to appear is the coleoptile, which grows up and in time, the first leaves unfold. The radicle anchors the seedling in the soil and the coleoptile carries the leaves up into the light, where the chlorophyll turns green and the little plant begins to make its own food. Until then it has been living on the food stored in the seed by the parent plant. The tip of the stem continues to grow and more leaves are produced. Roots grow from the radicle, and a complete plant is formed, which makes enough food to produce flowers and eventually fruits. The fruits, containing seeds, are distributed to begin the cycle again.

Main Idea:

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Details: A:

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B:

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C:

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D:

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F:

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- J:
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Paragraph 19

The law restricts the employment of youngsters. The federal law sets 16 as the lowest age at which a child may work during school hours. About half the states have approximately this same standard. Federal and state laws forbid the employment of young people in dangerous occupations. The employment of young people **at** night is also carefully controlled and limits are set on the number of hours and days a week they may work. Those under 18 must get work permits for most jobs and may have to pass physical examinations as well.

- Main Idea:
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- Details: A:
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- B:
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- C:
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- D:
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- E:
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VI

RECOGNIZING THE MAIN IDEA AND ITS MAJOR AND MINOR DETAILS

In the last section, we noted that there are two types of details: the major details and the minor details. The major details give the main supporting points to the central idea of a paragraph whereas the minor details give support to the major details, which in turn give support to the focal idea.

In reading for the main idea, it is sometimes important for the reader to distinguish the central idea, the major supporting details, and the minor details. The first step in doing this is to identify the main idea. Then find the major detail and its accompanying supporting sentences. Consider the following examples:

Erich Fromm, a well-known psychologist, believes that personality structure is greatly determined by the structure of the society. He suggests that there are five basic human needs which any society must provide for. First is the need for transcendence, to be creative and productive. Second is the need for relatedness, a sense of unity with others. Third is the need for rootedness, involving the sense of a home, security, and lasting ties. Fourth is the need for identity, allowing the individual to know himself or herself and to identify with others. Finally is the need for a frame of reference, to provide an orderly view of the world and to give purpose to life.

In the above example, we can grasp at once that the first sentence is the main idea sentence. The second sentence says something about what Fromm believes; thus, it is the major details of the main idea. All the other sentences expand and tell more about the idea expressed in the second sentence. They are the support of the major detail. Therefore, these sentences are the minor details of the paragraph. The main idea, the major detail, and the minor details can be clearly seen if we put them as in the following:

Main Idea: Erich Fromm believes that personality structure is greatly determined by the structure of the society.

Major Detail: A: He suggests that there are five basic human needs which any society must provide for.

- Minor Details:
1. The need for transcendence, to be creative and productive.
 2. The need for relatedness, a sense of unity with others.
 3. The need for rootedness, involving the sense of a home, security, and lasting ties.
 4. The need for identity, allowing the individual to know himself or herself and to identify with others.
 5. The need for a frame of reference, to provide an orderly view of the world and to give purpose to life.

Exercise 1

Read the selection below for both the main idea and the details. Write down the main idea in each paragraph, and then write the major details and the minor details which tell more about the main idea.

Paragraph 1

Between the world wars the assembly line spread to a host of industries while the automobile industry, where it was used first and most effectively mushroomed into one of the largest industries in the world. World War II introduced a further innovation which completed the evolution of mass production technology. This was the development of automatic transfer machines which integrated the various stages of production so that a continuous flow or process could be secured without the intervention of human labor. These machines handle a piece of some operation on it, release it, move it on to the next stage, and receive the next piece. All this is without any direct human intervention. The whole line of machines is run from remote electronic control.

Main Idea:

Major Detail: A:

- Minor Details: 1.....
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2.....
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3.....
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4.....
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Paragraph 2

Many systems of number notation existed among earlier civilization. One system was the tally. It did not use numbers but a series of marks--notches on a stick, piles of pebbles, scratches on clay or papyrus. Another early system involved rhyming words, with the nonrhymes coming at intervals of five. English shepherds counted to twenty in the following way: yan, tyan, tethera, methera, jimp, sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick, yanadick, tyanadick, tetheradick, metheradick, bunfit, yanabumfit, tyana-bumfit, therarabumfit, metherabumfit, jiggit. Still another system used letters instead of numbers. The familiar Roman numerals that we still use today are an example of this technique.

Main Idea:
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Major Detail: A:
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Minor Detail: 1.....
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Major Detail B:
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Minor Detail: 1.
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Paragraph 3

The peacock is noted for his colorful plumage. The head, neck, and breast of the common peacock are metallic blue-purple with glints of greenish-gold. The feathers of the back are green, and those of the wings are blue, black, and copper colored. The head bears a crest of slender feathers of similar metallic hues. The peacock's magnificent train is an extension of the feathers just above the tail. The train is colored in iridescent blues, greens, and golds, and is often longer than the bird itself. Some of its feathers are tipped with patterns resembling eyes. The train is raised and held in a fanlike display by the stiff feathers of the bird's true tail. The peacock uses this gorgeous plumage to attract a mate.

Main Idea:

Major Details: A:
B:
C:
D:

Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail: E.....

Paragraph 4

Like the hands of human beings, no two leaves are exactly alike, even if they have the same shape and color. But different plants have leaves of different shapes. For example, pine leaves are like needles; grass leaves are long and like ribbons. Catalpa leaves are broad and heart-

shaped. The edges or margins around leaves are also different. Some are straight, such as the leaves of corn; others are like rows of teeth, such as elm leaves; still others are wavy around the edges, such as cottonwood leaves. Red oak leaves have sharp points on the lobes which look like deep bites, and white oak leaves have rounded lobes. Different kinds of maple leaves also have different shaped lobes. The leaves of the sassafras tree are exceptional; each one may be quite different from the others.

Main Idea:

Major Detail A:.....

Minor Details: 1.
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Major Detail B:.....

Minor Details: 1.
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Paragraph 5

There are three major iron- and steel-production areas in the Soviet Union. The first, the Donbas, is in European Russia, where coal from the Donets Basin and iron ore from the Krivoi Rog region are close together. In this general area are such important Soviet cities as Rostov, Kharkov, and Kiev. Nearby are the great wheat fields of the Ukraine. Geographically, this region resembles the American Midwest. The second area is the Ural Industrial Region, which produces about half of the nation's iron and

steel. There is little coal in the Urals, and therefore it must be shipped in by rail, primarily from Asiatic Russia. As a result, Ural steel costs more to produce than that of the Donbas. The Soviet leaders are willing to produce this somewhat uneconomical steel, however, in order to diversify their industries and supply steel to the Ural cities of Magnitogorsk, Ufa, and Chelyabinsk. The Kusbas Industrial Region of the U.S.S.R. is fairly new, having been founded little more than thirty years ago. The area of the Kusbas, in Asia, is rich in both iron ore and coal, but there are few cities in the region to use the finished product. As a result, much of the Kusbas steel is shipped west to the large industrial centres.

Main Idea:

Major Detail; A:

Minor Details: 1.
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Major Detail B:

Minor Details: 1.
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3.

Major Detail C:

Minor Details: 1.
2.

Paragraph 6

Warlikeness appears to be related to the stimulating character of the climate and to the lack of barriers to mobility rather than to the economic difficulty of the environment. The primitive nomad of desert and steppe has a hard environment to conquer, but he may have a stimulating climate. His terrain, adapted to distant raids and without natural defenses, leads him to institutionalize war for aggression and defense. The seashore dwellers, because of easy opportunity to travel, is encouraged to piracy, as the nomad is encouraged to raid. The Eskimo of the north, with an equally difficult economic problem but with too severe a climate and with the protection of isolation and impediments to travel is often but not always peaceful. The hunters of forest and mountain, protected by natural barriers, tend to be peaceful. But where the climate is stimulating, as with the eastern American Indian, they may be warlike. The forest dwellers of the Andaman Islands, Africa, Malaya, and Indonesia, with a less stimulating climate, are more peaceful.

