

# Main idea with evidence

Grade 3 | ELA | Gradual release | 40 minutes

## Target and preparation

Students state a main idea, select two relevant details and explain how each supports it. Reference: CCSS RI.3.2. Use the new green-turtle passage for individual assessment. Success criterion: at least 4/5 points including an accurate main idea.

Print four student pages per student. Keep D until the exit ticket. Bring a bag containing three school items, pencils and optionally two highlighters. Number labels and underlining work without color. Prerequisites: understanding a sentence and locating information in a short paragraph.

## Teaching sequence

Hook | 4 min. Take a notebook, pencil and library book from a bag. Ask what connects them. Explain that a text also has a connecting idea, but "penguins" alone is only a topic.

Model | 9 min. Read A aloud. Say "I think this paragraph explains how fathers protect an egg from cold." Underline sentences 2 and 3. Explain how each prevents exposure to cold. Compare the broad idea with "The egg sits on feet," a detail. Record the anchor: "Main idea = what the paragraph says about its topic; details = evidence that develops it."

Guided practice | 12 min. Read B together (3 min). Pairs propose a main idea and evidence (5 min). Compare "Beavers are animals" with an idea about building and changing surroundings (4 min). Ask students to explain both details; do not accept two copied facts without a connection.

Independent | 10 min. Students read C, write the main idea and connect two details. Circulate without supplying the main idea. Record whether difficulty lies in decoding, selecting evidence or explaining its relevance.

Evaluate | 5 min. Give D unseen. Apply the same five-point rubric. A summary in the student's own words is valid; the main idea need not appear verbatim in one sentence.

## Adaptations

Read the passages aloud when assessing comprehension separately from decoding; record this support. Preview huddle, lodge, echo and flipper orally. Allow oral responses or a scribe. Use the frames "The text explains \_\_\_" and "Sentence \_\_\_ supports this because \_\_\_." Extension: propose a true detail that would be off-topic and explain why it does not belong.

# Answers, rubric and next steps

Grade 3 | Teacher copy

## Accept paraphrases that cover the paragraph

A: Fathers keep an emperor penguin egg warm/protected in the cold. S2: feet keep it off ice; S3: skin covers it; S4: huddling helps warmth. S5 summarizes the effect. Model S2 and S3 as distinct evidence.

B: Beavers build structures that change their surroundings. S2: materials make a dam; S3: dam creates a pond; S4: materials make a shelter. "Beavers build dams" is too narrow if it leaves out the lodge.

C: Insect-eating bats locate food using echoes/echolocation. S2: they send sounds; S3: sound returns from an insect; S4: echoes help locate prey. A strong response links the steps to finding food, not simply to making noise.

D: A female green turtle makes and covers a beach nest for her eggs before returning to sea. S2: digs a nest; S3: covers eggs; S4: leaves the eggs buried. Accept a shorter idea such as "Green turtles lay and cover their eggs in beach nests." Do not require reproductive facts beyond this text.

## Five-point rubric | use for C and D

1 point: accurate whole-paragraph main idea. 1 point for each of two distinct relevant details (2). 1 point for each explanation connecting its detail to the main idea (2). A sentence number is sufficient to identify a detail; spelling is not scored. One combined explanation can earn both explanation points only if it clearly covers both details.

4–5 with main idea correct: transfer to a longer paragraph. 2–3 or missing main idea: compare topic, detail and whole-text idea in a teacher group. 0–1: reread orally, establish literal meaning and then reconstruct a main idea together. These are classroom decision rules, not a validated reading-level score.

Original short passages authored for this pilot; facts checked against the sources below. Text complexity has not been measured with a Lexile instrument or tested with a class. Preview vocabulary and adjust support to actual readers.

## References checked September 23, 2026

CCSS3: <https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/>

PENGUIN: <https://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/animals/penguins/emperor-penguin/breeding-cycle/>

BEAVER: <https://www.nps.gov/romo/learn/nature/beavers.htm>

BAT: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/bats/echolocation.htm>

TURTLE: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/green-turtle>