

K-6 Lessons :: The Lost Garden 6th Grade Unit

Lesson 1: What are the Main Ideas?

Learning Outcome

Identify the main ideas in an autobiography.

Duration

Approximately 2 Days (40-45 minutes for each class)

Necessary Materials

Provided: Main Idea Web 1, Main Idea Web 2, Main Idea Web Worksheet (Student Packet, page 6), Main Idea Web Graphic Organizer (Optional)

Not Provided: Chart paper, markers, *The Lost Garden* by Laurence Yep

Lesson Plan

- **ACTIVATION & MOTIVATION**

Before starting the lesson, write the following three excerpts on chart paper or the board and cover them.

Reveal the first excerpt: Sixteen years ago, Aisha and Jason met while at a beach in Italy. They fell madly in love and got married within a month. The couple hasn't been apart for more than a day. Ask: "What is this excerpt mostly about? Aisha and Jason met on a beach, or Aisha and Jason are married for sixteen years even though they only dated for a month?"

Reveal the next excerpt: Aisha and Jason now have three children, even though they couldn't picture themselves as parents. Their love for their children is evident. Aisha and Jason are great parents who would do anything for their kids. Ask: "What is this excerpt mostly about? Aisha and Jason never wanted children, or Aisha and Jason are great parents?"

Reveal the final excerpt: When their oldest daughter lost her hair from chemo, Aisha shaved her brown locks off too. When their son needed a kidney, Jason gave his. Ask: "What is this excerpt mostly about? The couple's daughter went through chemo, or the family helps each other?"

Finally, Ask: "What are all these excerpts mostly about? The couple has been married for sixteen years, or the couple loves each other and their family?"

- **DIRECT TEACHING**



will explain that in each excerpt there was a main idea, or what the text was mostly about. Each of these main ideas helped us determine the overall main idea

of the passage. Similarly, autobiographies have an overall main idea for the book. A good way to understand the autobiography's main idea is to figure out the main idea of each chapter. To do this, I will identify the topic of each chapter, and the supporting details. This will help me draw a conclusion about its main idea.

I will identify the main idea of Chapter 1: "The Pearl Apartments," in *The Lost Garden*. I will skim or reread the chapter and I will list the topics discussed in the text on chart paper or the board. I will ask myself: What did I learn about in this chapter? For example, I learned about the author's grandmother, the author's childhood, the Pearl Apartments, the author's family, and the author's opinion of himself. I will write each topic in a circle that will help me create Main Idea Web 1. Note: See Main Idea Web 1 for a sample chart and responses.

For each topic, I will cluster key supporting details around the topic. For example, under the topic circle, "grandmother," I will connect a line and draw a detail circle. Inside the detail circle, I will write that she was born in China and she now lived in Chinatown, where the author visited her.

After I've clustered all the supporting details around each topic, I will think aloud: "What is the main idea of this chapter? What do all of these clusters have in common? What does the author want me to know overall? Using my clusters, I can figure out that the big idea of this chapter is to explain significant people and places in his childhood." I will write this main idea on Main Idea Web 1.

- **Think Check**

Ask: "How can I identify the main idea in an autobiography?" Students should answer that they can read a chapter and create a list of the topics in the text. Next, they can identify the main details for each topic. They can use the list to draw a conclusion about the chapter's main idea.

- **GUIDED PRACTICE**



will reread Chapter 2: "La Conquista" aloud to identify the main idea. As we read, we will create a Main Idea Web about the topics that are discussed. *Note:* Topics can include the family's store, landmarks of San Francisco, the family car, the author's writing career, the projects, and thieves in the author's neighborhood.

We will connect the supporting details to these topics. For example, under the topic circle, "the family's store," we will connect a line and draw a detail circle. Inside the detail circle, we will write that the store took up most of the family's time. See Main Idea Web 2 for specific examples.

We will examine the topics and details we have written down to draw a conclusion about the main idea. We will ask ourselves, what does the author want to tell us overall? We could draw a conclusion that the main idea of this chapter is that the store was the main source of the author's experiences with his family and society. We will record the main idea on our web.

- **INDEPENDENT PRACTICE**



will reread Chapter 3: "The Neighborhood." On your Main Idea Web Worksheet, you will record topics identified in the chapter and you will write down details from the text that support each topic. (See page 6 in the Student Packet.) You will then analyze the information on your Worksheet and explain the overall main idea. You will draw a conclusion about the chapter's main idea and you will prepare to share it with the class.

- **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**



will continue identifying the main idea of each chapter and fill out a Main Idea Web Graphic Organizer for each chapter if time permits. *Note:* See Main Idea Web Graphic Organizer for a worksheet to use with each chapter. When we are finished reading the book, we will come back to our Main Idea Web Graphic Organizer to draw a conclusion about the entire book's main idea. What does the author want us to come away with overall when we have finished reading his autobiography?