- Main Idea:
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- Major Detail A:.....
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- Minor Detail 1:.....
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- Major Detail B:
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- Major Detail C:
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- Major Detail D:.....
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- Minor Details 1.....
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Paragraph 7

History does seem to repeat itself, even in the way college students behave. In the 1840s, students protested and acted in violent ways. Students at Yale, for example, objected to their mathematics course and burned their books in the streets. Some captured their tutor and kept him tied up all night, and others shot a cannon through the tutor's bedroom window. In the 1940s and 1950s, students were a fun-loving, game-happy lot. They swallowed live goldfish, took part in dance marathons, and held contests to see how many people could crowd into a phone booth. The more daring males broke into women's rooms in "panty-raids," then festooned their own rooms with the ill-gotten silks. In the 1960s, students repeated the activities of the 1840s. They objected to the courses, littered the campuses with their books and papers, and locked teachers inside college buildings. They protested against all forms of social injustice, from war to the food in the cafeteria. The more violent threw rocks at the police, and a few planted bombs in college buildings. In the 1970s, students seem to be repeating the fun and games of the '40s and '50s. They hold contests to see how many people can squeeze into a Volkswagen. They even have dance marathons. The more daring run naked across campus, in a craze called "streaking." The slightly less daring do their streaking with brown paper bags over their heads. Yes, history does seem to repeat itself, even in the sometimes violent and sometimes fun-and-games behavior of the students on college campuses.

Main Idea:.....
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Major Detail A:.....
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Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail B:.....
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Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail C:.....

Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail D:.....

Minor Details: 1.....
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Conclusion:.....

Paragraph 8

The necessities of life cost more than they used to. The cost of shelter has increased steadily, for both renters and home-buyers. Renters may suddenly receive notice that their rent has been increased; and ~~potential home-~~buyers may find that the prices of houses are going up faster than they can save the money for a down payment. Even ordinary, everyday clothing items have increased rapidly in price. A few months ago, a pair of blue jeans could be bought for \$3.00; but today, those same jeans cost \$4.50. The most painful increase has been in the cost of food. A pound of bacon that cost 78¢ a short time ago now cost \$1.19. And eggs have gone up from 69¢ to 89¢ a dozen. In fact, according to a recent television newscast, even the ordinary bean has been hit by an 800% increase in price during the past few weeks. Every necessity of life--housing, clothing, and, worst of all, food--has gone up in price.

Main Idea:.....
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Major Detail B:
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Minor Details 1.....
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Major Detail C:.....
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Minor Details 1.....
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Conclusion:.....
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Paragraph 9

Pre-industrial England suffered from low incomes and poor living conditions. The average person's income was £10 a year. Farmers, for instance, earned about £8 a year. Shop-keepers and tradesmen earned a little more than the farmers. One fifth of the population was entirely paupered. Its expenses each year were more than its income. Many of these people were supported out of Poor Relief. But others, unable to meet the residency requirements for parish charity, suffered and died in destitution. Poor living conditions resulted in a life expectancy at birth of only 32 years.

Main Idea:.....
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Major Detail A:.....
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Minor Details 1.....
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Major Detail B:.....
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Minor Details 1.....
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Major Detail C:.....
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Paragraph 10

The Japanese created two distinctive types of drama: an aristocratic No and a popular Kabuki. The No plays were ritualistic and ceremonial. A chorus sat on the stage--a rectangular platform with a temple roof--and chanted the connecting parts of the story. All the characters, except young men, wore masks. Farces were performed between each short play on a program. Kabuki is younger than No. A woman dancer named Okuni is credited with beginning kabuki about 1600. The plays were concerned with daily life as well as mythical subjects. At first actresses were permitted to perform in the plays. Then the government forbade them, and kabuki, like No, became an all-male presentation.

Main Idea:.....
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Major Detail A:.....
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- Minor Details 1.....
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- 3.....
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Major Detail B:.....

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- Minor Details 1.....
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- 3.....
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Paragraph 11

Parachutes have two types of opening devices: the static line and the rip cord. The static line is a cord 17 feet long. One end of it is tied with string to the vent at the top of the parachute canopy. The other end is attached to the inside of the plane. After the jumper has dropped a short distance, the static line pulls the parachute out of the pack. When it is out all the way, the string breaks. The static line stays attached to the plane as the jumper falls free. The chute billows open in less than one second after the jumper has left the plane. A rip cord chute is opened by the jumper at any time after he has left the plane. When the rip cord handle is pulled, an umbrella-size pilot chute is released from the pack. It inflates and drags out the canopy, which also inflates. Suspension lines, attached to the skirt, or edge, of the canopy, lead to four risers that extend from the harness.

Main Idea:.....

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Major Detail A:.....

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- Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail B:.....
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- Minor Details 1.....
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Paragraph 12

The freedom won in the creation of American films of today has resulted in another form of regulation. The Motion Picture Association of America has established a rating system for American motion pictures in order to protect the film industry from the possibility of governmental regulation that might be urged by persons who see the freedom of contemporary films as allowing scenes on the screens of the United States that might be a bad influence on their children. Thus we now have "G" rated films which are open to the general public, and "GP" films which are also open to the general public but with parental guidance suggested. There are "R" rated motion pictures which restrict children under the age of 16 from attending unless they are accompanied by their parent or guardian, and in some states this age limit has been raised to either 17 or 18. Finally, there are "X" rated films which children are not allowed to attend under any circumstances.

The rating system has not seemed to hinder the creative film makers; however, ticket sales for "X" rated films are noticeably lower than for others, and more and more film-makers are trying to stay away from the "X" category. There are many many persons from U.S. Congressmen on down who have publicly stated that the ratings are useless and should be abolished or a better system found.

Main Idea:.....
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Major Detail A:
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Minor Details: 1.....
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Major Detail B:.....
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Minor Details: 1.....
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Paragraph 13

Education, as opposed to child training, implies the more formal efforts of adults to mold the personalities of the young, but among non-literate peoples the gap is nowhere as great as it is in American society, for example. Nonliterate societies never make an issue over "education for life," as American schools do. In a tribal group, education is life. The parents do not work in a factory or an office the child never sees.

The child is not shut up in a school away from the home for hours and days on end. In the camp or village, children are around while all the fundamental activities of adult life take place. They play with bows and arrows until old enough to hunt. They can play around the older children who are watching the herds until they are ready to herd. They see and imitate the dancers until admitted to the dance. They listen to the tales of tribal lore and myth until they know them by heart. Most knowledge comes as a by-product of living with family members as natural, non-professional instructors and from play with older children.

Main Idea:
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Major Detail A:
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Minor Details: 1.
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Paragraph 14

Magic as practiced by primitive people is either imitative or contagious. Imitative magic is based on the principle that "like produces like." When a voodoo practitioner in Haiti makes a wax figure of the intended victim and, then pierces it with pins or melts it over a fire, he is practicing imitative magic. A pin **through the head should produce head pains or madness; a pin in the stomach, internal disorders; destruction of the figure, death.** When a Hottentot priest in South Africa causes a fire to send up great billows of cloudlike smoke to produce rain, **he is likewise** working imitative magic. Contagious magic, however, is based on the belief that things which have been in contact continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has ended. A magician can take nail parings, hair clippings, castoff clothing, even the spittle of an intended victim and, it is believed, injure the former owner by performing the prescribed formula over these objects. For this reason people in societies where contagious magic is practiced secretly bury everything of the kind to prevent magic being worked against them.

Main Idea:

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Major Detail A:.....

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Minor Details: 1.....

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Major Detail B:.....

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Minor Details: 1.....

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Paragraph 15

If an organization has been effective in selecting employees, one of the best sources of recruits for job openings is its own workers. Promotion from within has several advantages. First, an organization should have a good idea of the strengths and the weaknesses of its employees. The skills inventory, which should contain information on each employee's basic qualifications, can be effectively used as a starting point for recruiting from within. After this initial screening, the employee's present and past supervisors can be interviewed to obtain their evaluations of his or her performance. In general, more accurate data are usually available concerning employees within the organization; thus, the chance of making a wrong decision is reduced.

