

## Mini-Lesson (15 minutes)

### Determining the Main Idea



#### OVERVIEW

When scientists research a topic, they must decide what is the most important part of what they read. When we do this, we are determining the main idea.

**Note:** You are encouraged to create the “Main Idea” anchor chart with your learners as you move through the lesson, using the provided anchor chart as a model. Post it for easy reference when completed and remind learners to refer to the anchor charts during inquiry circles.

#### MATERIALS

##### Teacher needs:

- chart paper
- marker(s)
- class Inquiry Chart (pond ecosystem)
- “Main Idea” anchor chart as a model
- exploratory text about pond ecosystems to model the strategy

#### PROCEDURE

Each *italicized statement* below contains suggested wording the teacher may use for the lesson; additional teacher actions and considerations are in parentheses.

##### Tell what the strategy is (declarative knowledge)

1. *Today we will practice determining the main idea of a section as we read about pond ecosystems. The main idea is the most important thing the author wants us to know about their topic. Getting the main idea is sometimes called “getting the gist” of a what we are reading.*

##### Tell when and why to use the strategy (conditional knowledge)

1. *Sometimes authors tell us the main idea. Usually they do that in the first or last sentence of a section. But they don’t always do that. Sometimes, they leave out the main idea and make us (as readers) work to figure it out. As a strategic reader, I will do this after each paragraph or section in the text I am reading. I do this because it makes my reading clear and helps me remember what I read.*

**Tell how to use the strategy (procedural knowledge)**

1. *The first thing I need to do is think about the topic (pond ecosystems) and what I already know about the topic.* (This could be information from inquiry circle time or during the scientific investigations).
2. *Now, I will draw a conclusion about what the author wants me to know about pond ecosystems—that is, I'll take what I already know about the topic and then I'll combine that with the most important details the author is telling me.* (Model this for learners while reading a section of from a text about ponds).
3. *Now, I have to put all these things together to get the main idea. I will think, "What would the author tell me was the most important idea from the reading if he or she were standing here next to me?"*
4. *I will put the main idea in my own words and record it on the Inquiry Chart.* (Use the class Inquiry Chart as a model.)