

Lesson 2

Finding the Main Topic



Learning Target



Knowing how to figure out the main topic of a text will help you understand what you read.

- **Read** Everything you read has a **main topic**. The main topic is what the passage is mostly about. Some passages have more than one **paragraph**, or group of sentences. Each paragraph includes **key details** that tell you about the main topic. When you put all of the details together, you will know more about the topic.

Read the passage and think about its main topic.

Home Sweet Home

Many early settlers in America lived in log cabins. They lived, ate, and slept in their log cabins.

Log cabins were built from the trees. Trees were cut into parts to make logs. Curved notches were made at the ends of the logs. The logs were put together to make the walls of the cabin. A roof was made from rough boards cut from the logs.



- **Think** Reread the passage and look at the picture. Now look at the chart. Add words to tell about the key details of each paragraph. Then write what you think is the main topic of the passage.

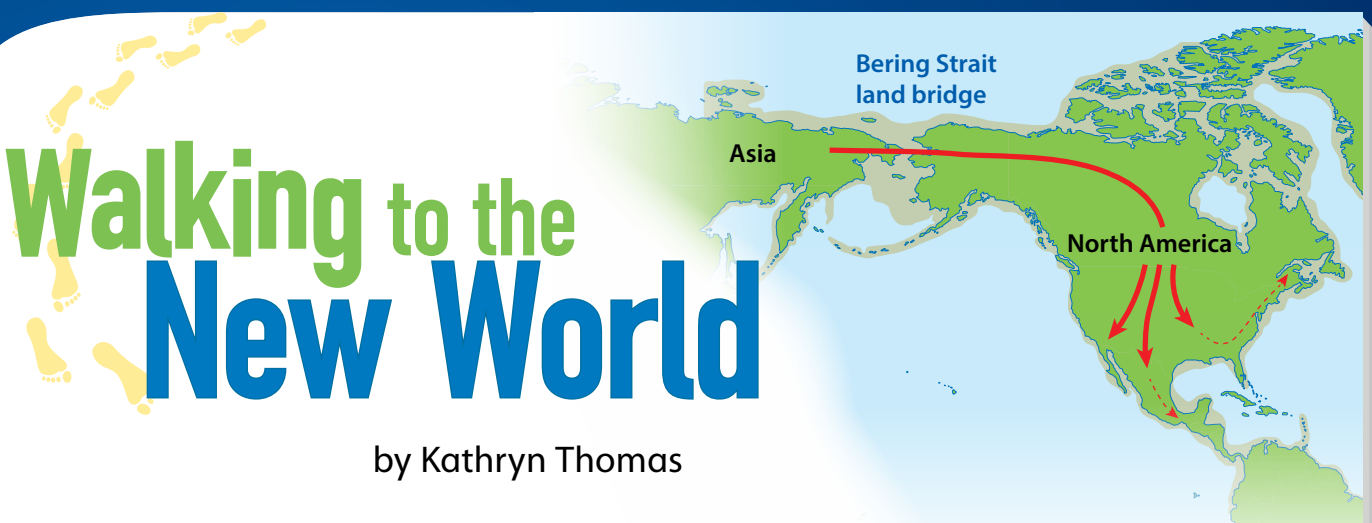
What is the Main Topic?	
Key Details from Paragraph 1	
Key Details from Paragraph 2	

- **Talk** Take turns with your partner telling why log cabins were good homes for early settlers.

**Academic Talk**

Use these words and phrases to talk about the text.

- main topic
- key details
- paragraph



Walking to the New World

by Kathryn Thomas

- 1 Long ago, ice covered much of North America. At that time, a bridge of land connected Asia and North America. People walked over this strip of dry land into Alaska. They were following herds of animals. The people settled in different places. Some slowly went south. Over time, they made different nations in the Americas.
- 2 Some scientists think people came to America even earlier. They think people reached the West Coast by boat. Ancient tools have been found there. These tools might show that people arrived before there was a land bridge. But people who study the past have not found much proof of this idea.
- 3 These people were the first Americans. All Native Americans are related to them. Scientists discovered they first came from Asia. They split into many groups as they settled America. They made ways of life we are still learning about today.

Close Reader Habits

Underline the key details of each paragraph.

Explore

What details in each paragraph can help you figure out the main topic of the article?



Look for key details in each paragraph.

Think

- 1 Complete the chart below with details from the passage. Then write the main topic.

Main Topic	
Key Details from Paragraph 1	People crossed from Asia into North America on a bridge of land.
Key Details from Paragraph 2	

Talk

- 2 Talk to your partner about the key details that help you figure out the main topic of "Walking to the New World."



Write

- 3 How do the key details from each paragraph help explain the main topic? Write your answer in the space on page 30.