Main Idea:.....
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Minor Details: 1.....
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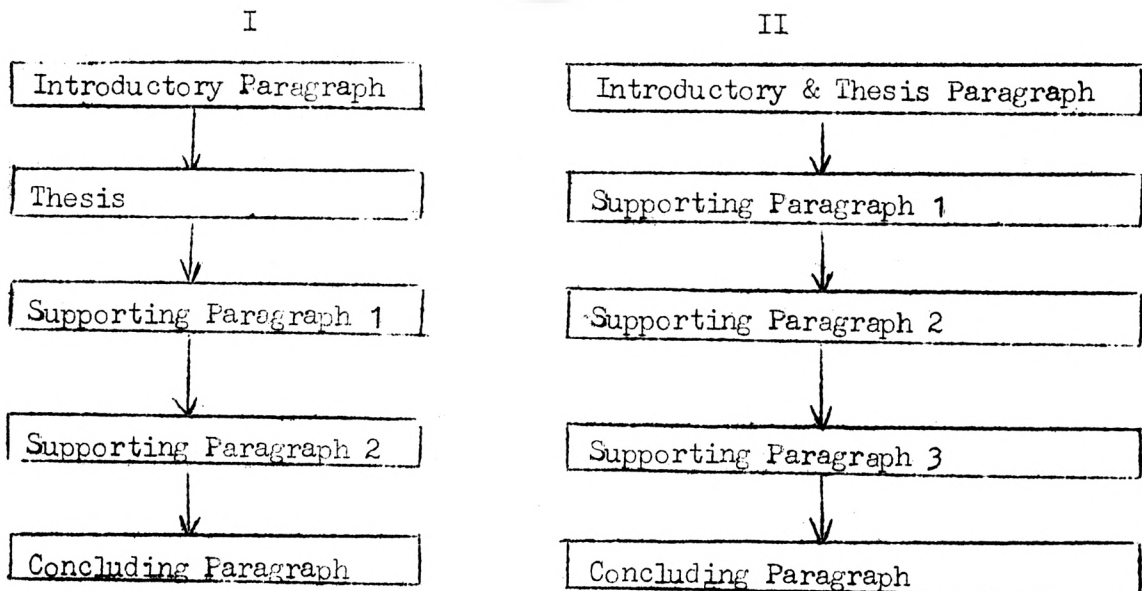
VII

RECOGNIZING THE THESIS OF LONGER SELECTIONS

In a paragraph, the central point made by the author is called the main idea. The main idea of a paragraph may be clearly stated in a topic sentence or it may be implied. However, in a longer work such as an essay, article, speech, or textbook chapter, the main idea is usually called a thesis, and a one- or two- sentence statement of it is referred to as a thesis statement. Sometimes, as in a short paragraph, the writer does not conveniently provide the reader with a topic sentence or thesis statement. Then the reader must infer or judge from the details or organization just what the main point is. Whether stated or implied, the main idea is like an umbrella. It covers all the details, but it does not introduce any new one.

In a longer piece of writing with several paragraphs, the first paragraph may be an introductory one, that is, it introduces to the reader what the rest of the essay will be. Then in the second paragraph, the thesis is stated. The other paragraphs comprising the essay, then, give supporting details to the thesis. The last paragraph is normally a concluding paragraph. However, in some cases the first paragraph may contain both introductory statements and the thesis.

The structure of a longer piece of writing can be either one of the following:



To determine the thesis of a selection, the reader must first look for the main idea of each paragraph comprising the whole selection. Then, by studying all of the main ideas, ~~he~~ should be able to select and mark out the prominent focal point among those main ideas. This dominant point is the thesis of the selection. Study the passage below and look for the main idea of each paragraph and then determine the thesis.

WOMAN'S INFINITE VARIETY

...by Claire Booth Luce

The talk about what "nature intended" in respect of the social roles of the male and the female is a lot of nonsense. Roles are character parts played by the dramatis personae in the human tragedy. Roles are, by definition, assignable--and reassignable--at the discretion of society. People play them well, or badly, willingly or unwillingly. It is, of course, always to the best interests of society that the roles which its members play should be well and willingly played. In a true democracy, all its characters or citizens would be free to choose their own roles.

It is a historic fact that there is no social role that has not, at some time, somewhere, been played by woman. Women have been absolute **monarchs** and heads of states. They have also been (outside the West) priests. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor--women in one culture or another have played every masculine role. And vice versa.

Women were once the wine merchants, the farmers, the weavers, the animal breeders of society. Now men are. Is cooking today a male or a female role? The cook who cooks for nothing is a female--or a housewife. The cook who cooks for \$25,000 is a male--or a chef.

Even the so-called female nursing role is often played by men. The American male who rises at 2 A.M. to feed baby his bottle is playing a "woman's role."

Nature assigns no "roles" to her creatures. She provides them with instincts and functions, which are not reassignable. And she lets her role-playing human children take it from there.

In the passage above, we can list the main idea of each paragraph as follows:

- Paragraphs: 1. The talk about what "nature intended" in respect of the social roles of the male and the female is a lot of nonsense.
2. Women have played every social role at one time or another.
 3. No specific role has been fixed for males or for females.
 4. Female nursing role is often played by men.
 5. Nature assigns no "roles" to her creature.

Upon considering the main ideas above, we see that the main ideas in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 expand the idea in paragraph 1 and the main idea in paragraph 5 is a repetition of the main idea in paragraph 1. The thesis of the passage is, therefore, the main idea of the first paragraph.

A close examination of the passage above also reveals that the first paragraph is both an introductory and thesis paragraph. Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 are supporting paragraphs. The last paragraph is a conclusion because it sums up the ideas of the essay.

Exercise 1

Find the main of each paragraph in the selections below and then write down the thesis of the whole passage.

Selection 1

LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH

...Judith T. Younger

The divorce rate (as recently reported by the National Center for Health Statistics) was up again in 1974. One out of every 50 married women were divorced that year. The new statistic continues an upward trend in divorces that began after World War II and escalated in the past decade to more than double the 1965 figure. It calls up a depressing picture of broken homes, disappointed adults and suffering children. Some societies (those organized on kinship lines) are well-equipped to handle such emergencies.

When there's a break-up of the nuclear family, each of its former members has some place to go. This is not so in America--"going home to mother" or father is out of fashion; in any event aging parents may have nothing to offer but a room in an old-age home. The increasing divorce rate then has grave implications for the stability of our society. What is to blame? Some commentators think they have found the culprit. They have seized upon the trend and all its implications, labelled them the product of the women's movement, and proffered them as evidence of what they perceive to be the movement's ultimate outcome: destruction of the family.

The charge that the movement, through achievement of its goal of equal rights for women, will ultimately destroy family life has been heard before. People like George Gilder (author of Sexual Suicide) and Phyllis Schlafly (titular head of Stop ERA forces) have been mouthing it for years. Today, however, the old charge is being made with new fervor and effect. When believed by voters, it has been a potent force at the polls, accounting for the defeat of state equal rights amendments in New York and New Jersey last november. The charge is, nevertheless, specious. In fact, the women's movement and family life are compatible and can coexist. What the movement opposes is not the family but rigid, sex-based role delineation within it, specifically the casting of the wife, because she is female, as an economic dependent for whom cooking, cleaning and child care are the only appropriate work, and the casting of the husband, because he is male, as the economic provider and power center of the unit. The movement takes the position that both spouses should share all the family's work, subject only to obvious biological limitations (men can't bear children), and sees family life as a partnership of equals. Far from destroying family life, the movement shores up well-founded families; they grow stronger as their members grow in independence, self-reliance and self-esteem. Spouses who have these qualities live together because they believe in each other and in their joint undertakings, not because laws or mores require it or because they are afraid of fending for themselves.

What is the real explanation for the increasing rate of family dissolution? It is the simple but distressing fact that most families are not well-founded. Their lack of foundation has nothing to do with the women's movement. It is attributable to two other notions that our society continues

to teach and reinforce through all the authorities it has at hand--parents, teachers, books, advertisements in all the media for every kind of commodity or article of commerce. The first is that mere sexual attraction--some call it "love"--is a sufficient foundation for marriage and building a family. The second is that free choice is vitally important in everyday life.

