

WRITING A SUMMARY

RI.4.2. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

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Detailed walkthroughs of each lesson.

STUDENT HANDOUTS FOR LESSONS 1–3

Reproducible handouts students will use to complete activities during the lessons.

PASSAGE

A text designed to support the skills students practice in the lessons. You may freely use the provided text or select your own. (Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.)

STUDENT ACTIVITY

An activity that gives students an opportunity to independently practice the skills from the lessons, intended to be completed following the lesson set.

STUDENT ACTIVITY FEEDBACK GUIDE

A feedback tool to use with the independent Student Activity.

WRITING A SUMMARY

TEACHER NOTES

RI.4.2, Lessons 1–3

UNIT OVERVIEW

These lessons are designed to help students determine the main idea of an informational text and use that knowledge to summarize the text. Determining the main idea is a high-level critical thinking skill that takes time to develop. The teacher may need to repeat lessons, scaffold skills, and model multiple examples to help students develop this skill.

Lesson 1: This lesson begins with a review of informational texts to set the foundation. Next, students read an informational text to discover its topic. Students decide which key details best support the topic and use the details to help determine the main idea, with targeted questions from you to guide them. During the lesson, students complete a graphic organizer with key details and the main idea of the text.

Lesson 2: In this lesson students determine if a detail is important by asking if it answers a who, what, when, where, or how question about the text topic. Students talk through their answers from the Lesson 1 handout and change or improve their answers based on the discussion. Then students use their improved answers to complete the Lesson 2 graphic organizer.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, the teacher models how to write a summary using details that explain the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the topic. Students use the details from their Lesson 2 handout to supply the who, what, where, when, why, and how details of the text; then they will practice writing a summary.

As an optional activity, the teacher may assign the [STUDENT ACTIVITY](#) with a new informational text to assess how well students independently determine the main idea and construct a summary.

Research Findings

Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities

<p>Younger students have a difficult time making inferences about a text and explaining how concepts relate to one another. The main idea strategy helps students make inferences by breaking the process into steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Step 1: Make the topic known.Step 2: Accent at least two essential details.Step 3: Ink out the clarifying details.Step 4: Notice how the essential details are related.Step 5: Infer the main idea. <p>(Boudah, 2013)</p>	<p>The lessons walk students through discussing the topic, locating the details, discovering how the details are related, and determining the main idea.</p>
<p>Think-alouds help students see and hear how successful readers strategize and work through problems when they read.</p> <p>(Boudah, 2013; Davey, 1983)</p>	<p>During the lessons, the teacher models some of the steps in the main idea strategy using think-alouds.</p>
<p>Young children may have trouble comprehending because they cannot make inferences.</p> <p>(Cain & Oakhill, 1999).</p> <p>If students are struggling, assess their reading comprehension skills with a text that is below grade level.</p> <p>(Boudah, 2013)</p>	<p>Consider text complexity when choosing an informational text for this lesson set.</p>
<p>Summarization skills are an important step in becoming a good reader. Explicitly teaching the steps involved in writing a summary equips all readers with the skills needed to become a good reader. Good readers are skillful at ignoring irrelevant details, while noting important details and passage structure to develop a summary</p> <p>(Jitendra & Gairia, 2011)</p>	<p>Graphic organizers break down the summarization process for students and help them see how the topic and key details are related. Students use knowledge of the topic and key details to write a summary as the culminating activity of the unit.</p>

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Davey, B. (1983). Think aloud: Modeling the cognitive processes of reading comprehension. *Journal of Reading*, 27(1), 44–47.

Jitendra, A. K., & Gajria, M. (2011). Main idea and summarization instruction to improve reading comprehension. *Handbook of Reading Interventions*, 198-219.

