



Main idea

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Practice

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The **main idea** of a paragraph is what the whole paragraph is *mostly about*.

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As you read Uncle Ben's letter, think about the **main idea** of each paragraph.

Marco got a letter from his Uncle Ben, the airplane pilot. Uncle Ben has traveled all over the world.

Dear Marco,

I'm so glad you're coming to visit me here in Washington D.C. I'm sending you a flyer that has pictures and descriptions of some of the places we'll be visiting. You'll be here just in time for the National Cherry Blossom Festival. The 3,000 trees were a gift to the city from Japan in 1912.

Here's a bit of background on our country's capital city. Washington D.C. didn't exist before the U.S. Constitution was signed. The creators of the Constitution decided that the new country needed a new city for its capital. It didn't seem fair for the country's capital to be in any one state, so the states of Virginia and Maryland each gave up some of their land to be the District of Columbia, which is not a part of any state. It is pretty amazing that these states gave up part of their land. Countries have waged wars that lasted for years over ownership of even less land that these states gave up.

So a new city was built. The heart of the city is the National Mall. The Mall is a two-mile park that stretches east to west from the Capital Building at the far east side to the Lincoln Memorial on the far west side. Along the two-mile stretch, there are all kinds of museums and galleries—and cherry trees! Toward the middle, on the north side of the Mall, is the White House. The White House faces the Washington Memorial. Inside the Memorial, you can take an elevator to the top and look out over the entire city. From up there, the view of the Capital Building is amazing. The National Mall is a tribute to this country's strength and beauty.

At the far west end of the Mall is the grand Lincoln Memorial. I'm sure you've seen pictures of the enormous statue of Abraham Lincoln seated in a chair. The way he sits makes the chair look like a throne. Lincoln's face looks like he is thinking about an important problem, and one of his hands is closed in a fist, as if he has just made a decision.

I'm looking forward to seeing you, and showing you all around D.C.!

Yours truly,
Uncle Ben

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
 - A. Uncle Ben is sending Marco a flyer about some places they will visit.
 - B. Uncle Ben is looking forward to showing Ben around Washington, D.C.
 - C. Marco will be in Washington in time for the National Cherry Blossom Festival.
 - D. The cherry trees were a gift to the city from Japan in 1912.

 2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - A. The creators of the Constitution thought the new country should have a new city for its capital.
 - B. The creators of the Constitution didn't want the country's capital to be in any one state.
 - C. Virginia and Maryland each gave up some of their land to be the District of Columbia.
 - D. It is amazing that Virginia and Maryland each gave up part of their land.

 3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - A. The Capital Building is on the far east side of the National Mall.
 - B. The National Mall is a two-mile park.
 - C. The heart of the city is the National Mall.
 - D. The White House is toward the middle of the Mall, on the north side.

 4. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?
 - A. The Lincoln Memorial is an huge statue of Abraham Lincoln seated in a chair.
 - B. The way Lincoln sits makes the chair look like a throne.
 - C. One of Lincoln's hands is closed in a fist, as if he has just made a decision.
 - D. The Lincoln Memorial is at the far west end of the National Mall.
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5. What is the main idea of Uncle Ben's letter?
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Answer Key

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. Accept any reasonable response, such as what Uncle Ben wants Marco to know about some of the things they will be visiting in Washington D.C.