

Main Idea and Supporting Details

1. What's Your Point?
2. Down to the Details.
3. He Said, She Said.



What's Your Point?

- Every writing has a focus and a purpose.
- The *focus* is the topic that the writer has chosen.
- The *purpose* is the writer's goal for the writing.



What's Your Point?

- OVERALL, *focus* and *purpose* are often referred to as the thesis, the main idea, or the primary purpose of writing. *Focus* and *purpose* are tied together.



What's Your Point?

Example:

Some people say that the recent cold weather proves there is no global warming. This is wrong. People are confusing “climate” and “weather.” Weather is what we get on a day-to-day basis. Climate is the average weather conditions over a long period of time. So, a couple of snowstorms don't mean that the climate is getting colder. A couple of cold spells don't prove that there is no global warming. In fact, scientists predict that climate change will cause extreme weather, including snowstorms. You have to look at the big picture. You have to think tens of thousands of years. As Mark Twain put it, “Climate is what we expect; weather is what we get.”

What's Your Point?

Example:

Focus: The main idea of this passage is that climate and weather are not the same thing

Purpose: The writer wants to explain the difference to the reader.



What's Your Point?

Summary:

- The **focus** of a written passage is the writer's topic, and the **purpose** of a written passage is the writer's goal.
- Together, the purpose and the focus of a written passage make up the thesis or main idea.
- When you summarize the main idea of a passage, provide a complete description but **stay within the boundaries of the text.**



Down to the Details

- When you understand a passage you are reading, you are able to answer questions such as “Who?” “What?” “When?” and “Where?” However, the answers to these questions are not always obvious.



Down to the Details

- Sometimes “Who?” questions can be answered with a name such as “George Washington.” But Washington can also be described as “the first president” or “General Washington” or “commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.”



Down to the Details

- “What?” questions can be answered with something as simple as “a chemical,” but the answer can also be more complicated, asking about “reagents,” “catalysts,” or “metabolites.”



Down to the Details

- “When?” questions become tricky if a lot of dates are included in the reading, and “Where?” questions become problematic if a lot of different places are mentioned.



Down to the Details

Summary:

- Good writing includes detail, and reading comprehension requires you to recognize those details, including names, objects, dates, and places.
- Monitor your reading comprehension by asking yourself why the author included a specific detail.



He Said, She Said

- Now we'll take a look at some paired passages about the same general topic. **Double passages**, as these are often called, are **not** necessarily twice as hard as single passages. Double passages can include questions about each passage alone as well as questions that ask you about the relationship between the two passages.



He Said, She Said

- Think of these **paired passages** as a conversation between two people. He says something and then she says something related. Questions about these double passages typically ask:

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He Said, She Said

- Do the author's agree or disagree?
- What is the most important point of disagreement?
- How might one author respond to the other author?
- What is the most important difference between the two?



He Said, She Said

TIP

- As you read paired passages try to determine the relationship between them. Do they agree or disagree? What argument is each author making?



He Said, She Said

Summary:

- Double passages include some of the same type of questions that are asked about single passages.
- Reading double passages also provides an opportunity to consider whether the authors agree or disagree and how their arguments compare.





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