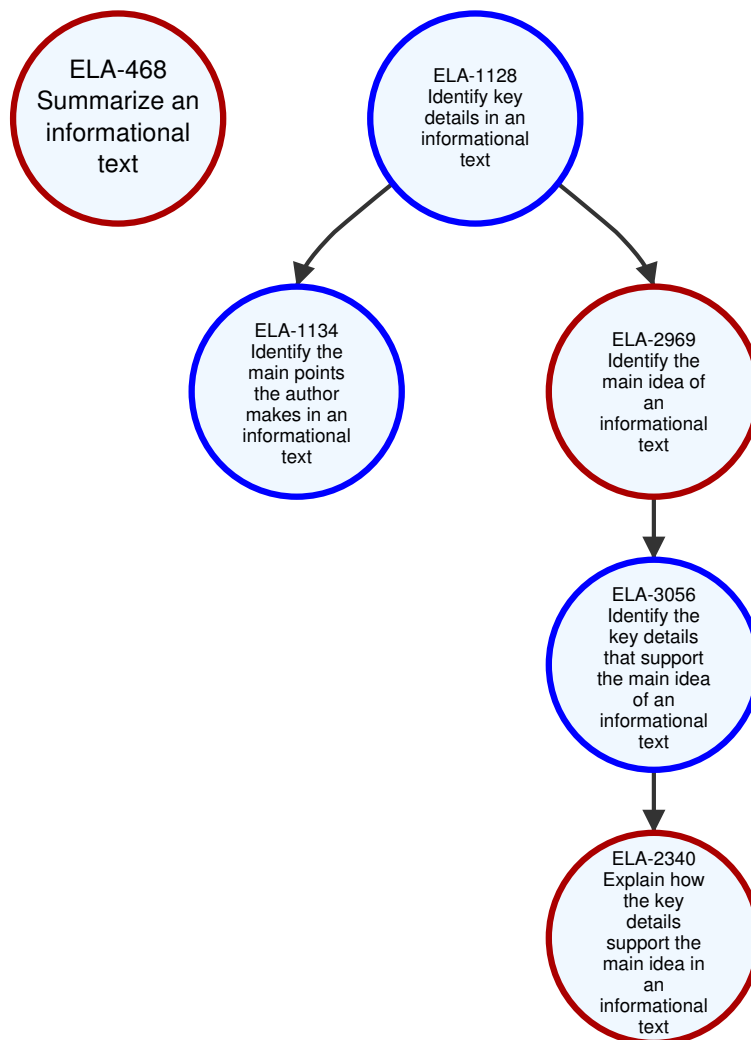
WRITING A SUMMARY

LEARNING MAP TOOL

RI.4.2

STANDARD

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.



**Learning map model for RI.4.2.*

Node ID	Node Name	Node Description
ELA-468	SUMMARIZE AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Summarize the facts, details, and other pieces of relevant, descriptive information in an informational text.
ELA-1128	IDENTIFY KEY DETAILS IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Determine which details in an informational text are most important.
ELA-1134	IDENTIFY THE MAIN POINTS THE AUTHOR MAKES IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Determine which of the points that the author makes in an informational text are the most important.
ELA-1252	IDENTIFY TOPIC-RELATED WORDS IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Determine which words in an informational text are related to the topic of the text.
ELA-2340	EXPLAIN HOW THE KEY DETAILS SUPPORT THE MAIN IDEA IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Provide an explanation for how details in a paragraph of informational text support the main idea of the paragraph.
ELA-2969	IDENTIFY THE MAIN IDEA OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Use supporting points and key details to identify the main idea of an informational text.
ELA-3056	IDENTIFY THE KEY DETAILS THAT SUPPORT THE MAIN IDEA OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify which details in an informational text support the main idea.

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.4.2, Lesson 1

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students learn to identify the main idea of an informational text.

STANDARD

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select a short informational text, such as a section from a science or history book or a magazine article. This unit includes a passage, [IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY](#), which you are free to copy. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ copies of [PASSAGE: IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY](#)
- ▶ highlighter
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: MAIN IDEA](#)

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can identify the main idea of an informational text.”

Ask students if they are familiar with these concepts: topic, main idea, topic sentence, and key details. Have students use hand signals, such as the fist-to-five strategy, to indicate familiarity. **Review** any terms that are unfamiliar.

- ▶ **Topic** – the subject of a piece of writing
- ▶ **Main idea** – the point about a topic, a big idea about the topic that the author wants to share
- ▶ **Topic sentence** – states the main idea and lets you know what the piece of writing is about
- ▶ **Key details** – sentences that help explain the main idea

Pass out copies of [PASSAGE: IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY](#) and **read** it aloud.

Ask, “What is the text topic?” As a class, decide on a word or short phrase that represents the topic and post it on the board.

