

## Unit 2

### Strategy: Find the Main Idea and Details



Since you have started school, you have read and written lots of paragraphs. You know that all the sentences in a paragraph give information about one topic. A paragraph may be about dogs that are trained to lead blind people, about high-speed trains, or about anything else.

A paragraph is usually written so that one sentence tells the most important, or **main idea**. The other sentences in the paragraph give **details**, or small pieces of information about the main idea. The main idea of a paragraph might say, "Dogs are trained to lead blind people." The details would tell how dogs are trained. When you read, finding the main idea and details will help you better understand and remember the information.

**The *main idea* is the most important idea. The *details* are the pieces of information that tell more about the main idea.**

- ✿ The main idea is often stated in the first sentence of a paragraph. Read the paragraph below at the left. Find the main idea and then find the details. You can put this information on a chart. Add a detail to complete the chart.

People enjoy different kinds of hobbies. Some people like to collect things such as rocks. Other people enjoy growing things such as flowers. Still others like to build things such as model airplanes.

#### Main Idea

People enjoy different kinds of hobbies.

#### Detail

People collect things such as rocks.

#### Detail

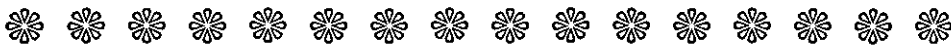
People grow things such as flowers.

#### Detail

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





## Exploring the Strategy

- ✿ A whole short selection can have a main idea, too. The main idea is often stated in the first sentence of the first paragraph. The details follow in the same paragraph and in other paragraphs. Read the short selection below. Find the sentence that tells the main idea. Then find the details.

### Games People Play

People all over the world have played games for thousands of years. Almost 5,000 years ago, children in Egypt played games with balls. Over 2,000 years ago, children in ancient Rome and China played tug-of-war. About 3,000 years ago, people in Asia played chess, a board game like checkers.

Another old game that children play is hopscotch. Children in Rome used nine squares, and children in England used twelve squares. By the time hopscotch came to the United States, children were using eight squares. But children always played the game in very much the same way!

- ✿ Now write the information on the chart at the right.

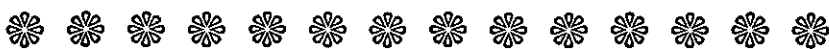
Main Idea
_____
_____
_____

Detail
_____
_____
_____

Detail
_____
_____
_____

Detail
_____
_____
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Detail
_____
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## Studying the Strategy

# Kwanzaa

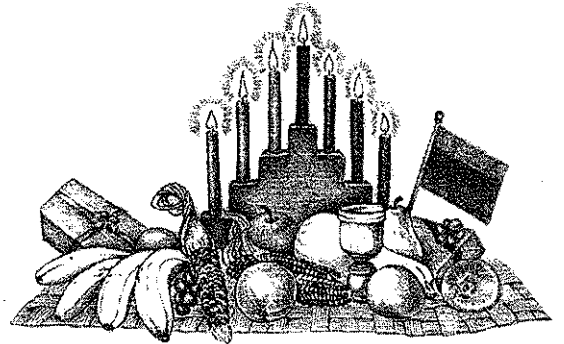
by Beryl Robinson

*What is your favorite holiday? Is it a time when you exchange gifts? Do you decorate the house and light candles? Do you dress up in special clothes? Do you eat special holiday foods? People who celebrate Kwanzaa do all those things and more!*

✿ A long selection may have one main idea, too. This most important idea is often stated in the very first sentence of the first paragraph of the selection. Details follow in the same paragraph and in other paragraphs. As you read, think about the main idea of the whole selection. Then notice the details that tell about this main idea.

**K**wanzaa is an African-American holiday. It is a seven-day celebration that begins on December 26th and ends on January 1st.

Seven is a special number for Kwanzaa. The word Kwanzaa has seven letters. Families set out seven objects for all to see. Each object stands for one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

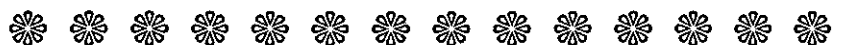


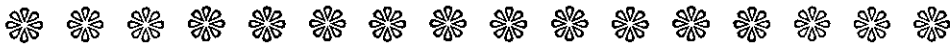
1. a straw mat (to remember the history of the people)
2. a candle holder (for the people of long ago)
3. seven candles (to light the way)
4. ears of corn (to honor children in the family)
5. fruits and vegetables (to celebrate the harvest)
6. a big cup (for families staying together)
7. gifts for the children (for promises kept all year)

Many families hang up a special Kwanzaa flag. This flag has three stripes. Black, red, and green stand for the African-American people, their struggles, and their hopes.

The idea for Kwanzaa came from Dr. Maulana Karenga. About thirty years ago, he decided that African Americans needed a holiday for giving thanks. He also felt it was important to remember African-American history.

Kwanzaa is a good time to learn words in Swahili. Swahili is a language used in parts of Africa. On this holiday people call out, "Harambee!" That means, "Let's all pull together!"





## Using the Strategy

- ✿ Write the sentence that states the main idea of the selection on the chart below. Then write five details from the selection that tell about the main idea on the chart.

<b>Main Idea</b> _____ _____ _____
<b>Detail</b> _____ _____ _____
<b>Detail</b> _____ _____ _____
<b>Detail</b> _____ _____ _____
<b>Detail</b> _____ _____ _____
<b>Detail</b> _____ _____ _____

### More to Explore

Write a paragraph about your favorite holiday. Tell its name in your first sentence. Tell details about the holiday in your other sentences. You might also draw a picture about the holiday. Then exchange papers with a partner and read your partner's paragraph. Can you find the main idea and details? Make a chart and share it with your partner.