"Love" is exalted by constant telling, retelling, embroidering and embellishing of the Cinderella stories. Always the principals are strangers; at first meeting instant sexual attraction renders them unable to part--we say they "have fallen in love"--so they marry. Always this "love" that they have is the one bond between them. Always it is described in glowing prose, drawn in brilliant color, and said to be unique, consuming, lasting and capable of conquering all.

The second theme--the importance of free choice-- and its corollary-- the ever present possibility of correcting a wrong one--are similarly hammered home. The message is given variously. We are urged to trade in our new cars for better ones, change our college majors from physics to government, our habits from smoking to nonsmoking, our careers in midstream, our hair color each week, our companions, clothes or schools as the mood strikes us.

The teaching has been successful. We now view "love" as the only honorable basis for marriage and founding a family and free choice as the only honorable basis for selecting a mate and reason for sticking with the selection once made. Thus we raise our eyebrows and exclaim in horror at any match that seems to have something other than "love" as its basis (e.g., Kennedy-Onassis), or at any interference with a couple's free choice (e.g., Princess Margaret's forced renunciation of Peter Townsend). The trouble, however, is that "love" is ephemeral--it can pass--and choice, though important, must have limits. When "love" is the sole basis for a marriage there is nothing left when it fades. No residue of respect, friendship or mutual dependence between the spouses remains to act as a family foundation. Instead of staying together and trying to build a foundation that could support the family's continued existence, the typical modern couple, believing that every choice, including their earlier choice of each other, is revocable, gets a divorce. The 1974 statistics confirm a pattern of

early exit from marriage: of all divorces in that year, 31 percent were granted after less than four years of marriage, 40 percent were granted after less than five years and 66 percent were granted after less than 10. The median duration at the time of divorce was only 6.5 years, a drop from 6.7 in 1972.

The exaltation of "love" as a basis for marriage and the emphasis on free choice in picking, and staying married to, a mate now operate together to increase the number of poorly founded families and to hasten their dissolution. If we hope to rescue the family from the ascending divorce rate and to restore its former stability, we must retreat from these widely accepted notions and substitute others. I suggest five: first, marriage is not for everyone but only for those who want to found families and are prepared to work at and stick to it; second, there are more important reasons for marrying than sexual attraction (primary among them is that marriage to a certain person is likely to satisfy the needs of the family so founded); third, "love" should never be the only reason for a marriage; fourth, resort to divorce is often no more than extreme self-indulgence; and fifth, divorce, though it should continue to be available, is not an acceptable remedy for marital mistakes of the usual sort. Indeed, social disapproval in some societies (e.g., American Indians) has made divorce, though available, rare.

As chief harbinger and disseminator of this new learning, I suggest the women's movement. Self-interest requires it to spruce up its image. By announcing its support for well-founded, enduring families in which committed spouses, as equals, work out their own roles, the movement could accomplish a fantastic coup. Such a platform would, at once, open its doors to those who are now its worst critics--women who have devoted their lives to the family and see it and themselves threatened; and destroy the utility of its critics' best weapon--the false charge that equal rights for women can't be achieved without an accompanying wake for the family.

The thesis is:
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Selection 2

ACID INDIGESTION

...by Art Buchwald

America is an abundant land that seems to have more of everything than anybody else. And if one were to ask what we have the most of the answer would be acid indigestion.

No country can touch us when it comes to heartburn and upset stomachs. This nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all, neutralizes more stomach acid in one day than the Soviet Union does in a year. We give more relief from discomfort of the intestinal tract than China and Japan combined.

They can say what they will about us, but we Americans know what to do with our excess gas.

It is no accident that the United States became the largest producer of acid indigestion in the world. When the first settlers came to the New World they found their lives fraught with danger. First they had to worry about Indians, then they had to worry about their crops. Afterward they had to worry about witches. This played hell with everyone's stomach and the early settlers realized if they ever hoped to survive they would have to come up with a cure for acid indigestion.

Providence was on their side, because amongst the early settlers were two brothers, Alka and Bromo Seltzer. They were both chemists who had experimented with various potions that had been given to them by the Indians.

One potion was a white powder that the Indians used for athlete's foot. Why, asked the Seltzer brothers, couldn't the same powder be used for upset stomachs. Al was neater than Bromo and rolled his powder into a tablet which he then dropped into a mug of water where it immediately fized. Bromo said it was too expensive to make tablets, and it was much easier just to dump the powder into the water, which would produce the same effect.

The brothers split in anger, and Al put out his product under the Alka-Selzer, while Bromo put his out as Bromo-Seltzer. Fortunately for the country, both methods worked, and as soon as the cure for acid indigestion had been concocted the New World could be settled once and for all.

You would think that after we killed all the Indians and won the West and became a large industrial nation Americans would have stopped having queasy stomachs. But the truth is we suffer more from the blaahhs now than we ever did before. Some of it still comes from fear, some of it comes from ambition, and some of it comes from eating the whole thing.

As a people who strive for the best we must accept the fact that it takes a cup of acid for every step we take up the ladder of success. It is no accident that the men and women who run our corporations and our advertising agencies and our networks and our government are the same people who keep the Maalox, Pepto-Bismol, Bisodol, Tums and Rolaids companies alive.

Show me a man who has to drink milk instead of wine with his meals and I'll show you a titan of American industry.

For years other nations have tried to catch up with us when it came to sour stomachs and heartburn. But they never had the drive to produce a good case of acid indigestion. They never understood what it takes to keep up with the Joneses or outdo the Smiths. They don't realize that in order to live in the best of all possible worlds you have to have a certain amount of stomach discomfort to go with it.

If there is anything that shows up our system to that of the Communist nations, it is that we Americans can not only live with acid indigestion but we have three thousand different remedies to give us relief. In a Communist society the state decides what you should coat your digestive tract with, and if it doesn't soothe you, the state couldn't care less if you burp all night long.

Acid indigestion is as American as Mom's apple pie (which is one of the reasons we get it) and as long as there is enough heartburn to go around, we, as a nation, will survive.

The thesis is:

Selection 3

THE ENERGY CRISIS AND THE HIGH PRICE OF GASOLINE

...by John Beyenka

There are two main causes of the energy crisis and the subsequent high price of gasoline since 1974. First, in 1960 the five largest oil producing nations, excluding the United States and Canada, formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); second, by 1971 the Western industrialized countries' need for oil compelled the international oil companies to accept dramatic new demands by OPEC.

Prior to 1960, the countries that produced most of the oil used by Europe and Asia were at the mercy of a fluctuating supply of and demand for oil. The price the producing countries received for their oil went up and down by a wide margin. As a result, they could not make long-range economic plans. The reason is that, in any given year, the oil producers could not be sure how much income they would earn from oil. In 1960 the governments of the five countries agreed to form a cartel to ensure stable oil prices in the future. Of the five original members of OPEC, three were Arab countries.* One of these, Saudi Arabia, had over 30 percent of the total world's known oil reserves under its lands.

Before they formed the cartel, each member was weak in defending itself from lower oil prices or outside political interference. For example, when Iran, acting alone in 1951, nationalized its oil industry, the government was overthrown by the American Central Intelligence Agency working with Iranian groups opposed to their government. The CIA was brought in because the Iranians took over Western Oil Company assets and Iran planned to limit its oil production to Europe. Some observers believe the overthrow of the Iranian government came about because of political and economic pressures the major oil companies operating in Iran made on Western governments. After the Iranian experience in 1951, almost ten years of irregular prices brought no individual response from the oil producing countries. But by 1960 the producers had had enough of the fluctuations in oil prices and they formed OPEC.

*In September of 1960, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela formed OPEC. Just prior to September 1960, the price of oil had been reduced from 18¢ a barrel to 14¢ a barrel.