Group students, telling them they can discuss their answers, but they will do the work on their own text copies. **Post** and review the following directions:

- ▶ Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph.
- ▶ Circle all topic-related words.
- ▶ Highlight the most important details in each paragraph.

While students are working, **circulate** and check for understanding.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can **IDENTIFY KEY DETAILS IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-1128)**:

- ▶ What details did you find?
- ▶ How does it help explain the main idea?

Pass out [STUDENT HANDOUT: MAIN IDEA](#). **Ask** students to write four of the most important, or key, details on the graphic organizer and to think about the main idea before they write down an answer.

When most students have finished, **pose** the following questions to facilitate a class discussion:

- ▶ How do these key details go together?
- ▶ What is the author saying about the topic between the lines?
- ▶ Do these key details give us examples or characteristics of an important point about the topic?
- ▶ What is the big idea or main point made by these key details and topic-related words?
- ▶ What’s the main idea?

Ask students to write what they think the main idea is on the handout.

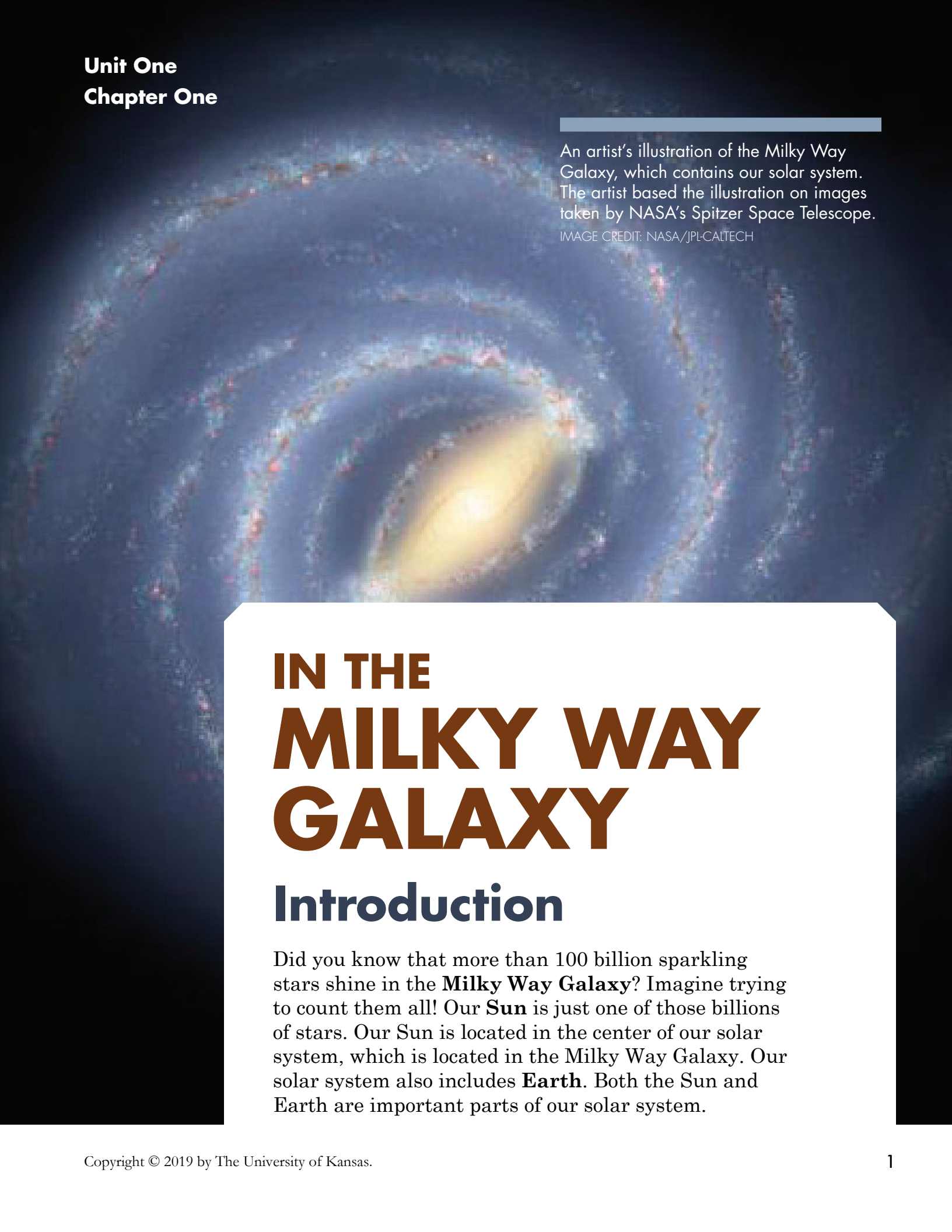
Randomly **call** on students to share their main idea and to explain how they chose it. After individuals share, **say** “thank you for your thoughtful response,” regardless of the accuracy of the answer. (Rather than reward