HINT Change the main topic into a question. How does each paragraph give part of the answer to the question?

Who Were the Mound Builders?

by Bea Marron

- 1 Long ago, Native Americans lived near the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. These people are known as the Mound Builders. They carried earth in baskets. Then they piled it up with their hands. Over time, they made huge earth mounds. Some mounds were used to bury the dead.
- 2 The mounds have different shapes. Some people built mounds shaped like cones. One of the highest mounds is almost 70 feet tall.
- 3 Some people built mounds shaped like circles or squares. They made some of the largest mounds in the world. These mounds were built about 2,000 years ago.
- 4 Other people built mounds shaped like animals. One mound looks like a winding snake. It is about 1,300 feet long.
- 5 Still other people made mounds with flat tops. The people built homes on top of the mounds. These mounds were once part of a large, powerful city.



Close Reader Habits

How does each paragraph help you identify the main topic of the article?

Underline the key details in each paragraph.



Sometimes the first sentence in a paragraph tells me a key detail about the main topic. I'll reread all of them.

Think

- 1** This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

What kind of mounds are talked about in paragraph 3?

- A** mounds like cones
- B** mounds like circles or squares
- C** mounds like animals
- D** mounds like a city

Part B

Write **two** details you learned about the answer you chose in Part A.

- _____
- _____

Talk

- 2** Talk to your partner about how the key details in the paragraphs work together. What do they all tell about the main topic?

Write

- 3 Short Response** How does each paragraph add to what you know about the main topic? Write your answer in the space on page 31.

HINT Use what you underlined in each paragraph to help you write your answer.

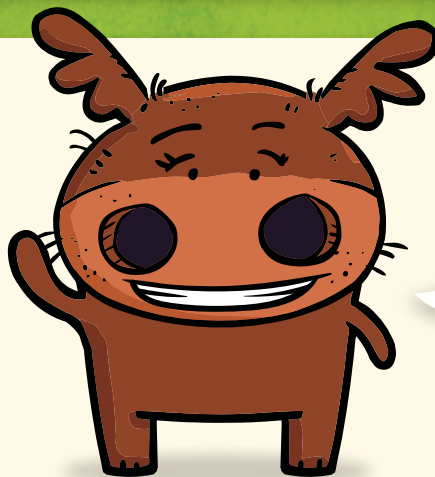


Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 27.

Walking to the New World

- 3** How do the key details from each paragraph help explain the main topic?

HINT Change the main topic into a question. How does each paragraph give part of the answer?



Don't forget to check your writing.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 29.

Who Were the Mound Builders?

- 3 Short Response** How does each paragraph add to what you know about the main topic?

HINT Use what you underlined in each paragraph to help you write your answer.

Check Your Writing

- ☐ Did you read the question carefully?
- ☐ Can you say the question in your own words?
- ☐ Did you use proof from the text in your answer?
- ☐ Are your ideas in a good, clear order?
- ☐ Did you answer in full sentences?
- ☐ Did you check your spelling, capital letters, and periods?



What the Past Leaves Behind

by Tracy Vonder Brink

WORDS TO KNOW

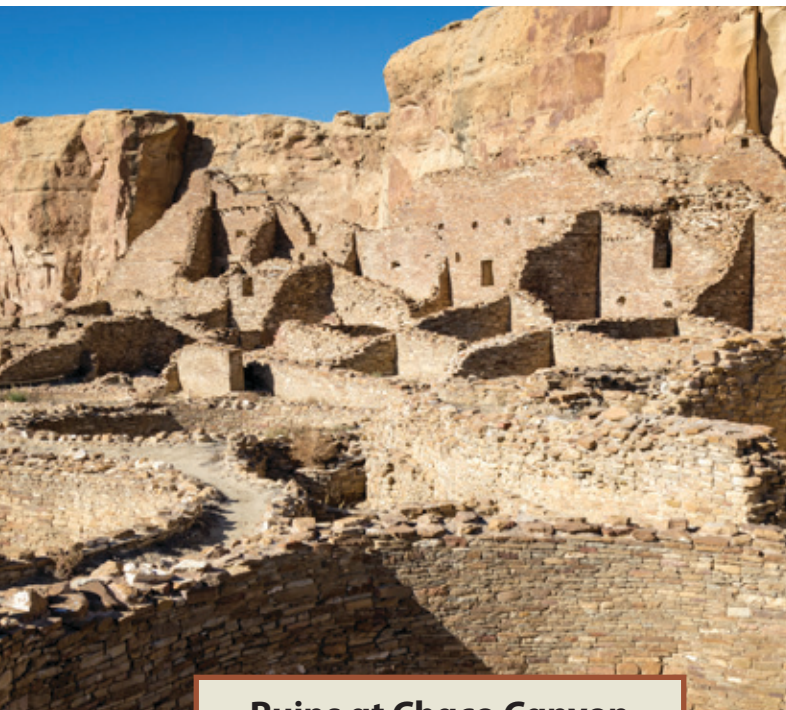
As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- **scientists**
- **traces**

