



Summarizing

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Practice

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

The **details** are *small pieces of information* that make the paragraph more interesting.

A **summary** includes the **main idea** of *each of the paragraphs* in a story. It does not include the **details** of the paragraphs.

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As you read this story, look for the **main idea** of each paragraph. These can be put together to make a **summary** of the whole story.

A Woodcutter was hard at work beside a river. He chopped down a tree and chopped off the branches, one by one. He stacked the small branches in one pile and the large branches in another pile. It was hard work, and he grew tired. By accident, he dropped his axe into the deep river. He sat down on the river bank, and put his his head in his hands.

The Woodcutter heard a sound in the nearby bushes. He lifted his head and was amazed to see a strange little man dressed all in green. He thought perhaps it was one of the Wood Gnomes of the fairy tales, and he was quite correct. "Why are you so upset?" asked the Wood Gnome. The Woodcutter explained what had happened, and the Wood Gnome walked closer to the bank of the deep river and dived right in headfirst. In moments he climbed out, carrying a golden axe. "Is this your axe, sir?" asked the Wood Gnome. The Woodcutter shook his head with sorrow. The Wood Gnome dived back into the river, and came up with a silver axe. "Is this your axe?" he asked. Again, the woodcutter shook his head, and again the Wood Gnome dived into the river.

This time, the Wood Gnome came out of the river with the Woodcutter's own axe, and the Woodcutter shouted out with joy. The Wood Gnome told the Woodcutter that he must keep the gold and silver axes as well as his own, as a reward for his honesty. The Woodcutter went home and told all of his friends what had happened, and showed them the gold and silver axes.

The next day, one of those friends went to the place by the river that the Woodcutter had described. He threw his axe into the river, and sat down on the riverbank and cried. The Wood Gnome appeared, and asked the man why he was crying. The man said that he had dropped his axe into the river by mistake, and the Wood Gnome quickly dived into the river, and came up with a golden axe. "Is this your axe?" the Wood Gnome asked, and the man reached for it greedily, saying that it was the very axe he had lost. The Wood Gnome kept the golden axe, and left without going back into the river for the axe that the dishonest man had thrown there on purpose.

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
 - A. A Woodcutter was hard at work beside a river.
 - B. A Woodcutter stacked the small and large branches in two piles.
 - C. A Woodcutter accidentally dropped his axe into the river.

2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - A. The Woodcutter heard a sound in the nearby bushes, and was amazed to see a strange little man dressed all in green.
 - B. A Wood Gnome offered the Woodman a golden axe, then a silver axe, but the Woodcutter said they were not his.
 - C. A Wood Gnome asked the Woodcutter why he was crying, and the Woodcutter explained what had happened.

3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - A. The Woodcutter got his own axe back, and the gold and silver axes as well, as a reward for his honesty.
 - B. When the Wood Gnome brought up the Woodcutter's own axe, the Woodcutter shouted out with joy.
 - C. The Woodcutter went home and told all of his friends what had happened.

4. What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
 - A. One of the Woodcutter's friends went to the place by the river.
 - B. The Wood Gnome showed a golden axe to the Woodcutter's friend.
 - C. The Woodcutter's friend threw his own axe into the river on purpose, but this did not fool the Wood Gnome.

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5. Write the numbers 1 through 4 in the boxes beside the events to show the sequence of what happened, from *first to last*. This creates a **summary**.

1-4?

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| A Woodcutter accidentally dropped his axe into the river.                                                    |  |
| The Woodcutter's friend threw his own axe into the river on purpose, but this did not fool the Wood Gnome.   |  |
| A Wood Gnome offered the Woodman a golden axe, then a silver axe, but the Woodcutter said they were not his. |  |
| The Woodcutter got his own axe back, and the gold and silver axes as well, as a reward for his honesty.      |  |

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6. What would be a good title for this whole story?

Answer Key

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. C
5. 1, 4, 2, 3
6. Accept any reasonable response, such as, "The Honest Woodcutter."