students for correct answers, the point is to listen in on students' thought processes and to allow other students to hear their peers' techniques for determining main idea.)

After a few students have shared, **lead** students toward a class consensus about the true main idea of the text.

To close the lesson, have each student edit his or her main idea on the graphic organizer to match the answer on the board. **Collect** the handouts and the informational text copies to use in the next lesson.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.



An artist's illustration of the Milky Way Galaxy, which contains our solar system. The artist based the illustration on images taken by NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope.

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA/JPL-CALTECH

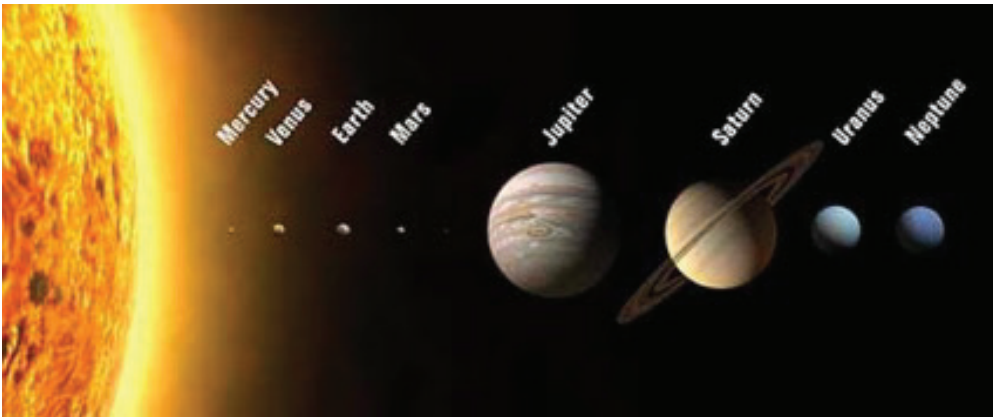
IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY

Introduction

Did you know that more than 100 billion sparkling stars shine in the **Milky Way Galaxy**? Imagine trying to count them all! Our **Sun** is just one of those billions of stars. Our Sun is located in the center of our solar system, which is located in the Milky Way Galaxy. Our solar system also includes **Earth**. Both the Sun and Earth are important parts of our solar system.

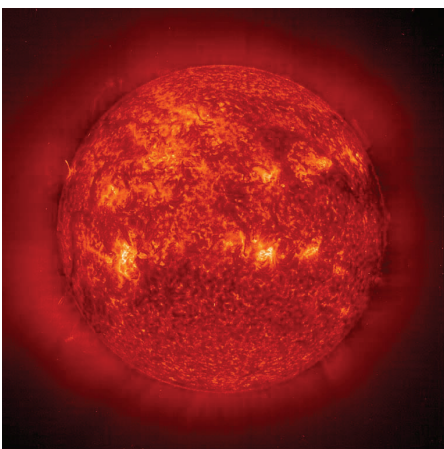
Solar System

The **solar system** includes the Sun and everything that travels around it. Our solar system is an elliptical shape, which is the same shape as an egg. There are eight main **planets** in our solar system. Every planet in our solar system, including Earth, follows its own path around the Sun.



An artist's illustration of the solar system. The Sun is pictured on the far left, and then the planets are shown in order.

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA



Sun

The **Sun** is a star in our solar system. The Sun seems quite large compared to other stars, but it is actually a medium-sized star. The Sun looks much bigger and brighter to us than other stars in the sky because it is the closest star to Earth. That is also the reason that we feel the warmth of the Sun shining on us. The Sun is necessary to Earth because it provides light and warmth.