Meanwhile, Europe, Asia, and the United States were entering a phase of great industrial growth. In the United States the growth was fueled by its domestic oil and gas production. In 1960 the United States enjoyed enough oil reserves not only to fulfill all its own needs but also to export some oil to other countries. This was not true for Europe, Japan, Latin America, and Asia. These countries relied on foreign oil for 85 to 90 percent of their needs. Their dependence on foreign oil did not slow down the insatiable demand by the booming economies because oil was still abundant and very cheap. None of these countries in 1960 was alarmed by the formation of OPEC because the new stabilized price set by OPEC was quite low.

Another eleven years elapsed before any significant change occurred between the OPEC countries and the consuming nations. In 1971 Libya, a member of OPEC, acting on its own, raised the price of oil. This dramatic increase was ordered by the military leader of Libya, Colonel M. Quaddafi. Colonel Quaddafi was considered by the other OPEC countries to be a brash extremist. The leaders of these other OPEC nations waited for Quaddafi to be slapped down by the giant oil companies or, if not by them, then by the oil consuming countries' governments. To their astonishment, this did not happen. Instead, the oil companies, after a brief period of negotiations, accepted the young Colonel's new price for oil. The other OPEC states then quickly demanded the same terms.

Even before the dust settled on the new price, the Colonel from Libya demanded yet a higher price. And again, to the surprise of many world observers, the oil companies and oil consuming countries consented to the demand. The success of these initial large increases in oil prices showed the OPEC cartel it could have great political and economic power.

Later that year, September 1971, the oil ministers of OPEC met at the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut, Lebanon, to prepare a far-reaching new program. King of Saudi Arabia proposed the theme participation, which would test this new found power. In essence, participation meant that each OPEC member would own 20 percent (increasing to 100 percent) of the producing pumps, pipelines, terminals, and gathering systems installed by the oil companies in countries to produce oil. It also meant that each OPEC member would take over 20 percent (up to 100 percent) of the oil

reserves and production claimed by the oil companies.

This was a revolutionary concept, and the oil companies dug in their heels for a long fight. After lengthy negotiations in which neither side was willing to budge, the King of Saudi Arabia became impatient and issued a royal decree nationalizing 20 percent of the assets of ARAMCO. (ARAMCO or the Arabian American Oil Company was owned by Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Mobil and Standard Oil of New Jersey--now EXXON.) ARAMCO had little choice but to accept the decree.

The oil companies and the oil consuming countries accepted the progression of demands by OPEC for political and economic reasons. The consuming countries were all having severe difficulty with their own internal political structures. And, as a result, no Western leader came forth to oppose the building Arab power. Economically the Western countries were still enjoying booming growth and had come to rely more on OPEC oil. The United States, at the time of the formation of OPEC had been an exporter of oil. By 1971, however, the United States was importing 25 percent of its required needs from OPEC and Canada. Therefore, with the United States, Europe, and Japan all dependent to some degree on OPEC oil, the feeling was that if OPEC shut off its oil, a severe economic recession would follow. It was this economic fear that prompted the oil companies and the governments to accept the demands of 1971 for higher prices and participation.

In March of 1972, Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia, and His Royal Highness Saud Feisal, Prince of Saudi Arabia, came to Washington, D.C. to make an economic proposal. Their proposal called for long-term technological aid from the United States in exchange for a guaranteed flow of oil from Saudi Arabia. They proposed to reinvest their oil dollars back into the United States, thus providing jobs and reducing the American economic burden. They also warned that, if progress was not forthcoming on a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, the Arabs would resort to the oil weapon to pressure the West for a settlement. Their proposal was rejected in Washington.

Thus the stage was set for the oil embargo of 1973 which meant that all the Arab States stopped producing oil for export to the United States. Saudi Arabia had warned for many years that they would eventually resort to the oil weapon if a settlement was not forthcoming in the Middle East.

When war broke out in October of 1973, the Arab members of OPEC embargoed all oil to the United States and the Netherlands and reduced shipments to the rest of the world by 10 percent. As a result, most Americans and Europeans experienced long waiting lines for gasoline.

The tripling of oil prices was not caused by the Arabs' embargo. Rather it was at the insistence of the Shah of Iran that oil prices went from about \$3.00 per barrel in October of 1973 to \$11.00 per barrel on January 1, 1974. An ironic facet of the tripled oil prices and the subsequent increase in gasoline prices is that the Shah of Iran's father was placed in power by the CIA after the overthrow of the government in 1951.

The future will undoubtedly see lower oil prices. Historically, there has never been a successful cartel which lasted. Eventually, as demand for an item falls because of higher prices, a member of the cartel begins to cheat by selling more volume at a lower price. This process feeds upon itself until competition is restored to the market. Already, the individual members of OPEC have begun to reduce oil prices. Soon the oversupply of oil should result in even larger price reductions.

The thesis is:
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Selection 4

THE ENERGY FRONTIER

...by David Rittenhouse Inglis

Among all possible future energy sources, nuclear fission energy from reactors has been the darling of government funding because it is a spin-off from the military nuclear adventure. The development of the first atomic bomb during World War II was an intense and dedicated exploration into the unknown in a spirit of national urgency. In spite of all the uncertainty and enormous obstacles, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made a brave decision. Two billion 1945 dollars were poured into the gamble and it paid off.

After the war, reactors were developed almost to the point of commercial practicability with government funding in the new national laboratories. Then in the mid-1950s the decision was made to throw to industry the main task and opportunity of engineering the development and construction of commercial nuclear reactors, with the national laboratories playing a backup role in research. Both government and industry have since poured billions of dollars into the project, and because of this there is strong vested interest and an inclination to scorn other energy alternatives.

The proponents of an enormous expansion of nuclear reactor deployment rightly point out that such a program can probably be kept reasonably safe if eternal vigilance and the meticulous care appropriate to so dangerous an enterprise can be maintained. But there are already abundant signs that with pressures to build a large number of reactors, this safety cannot be assured. For example, a welding inspector was fired at a nuclear power plant at Virginia Beach, Virginia, for being too faithful in reporting faults in the welds, which are vital to the safety of any nuclear plant. Anyone who guesses that the probability of a catastrophic accident in a large nuclear power plant is only 1 in 10,000 **per year** is guessing about the performance of vessels with inadequately inspected welds and of much more intricate apparatus. In 1979, a partial meltdown and release of radiation from the Three Mile Island nuclear plant raised serious questions about the safety of nuclear power.

It would be much easier and less disruptive of our way of life to seek safe alternatives to nuclear power and even to fall far short of doubling U.S. per capita electricity consumption every decade. Of all the reasons to seek alternate energy sources, the most important is avoiding the proliferation of nuclear materials that adds to the likelihood of nuclear war and blackmail.

What we need again today is a brave decision by national leaders to explore with vigor and dedication the unknown but real potential of new energy sources. True, some effort and some public funds are being devoted to developing exotic new energy sources, but these funds are miserably small compared with the need, which, with the exception of nuclear fusion, is receiving perhaps half as much funding as it could use. Fusion is a

noble gamble, a bit more than a gleam in the scientist's eye. It may work. It may not. If it does, it will be several decades hence and it will have its troubles, including radioactive troubles less severe than those of fission reactors. It has the blessing of the vested interests because it could serve as a later-generation nuclear energy source.

Of the meager funds going into some of the other possibilities, it seems that more is going into paper studies and committee reports than into enthusiastic developmental work. Yet there are enthusiasts with ideas who cannot get money for research.

Of the solar energy possibilities, the Meineis' worthy steam-turbine in the-desert ~~scheme~~ (Meinel & Meinel 1971, 1972) and the biological production of fuels are receiving some funding, but still far below what is needed.

