

6.14 Paragraph structure

Topic: Conservation

Subtopic: Water conservation

Activity type/skill: Identifying main ideas and details

Literacy focus: Reading

Genre: Information reports

Objective

- Identify the main idea of a paragraph.
- Identify details that support the main idea.

What you need

- Student worksheet (see next page)

What to do

1. Look at the student worksheet and remind students of how they can use headings and illustrations to help them understand what a text will be about.
2. Explain how paragraphs have a main idea and details that relate to the main idea. The main idea is usually, but not always, in the first sentence. Identifying the main idea of paragraphs will help them understand the detail.
3. Have them work together to find the main idea of the first paragraph (There are two types of water), then find the details.
4. Allocate one of the other paragraphs to each student and give them time to identify the main idea and details.
5. Have them talk to the rest of the group about their paragraph, explaining the way the details relate to the main idea. Other students should challenge the speaker if they don't agree – when a consensus is reached, each student should underline the main ideas and circle or highlight each of the details.

Extending the activity

- Have students find the main idea and details in other texts in the classroom.

Activity fourteen

main idea (+ detail + detail + detail)

main idea

There are two types of water found in the environment. One is sea water which is salty and we cannot drink it. The other is fresh water which is not salty and we can drink it (after it has been treated).

detail

detail

Living things need other living things to survive. Animals use other animals and plants for food and shelter. Plants need other plants for shelter.

People depend on water to survive. We use it in our homes for drinking and washing. We also use water in gardens and on farms.

Factories can pollute streams and rivers by letting dirty water flow into them. This can make the water poisonous for plants and animals. There are laws to stop factories polluting rivers.

There is more demand for water in summer than in winter. In summer it is hotter and people want water to keep them cool. They drink more and have more showers. They also use more water in their gardens and swimming pools.