

Main idea and supporting details

Grade 3 Reading Worksheet

The **main idea** is what the story is mostly about.

The **supporting details** are small pieces of information that help explain the main idea.

1. Read the story once.

Penguins are special birds that can't fly. Most penguins live in Antarctica. A long time ago, penguins adapted to life in the water instead of the air. Their wings became strong, flipper-like tools that help them swim instead of soar above the land. Penguins are excellent swimmers, and their bodies are built for gliding through the water. Their smooth shape, strong muscles and flippers make them fast and graceful as they chase fish, squid and other food.

Flying takes a lot of energy, and penguins don't need to fly to survive. They get most of their food from the ocean, so being great swimmers is more important. Instead of the hollow bones that flying birds have, penguins have heavier bones. These help them dive deep underwater without floating back up too quickly.

On land, penguins waddle because their short legs are not built for running or jumping. Even though they can't fly, penguins have other ways to move. Some slide on their bellies across the snow, which is a fun and fast way to travel on the ice.

Penguins can't fly, but they don't need to. Their amazing swimming skills and unique bodies help them survive in their cold, icy homes. Penguins remind us that animals are built to fit their environment perfectly!



2. Read the story a second time. This time, underline the main idea and circle the supporting details.

3. Then answer the following questions:

What is the story's main idea?

- a. Penguins are special birds that can't fly.
- b. Penguins are excellent swimmers.
- c. On land, penguins waddle.

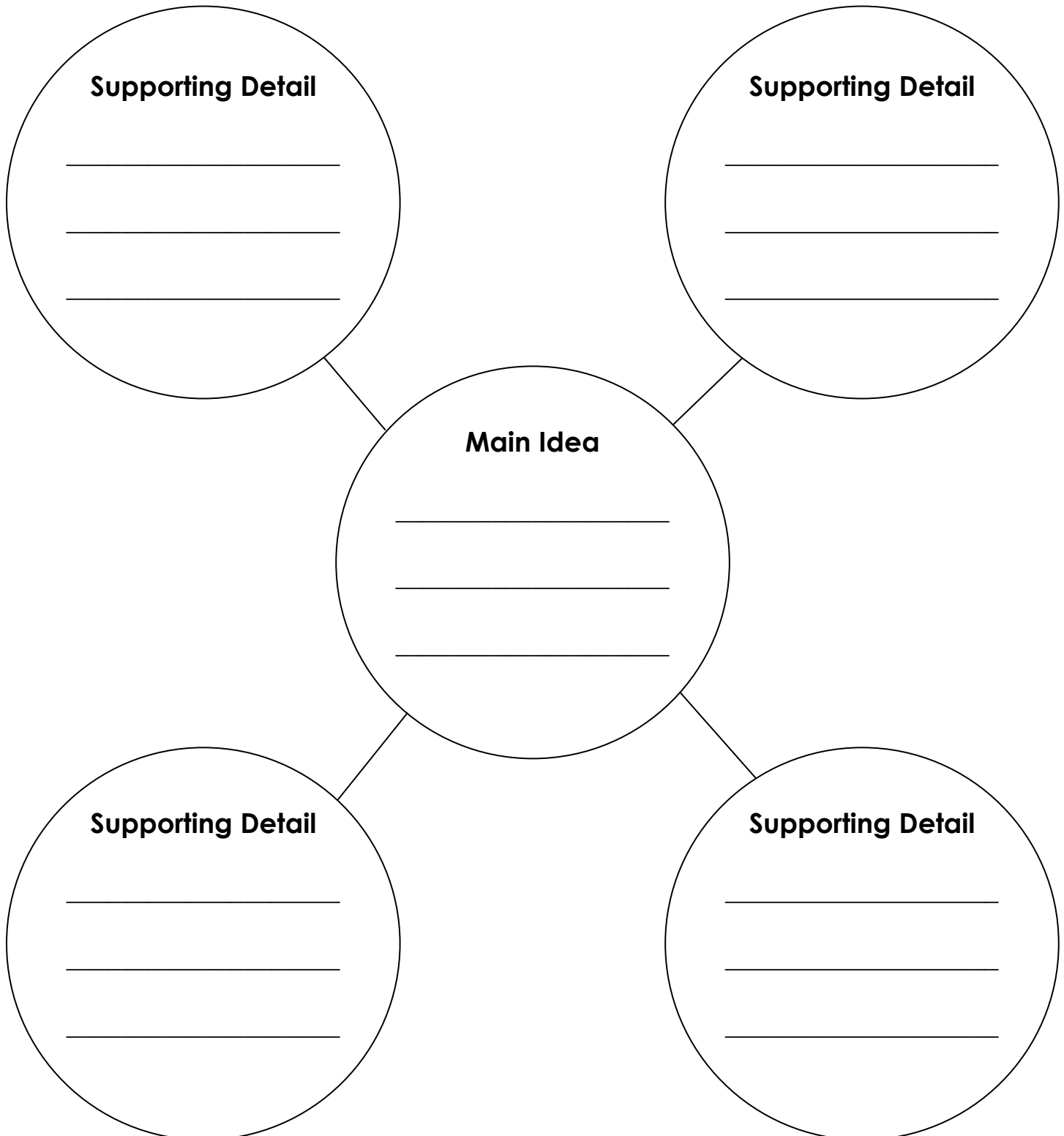
How do you know this is the main idea?

Which of the following details supports the main idea?

- a. They get most of their food from the ocean, so being great swimmers is more important.
- b. Flying takes a lot of energy.
- c. Most penguins live in Antarctica.

What is another detail that supports the main idea?

4. Use your answers to help you fill out this Main Idea Organizer.
(You will need to find two more supporting details from the text!)



The diagram is a Main Idea Organizer. It consists of a central circle labeled "Main Idea" with three horizontal lines for writing. Four lines radiate from the central circle to four surrounding circles, each labeled "Supporting Detail". Each "Supporting Detail" circle contains three horizontal lines for writing.

Supporting Detail

Main Idea

Supporting Detail

Supporting Detail

Supporting Detail

Answers

3. Then answer the following questions:

What is the story's main idea?

- a. Penguins are special birds that can't fly.
- b. Penguins are excellent swimmers.
- c. On land, penguins waddle.

How do you know this is the main idea?

Accept anything along the lines of: I knew this was the main idea because it is what the story is mostly about.

Which of the following details supports the main idea?

- a. They get most of their food from the ocean, so being great swimmers is more important.
- b. Flying takes a lot of energy.
- c. Most penguins live in Antarctica.

What is another detail that supports the main idea?

Answers will vary but must be taken from the text.

4. Use your answers to help you fill out this Main Idea Organizer. (You will need to find two more supporting details from the text!)

Answers will vary but must be taken from the text.