As another example of inadequate effort, no one is building a giant windmill. One prototype, built on a limited experimental basis during World War II, fed 1,000 kilowatts into the electricity grid in Vermont. That experiment came just at the dawn of the atomic age and was not followed up, probably because of early rosy hopes for infinite, cheap, and trouble-free nuclear power. Now that those early dreams have faded, it is high time to follow up on wind power development. The potential is enormous--almost limitless. Modern engineering stands ready, without awaiting further research and development, to build large numbers of giant windmills either in the sparsely settled parts of the Great Plains or offshore near the edge of the continental shelf, where they will bother almost to no one. They can generate hydrogen to be stored and provide a steady source of power. The immediate need is for a few million dollars to build the first full-scale prototypes to convince decision makers that thousands of windmills would provide as much power as the nuclear plants that are being proposed.

New legislation is providing sharply increased funds for energy research and development. But for 1979 only about 10 percent of the total federal energy budget was designated for development of solar and wind energy. Money alone will not do the job, but money in abundance and properly administered could foster the surfacing and development of all sorts of brave new ideas. A wide gamut of such ideas should be explored so that

we may have available the best options 10 and 20 years from now and, even more importantly, for the next century, when the more serious crunch will come. Anything less is shunning the challenge of the energy frontier.

The thesis is:
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Selection 5

A CASE AGAINST NUCLEAR REACTORS

...by B.J. Phillips

There are few subjects as daunting as nuclear technology. Its language is arcane, its mathematics mind-boggling, and, after all, it took Einstein to figure it out. Leave it to the physicists. Thus the nuclear industry was allowed to develop without public oversight. It matters little whether an uniformed and apathetic citizenry or a nuclear establishment less than candid about the risks is at fault in this. The point is that the reactors are there, 56 in operation today, with plans to build 850 to 1,400 by the year 2000. They dot our countryside, are cheek by jowl with our cities. And they pose hazards on a scale second only to nuclear warfare.

The possibility of an accident releasing radioactive materials from the core of a nuclear reactor is very real. There have already been a series of near misses, enough to remind us that technology is not always triumphant. Just as planes crash, bridges collapse, cars are lemons, so do reactor components malfunction. But a major reactor accident could, according to a study prepared, then suppressed for eight years by the AEC, result in 45,000 fatalities and contamination of an area the size of the state of Pennsylvania. The area close to the accident site would likely be uninhabitable for hundreds of years.

The lengthy lethal life of reactor fuels (plutonium, for example, remains radioactive for a quarter of a million years) poses a second problem: the storage of nuclear wastes. Under present plans, there will be 20,000 metric tons of nuclear wastes by the turn of the century, wastes that will have to be kept out of the biosphere for a time frame almost

one hundred times as long as the recorded history of the human race. Not only does this presuppose political and social stability, it also assumes that the technology to assure safe disposal exists. There are plenty of sci-fi schemes for getting rid of the waste--launching it into perpetual orbit (a risk the missile designers are unwilling to take); dropping it into the tectonic plates in mid-ocean and hoping it will work its way down to the earth's core; letting it melt into the Antarctic ice cap. But the simple fact is that the best anyone can do at this point is provide temporary storage with constant monitoring and safeguards until a method for disposal is found.

Finally, there is the matter of securing nuclear materials from the world's terrorists and blackmailers. A quantity of plutonium roughly the size of a softball is sufficient to build a nuclear weapon. Once the material has been obtained--and hijacking hasn't been proved impossible--it is regarded as quite simple to build a crude weapon.

The thesis is:.....
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VIII

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

Exercise 1: In your own words, write down as concisely as possible the main idea of each paragraph below.

Paragraph 1

With the advance in medical science many fatal diseases have been completely eradicated and several have successfully been controlled and prevented. However, malnutrition is still a cause of blindness among children although more and more nations have adopted measures to prevent infectious diseases. In areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America many eye diseases are associated with vitamin A deficiency, xerophthalmia, and its advanced form, peratomalacia. This deficiency predisposes infants to blindness from causes that would not impair a well-nourished child. The ensuing softening of the cornea causes loss of sight and frequently death. Emergency treatment often can save the lives, but not the sight, of youngsters suffering from this disease. Childblindness decreases with the improvement of health services. However, until nutrition is vastly improved, or the ophthalmic results of malnutrition are controlled, the rate of blindness among children is not expected to fall behind the rate of population growth.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 2

The question why a person gets fat can be easily answered. A person becomes fat simply because he takes in more calories in his food than are used up by his daily activities. No single optimum figure can be set for calories intake because the number of calories a person needs depends on the amount of energy he expends: a farmer's requirements are higher than a clerk's. However, once particular requirements have been satisfied, the excess calories, in the form of fats, are carried by the bloodstream to special storage depots in the body, the fat cells, and deposited there as the fat compounds called triaglycerides. If at any time the body needs

additional energy, it calls upon these depots for a supply of fuel. But when intake consistently exceeds requirement the storage of triglyceride increases, the fat cells increase in size and number, and ever-larger deposits of fat are left under the skin, around the heart and kidneys and near the organs of intestinal tract.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 3

Diet alone is not enough. Fat people generally exercise too little, and unless they alter both eating and exercising habits, they cannot attain healthy slimness. Most doctors now insist that their overweight patients make a practice of moderate but regular exercise rather than occasional violent activity. By walking three miles at a reasonable pace an average-sized man can burn roughly 140 calories more than he would sitting still. Jogging, an increasingly popular prescription, consumes about 400 extra calories per hour, and swimming better than 550. Even the housewife's chores can help: a half-hour stint with the vacuum cleaner uses almost 100 calories. These energy expenditures are hardly dramatic. But for the dieter, every little bit helps. Moreover, exercise produces important corollary benefits: it stimulates the blood circulation, promotes mental relaxation and, in general, induces a feeling of well-being. These psychological effects may be of critical importance, for the improvement the dieter feels in his physical condition can inspire a determination to maintain the diet and exercise he has begun.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 4

A young man was driven to seek help in a New York hospital. He was only 26, of average height but of startling girth; he weighed over 400 pounds. So obese was he that he could not walk the length of a city block without stopping several times to lean against a building and catch his

breath. His weight had cost him several jobs; he could not meet their physical demands. Still he continued to gain until at last, he met the girl who apparently felt she could love him more if there were considerably less of him. With this motivation, he put himself under the care of nutritional specialists, to whom he soon became known as the "vanishing American." In the course of 37 weeks on a diet that average about 400 calories a day, he lost about half his weight, regained his physical vigor and won the lady of his heart.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 5

Many women go through menopause without any difficulties, but many have disturbing symptoms that generally involve the nervous, circulatory, and the endocrine systems. Nervous-system symptoms include headache, dizziness, insomnia, drowsiness, neuralgia, numbness in the legs, and itching. Circulatory symptoms include hot flashes, perspiration, a sensation of choking or suffocating, rapid pulse, and shortness of breath. The term "hot flashes" refers to hot tingling sensations that involve the whole body, while "hot flush" refers to involvement of the head, neck, and upper chest. Endocrine-system signs are due mainly to diminished production of female hormones and include changes such as arteriosclerosis caused by the decreased hormonal levels.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 6

To produce energy, the cells generally call on carbohydrates and fats for fuels, thus putting to use the energy that had originally been derived from the sun. Using the sun's energy, green plants--and only green plants--have the power to combine carbon dioxide and water into a simple sugar called glucose. Plants link such sugars together to form starches; animals that eat the plants store the energy of sugars and starches in the

form of fats. The human body reverses the process by which energy was stored. For in assimilating a simple sugar, a cell oxidizes--in effect, "burns"--the nutrient to release energy, leaving carbon dioxide and water to be subsequently eliminated from the body. The process involves more than a score of separate chemical transformations, in each of which some enzyme does its job.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 7

Planning is the process of forecasting and anticipating and of preparing to meet those conditions that may affect the enterprise and its operations. More important, it is the process of attempting to make those conditions occur that are favorable to the enterprise. Planning involves determining the objectives that are to be achieved and the processes that must be performed to insure their achievement. It includes decision making, which is the process of determining and evaluating the alternative courses of action that may be taken and of selecting the course that is considered to be the most feasible. Although planning is concerned primarily with the future, it requires the use of data from the past as the basis for projecting future trends and events.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 8