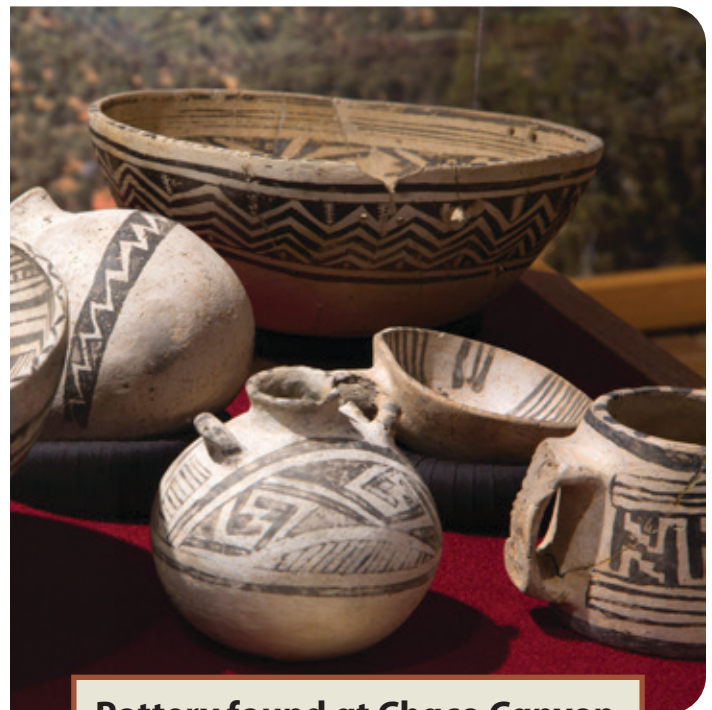
- 1 Have you ever wondered how people lived long ago? What did they eat? Did they wear hats? What tools did they use? The answers are hiding in their ruins, or what they left behind.

Looking for Clues

- 2 Scientists want to learn about humans who lived long ago. So, they study the ruins of the people. In these ruins, they might find a broken sandal, a piece of cloth, or a child's toy.



Ruins at Chaco Canyon



Pottery found at Chaco Canyon

Cacao from Far Away

- 3 The ruins of a city were found in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. This was one of the homes of the early Pueblo people. Chaco Canyon was a place where Pueblo people traded pottery and other items with other groups of people.
- 4 Thousands of bits of bowls and jars have been found in Chaco Canyon's ruins. The scientists learned that Pueblo people did not make all their pottery. About half the pottery came from a place that was far away.
- 5 The scientists wanted to learn who made the pottery. So, they tested some pots to see what kind of food they once held. They found traces of chocolate!
- 6 Chocolate comes from the cacao plant. But cacao plants only grow far to the south in Mexico and Central America. That means people from Chaco traded goods with people from far away. Even long ago, everyone loved chocolate!



Cacao tree

 **Think** Use what you learned from reading “What the Past Leaves Behind” to answer the following questions.

- 1** What is paragraph 2 about?
 - A** where people find ruins
 - B** how ruins are made
 - C** why ruins are broken
 - D** what can be found in ruins

- 2** Reread paragraphs 3 and 4. Find clues for the meaning of “items.” What is an “item”?
 - A** a place
 - B** a group of people
 - C** a thing
 - D** a piece of news

- 3** What is paragraph 6 **mostly** about?
 - A** why scientists tested bits of pots
 - B** how chocolate got to Chaco Canyon
 - C** how chocolate is made from a plant
 - D** why people in Chaco Canyon liked chocolate

- 4** Paragraphs 2, 4, and 5 are like each other in one important way. Which sentence **best** describes how they are alike?

- A** Each tells about the same ruin.
- B** Each tells about things found in ruins.
- C** Each tells who made the ruins.
- D** Each tells how people hid objects in ruins.

- 5** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Think about what the article tells about pottery. What is “pottery”?

Part B

Look at the answer you wrote for Part A. Write **two** details from the article that helped you figure out the meaning of the word “pottery.”

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Write Based on what you read, what is the main topic of the article?

6 Plan Your Response What is the main topic of the article?

- A** how ruins can help people learn about the past
- B** how chocolate traveled to New Mexico
- C** what the pottery of Chaco Canyon held
- D** how scientists learn what foods people eat

7 Short Response Tell about the main topic of “What the Past Leaves Behind.” Tell what you learned about the topic. Use details from the article to support your response.

[illegible]



Learning Target

How does knowing the main topic of a text and the key details of paragraphs help you better understand what you read?