When a child is old enough to play, other children come into his widening circle of experience, and they, too, become important in socializing him. He must learn not only to get along with others and to defend his rights, but also to share and cooperate. By the time he is in school, the attention, approval, and affection of other people are nearly as important to him as the satisfaction of his physical needs. Since families in a neighborhood tend to be similar due to economic circumstances and

taste, the neighborhood children with whom the child plays probably come from families with standards much like those he has been taught at home. His association with them strengthens his conviction that his ways are right.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 9

Paul always knows all the answers; he tells you how to do everything, finishes your sentences for you, and takes over and runs things the way he wants them run whether anyone else is satisfied or not. Paul is bossy. He dominates a situation and is unhappy in any role except that of the leader. He usually assumes a superior and behaves as if he were the only one blessed with good ideas or the know-how to get things done. Paul wonders why he is not included in the parties and picnics and why no one asks him to go to the "snack bar" where most of the high school crowd "hang out" after school. Paul, too, is puzzled over why he gets left with so much of the "dirty work" to do. His classmates seem enthusiastic when a club program or school function is being planned, but after he has told them what to do or how to do it, they lose their interest as well as their enthusiasm. Paul has not learned that people like to work together on jobs but resent being bossed and treated as if they are inferior and their ideas no good.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 10

The person who is forever finding fault with what others do is often an insecure person who attempts to bolster his own ego by tearing down someone else. Being overcritical is a symptom of maladjustment. In running down another person and finding nothing good to say about him, you reveal to the world that you find little good in yourself and that you feel inadequate and incompetent. By criticizing others, you attempt to show your own superiority. You try to make other approve of you at the same

time that they disapprove of the one you criticize. This one one of the most common defense mechanism.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 11

The shepherd's work does not always cease when he returns to the hut. Sometimes there has been a tragedy in the fold and then, when he walks back after one of his visits to the lambing-pen, he carries a newly born lamb whose mother has died. He hangs the lantern on its hook and then gives the lamb a brisk rub down with a wisp of hay. He warms some milk on his little stove and, with a feeding bottle, contrives to get the lamb to swallow some of it. This done, the lamb is placed comfortably in a warm nest of hay or sacking and in the morning a foster-mother will be found for it. Then, maybe, the shepherd lights his pipe, or eats a snack of bread and cheese, or perhaps has a well-earned doze on a couch of bags filled with cake until it is time for him to visit the fold once again.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 12

During the Dark Ages the Church had the say-so on who could read what. The invaluable writings of the ancient Greek, Arabian and Hebrew scholars were thrown out of the libraries. For one reason, the Christian authorities believed these to be pagan works, and therefore dangerous. For another, the Christian religion was based on pure, unquestioned faith, and its leaders decreed that any attempt at reasoning toward truth was hostile to that faith. So heartily did the Church detest the truth-seeking alchemists that in most European countries it forbade printers to publish any of their writings. With all these bands in effect, medieval scholars had to work in an intellectual vacuum, deprived of basic textbooks and of much contact with each other's work and studies.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 13

In a world where each state pursues its national goals or "vital interests," and where these interests may be incompatible with those of other states, power becomes a crucial factor. A state must rely on its own power to protect its citizens, maintain domestic law and order, and repel possible outside aggression. It must rely on power to protect its economic interests abroad, promote its ideology, and honor its commitments. States cooperate with each other by forming defensive organizations to ward off actual or potential threats. Such cooperation is not limited to defensive pacts or alliances, however. There are many subjects of mutual concern to all states, such as the international exchange of mail.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 14

We are often told that technological know-how, acquired in attempting to get us into the orbit, will be utilized to make life better on earth. But what has the space race done to relieve the suffering of the earth's starving millions? In what way has it raised the standard of living of any one of us? As far as the layman is concerned, the practical results of all this expenditure of money and effort are negligible. Thanks to space research we can now see television pictures transmitted live-half-way across the globe and the housewife can use non-stick frying pans in the kitchen. The whole thing becomes utterly absurd when you think that no matter what problems man overcomes, it is unlikely that he will ever be able to travel even to the nearest star.

Main Idea:
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Paragraph 15

The space race is not just simply the objective search for knowledge it is often made out to be. It is just an extension of the race for power on earth. Only the wealthiest nations can compete and they do so in the name of pure scientific research. But in reality, all they are interested in is power and prestige. They want to impress us, their spectators, with a magnificent show of strength. Man has just played the power game ever since he appeared on earth. Now he is playing it as it has never been played before. The space race is just another aspect of the age-old argument that "might is right."

Main Idea:
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Exercise 2: Each passage below was originally written as two paragraphs. Find the beginning sentence of each second paragraph and underline it. Then, find the central thought of each paragraph.

Passage 1

In every dynamic society there is always a generation gap, for in a changing world the young will always have different habits, viewpoints, and styles from the old. But in the 1960's the gap has opened to a point where the very fabric of our society threatens to be rent altogether. As with technology, it may well be that nothing "new" is happening, merely that cumulative tensions of decades are beginning to find ultimate expression. Still, the effect is to all intents and purposes the same. The young not only live in a world of their own--they have always done that, more or less. They now live--an increasing number now live--in an anti-world, one whose existence challenges the legitimacy of the adult world. The turmoil on our campuses is the most obvious sign of these worlds in collision. Any sensible adult knows that young people can be--and there are always some who will be--rebellious, wayward, defiant, dissenting. That youth should desire to see the world different from what it is, should incorporate into their won life styles this desire and this difference, is not an unfamiliar idea. What is unfamiliar is the idea that youth may properly engage in a serious struggle

for power against their parents and elders. Young people have always resisted or evaded the moral authority of their parents, on the assumption that it was out of date. But never before has the right of adults to any moral authority whatsoever been challenged.

1. The main idea of the first paragraph is.....
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2. The main idea of the second paragraph is.....
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Passage 2

A study of the international press could easily lead one to the conclusion that the United States is the loneliest nation in the world. We have allies and associates, but we have no friends. Across the face of the earth, from India to Chile, from Japan to England, bitter condemnation of American policies, attitudes and opinions has become sweet music to the ears of untold millions. Yet if we let these attacks drive us to bitterness or anger, we shall be entirely wrong. For the deeper meaning, the underlying significance of the denunciations is flattering beyond belief. Cacophonous as they may be, these catcalls are a call to greatness. The peoples of the world, in their dire need, want us to be wonderful, infallible, perfect--greater than they themselves have ever been in their own historic hours.

1. The main idea of the first paragraph is.....
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2. The main idea of the second paragraph is.....
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Passage 3

Not many years ago journalism meant newspapers. Today, the techniques of reporting are used in many media, one of them being electronic journalism. Yet the increase of avenues in reporting the news has not reduced the importance of reading the newspaper. In more than 12,000 newspapers in

the United States, editors and reporters try to keep the people informed. It is a tradition of the American press that it has an obligation to the American people: to print all of the truth, fully and fairly. Nowhere in the world is a deadline more inexorable than in a newspaper office. Come what may, the paper must be out on time. Because it is the goal of all papers to furnish high quality journalism--even under pressure, individual responsibility is great, and individual success is heady. There's something personal about a newspaper. It makes a difference which paper one reads, for daily consumption of the same journal influences one's thinking and one's point of view. One ought, then, to know what makes a paper good or bad. Only by exercising judgment regarding journalistic values can the consumer hope steadily to improve the press of the country--a goal to which every responsible citizen should be dedicated.

1. The main idea of the first paragraph is.....
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2. The main idea of the second paragraph is
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Passage 4

The weeklies are personal papers, concerned with "local" that constitute a record of the goings and comings of individuals in a limited geographical area. Usually they do little with international news, since with such very limited space they can hardly hope to compete with the urban dailies. The weekly newspaper is a strong force in building community spirit, its editorial page getting a much higher percentage of attention than the average city daily. If it is good, it is tailored to fit the needs of the community, whether those interests are tobacco, mining, or tourism. The news magazines are another type, with special goals of their own. Because they appear only once a week, news magazines can give more careful attention to preparation of copy, and in giving complete coverage a week at a time can achieve a better perspective in the news than a daily can hope to attain. There is also better opportunity for interpretation, since with the lapse of time one can see news events in their proper relationship.

Such popular news magazines are Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report, have sections devoted to special interests, such as business, medicine, science, music, art, education, books. A comparison of the three mentioned will disclose certain matters of emphasis (or slant) that one ought to keep in mind when reading them.

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2. The main idea of the second paragraph is.....
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Passage 5

Fiction, like, food, is of different nutritive values. Some is rich in protein and vitamins; it builds bone and sinew. Some is highly agreeable to the taste but not permanently sustaining. Some may be adulterated and actually harmful to our health. Escape fiction is of the latter two sorts. The harmless kind bears frankly on the face of it what it is. It pretends to be nothing else than pleasant diversion and never asks to be taken seriously. The second kind masquerades under the appearance of interpretation. It pretends to give a faithful treatment of life as it is, perhaps even thinks that it does so, but through its shallowness it subtly falsifies life in every line. Such fiction, taken seriously and without corrective, may give us false notions of reality and lead us to expect from experience what experience does not provide. When we enter a library and glance at the books on the shelves, we are at first likely to be bewildered by their variety and profusion, each seeming to cry out "Read me! Read me! Read me!" or "No, read me!" We have time to read only a fraction of them. If we are wise, we shall read as many as we can without neglecting the other claims of life. Our problem is how to get the most out of what time we have. To make the richest use of our portion, we need to know two things: how to get the most out of any book we read; how to choose the books that will best repay the time and attention we devote to them.

1. The main idea of the first paragraph is.....
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- 2. The main idea of the second paragraph is.....

Passage 6

Confusion about what it means to own a book leads people to a false reverence for paper, binding, and type--a respect for the physical thing--the craft of the printer rather than the genius of the author. They forgot that it is possible for a man to acquire the idea, to possess the beauty, which a great book contains, without staking his claim by pasting his book-plate inside the cover. Having a fine library doesn't prove that its owner has a mind enriched by books; it proves nothing more than that he, his father, or his wife, was rich enough to buy them. There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best-sellers--unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns wood-pulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books--a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many--every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This man owns books.)

- 1. The main idea of the first paragraph is.....

- 2. The main idea of the second paragraph is.....

Passage 7

Humans have used falling water as a source of energy for centuries. As water flows downward from high to low land its gravitational potential energy is converted into the kinetic energy of streams and rivers. This kinetic energy can turn waterwheels to do useful work (such as milling or driving machinery) or to spin turbines to produce electricity. Dams have stored water in reservoirs where it can be released to produce electricity

at any time. Although water power is theoretically a renewable resource, all hydroelectric power dams have finite lives, ranging from 50 to 300 years, because their reservoirs eventually fill up with silt. Hydroelectric power plants have several important advantages: high efficiency, high net useful energy yield, low to moderate environmental impact on the air and water, a long life, and relatively low operating costs. In addition, they are run by a free source of energy (falling water). The large-scale development of hydroelectric power, however, is limited by the availability of suitable sites. A good site has a high head (height of the water fall), a high rate of flow, a large storage capacity (reservoir), and nearness to a large population center. As a result, the best hydroelectric sites are in areas that have heavy rainfall and large variations in elevation. In the United States most hydroelectric projects are concentrated in two areas, the Southeast and the Northwest. Not only are good sites limited, but they are also unevenly distributed throughout the world and are often far from major population centers.

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Passage 8

For most of the world's population, especially in developing countries, the major water pollution problem is drinking water contaminated with bacteria and viruses that cause sickness and death. In the United States, purification of drinking water led to a sharp drop in the incidence of water-borne diseases until the mid-1960s, when it started to rise again. In 1975 there were 10,000 known cases of illness linked to drinking water in the United States. In 1974 a sample survey of U.S. public water systems revealed that only 60 percent delivered drinking water of good quality, 30 percent delivered drinking water of fair quality, and 10 percent had water of very poor quality. In 1974 and 1975 scientists found at least 253 synthetic organic chemicals in the drinking water supplies of 80

major U.S. cities, including at least 20 organic chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer in humans and test animals. Some of these chemicals are discharged into water supplies by industries. But there is strong evidence that some chlorine-containing organic chemicals (chlorinated hydrocarbons) which could cause cancer in humans are formed when chlorine is used to kill bacteria in drinking water. It is difficult to relate chemicals in drinking water directly to various types of cancer but there are a number of suspicious correlations.

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Passage 9

The average fertility rate of women is influenced by a number of economic, social, and psychological factors. One important factor is the average age of women at the time of their first marriage, or more precisely the average age at which women give birth to their first child. This seems to hold true in both developing nations with high birth rates and young marriage ages and developed nations with lower birth rates and later marriage ages. If social custom or pressure in society uses special pressure to raise the marriage age, as in Ireland and China, the fertility rate normally drops. Older brides tend to have fewer children. By raising the average marriage age (or age at which the first child is born, whether the woman is married or not) to 24, the reproductive period is changed from 15 - 44 to 24 - 44 and the prime reproductive period is cut almost in half from 20 - 29 to 24 - 29. This will almost certainly lead to a smaller number of children per family and is probably one of the fastest and surest ways to attain zero population growth (ZPG) with fewer ups and downs. For example, British women marrying in 1951 at age 19 had an average of 2.9 children. Those marrying at 20 to 24 had an average of 2.3 children and those marrying at age 25 to 29 had only about 1.8 children.

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Passage 10

Humanity's history of attempting to change and control the environment is basically a history of using more and more energy per person to supply human needs and wants. Primitive peoples had to rely on muscle power. Agricultural peoples added animal power. But during the eighteenth century humans made a quantum leap by inventing machines and discovering how to unlock the chemical energy stored in coal, oil, and natural gas and to take ores from the earth. Like the agricultural revolution, this industrial revolution was not a dramatic shift but a gradual process of technological and social change. Industrial societies led to a new catalog of ecological problems. We entered the age of new forms of air pollution, water pollution, and strip mining. As we learned to build industries that put chemicals together in new ways, we produced a series of useful products. But we also found DDT in our food, polluted air, and water with lead, mercury, other industrial wastes, and phosphates from fertilizer runoff. We have a massive solid wastes problem from increasing use of synthetic products not broken down by natural processes. With the harnessing of atomic energy for thousands of years. Industrial societies also decreased the need for much of the population to engage in agriculture. This has caused massive shifts of population from rural to urban areas, with a new array of social, political, and economic problems.

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Passage 11

Unlike most other fruits, the banana is best picked green rather than tree-ripened. When a stem of fruit has formed, commercial growers cover it with clear plastic bags that let in the sun, but protect the fruit from insect damage. Once the fruit is fully formed, yet still green in color, the stems are cut, washed, divided into bunches and packed for shipping. At the time we see the familiar fruit on grocers' shelves, still green at the tip but yellow in color, the banana has a shelf life of about one week. As the banana continues to ripen, the yellow skin freckles and finally darkens. The flesh is edible until it, too, turns dark. More than 100 varieties of banana are produced commercially. The native bananas of Asia grow in all sizes and shapes--from the tiny, sugar-sweet Senoritia, no larger than a girl's hand, to the giant wild plantains of the tropical rain forests.

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Passage 12

While the particular rules that govern the individual's behavior may differ from culture to culture, all societies possess some sort of ethical system. Certain actions have the word "right" attached to them, while others are identified as "wrong." Children are expected to learn right from wrong, to behave in accordance with these values, and, if they do not do so, to have a good explanation for their behavior. Reaching this stage is the goal of moral development. Behavior during the first year of life is essentially amoral, or without morals. During infancy social control comes from external forces--as it does to a great extent throughout life. No appeal to higher-order ethical principles, for instance, will prevent a toddler from snatching a toy from another child. Prevention can be achieved only by 1) removing the child from the situation; 2) distraction or substitution; 3) punishment; or 4) the introduction of a stimulus,

such as an authority figure whom the child has learned to model on or obey through past experience.

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