Sun

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA



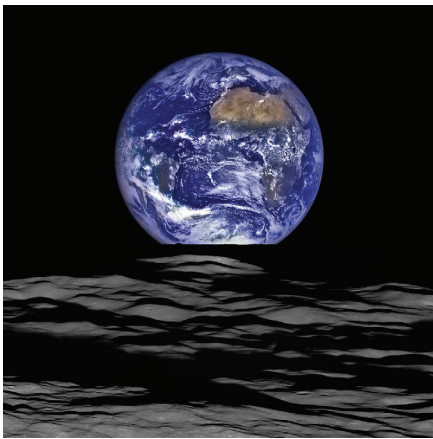
Earth as seen from space

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA

Earth

Earth is the third planet from the Sun. The planet Earth's distance from the Sun makes Earth the perfect place for living things. If Earth was nearer to the Sun, the planet would be much too hot to support life. But if Earth was farther away from the Sun, the planet would be too cold to support life. Because humans, plants, and animals live on Earth, it is an important place.

Conclusion

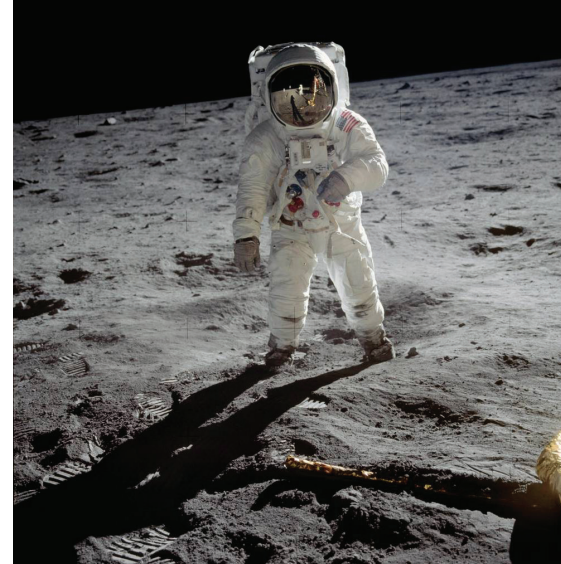


Earth as seen from the surface of the Moon. Earth has one **satellite**. A satellite is an object that **orbits** another object in space. Earth's satellite is the Moon. This image shows what Earth looks like from the Moon.

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA

Both the Sun and Earth are important parts of our solar system. Because it provides light and warmth, the Sun is necessary for life on Earth. Earth provides a home for many different types of living things, which makes Earth important. Even though our solar system includes other objects, the Sun and Earth are the most important to humans.

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin Walks on the Moon

Besides Earth, the Moon is the only place in our solar system that humans have visited.

On July 20, 1969, the Apollo 11 lunar module landed on the Moon. American astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong were the first people to walk on the Moon. When the module landed, Neil Armstrong said, "Tranquility Base here, the Eagle has landed!"

The Moon landing was an exciting event. People all around the world celebrated the successful mission.

MAIN IDEA
STUDENT HANDOUT
Lesson 1

Key Detail	
Key Detail	
Key Detail	
Key Detail	
Main Idea	

FINDING KEY DETAILS

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.4.2, Lesson 2

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students learn that key details support the main idea of an informational text.

STANDARD

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ copies of the Lesson 1 informational text
- ▶ completed copies of [STUDENT HANDOUT: MAIN IDEA](#) from Lesson 1
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: KEY DETAILS](#)

Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can identify key details that support the main idea of an informational text.”

Explain that key details provide information about the main idea of the text, but not all details are key details. A good way to determine if a detail is a key detail is to ask if it answers a who, what, when, where, or how question about the text topic. If the detail answers one of these questions, there’s a good chance it’s a key detail that supports the main idea.

Pass back students’ Lesson 1 [STUDENT HANDOUT: MAIN IDEA](#). **Pair** students and **ask** them to trade papers.

Write this question on the board: Does my partner's detail tell who, what, when, where, or how about the text topic? **Instruct** partners to read each other's answers and discuss the question on the board for each detail on their handouts.

When students have finished discussing the details, **ask** them to trade back their papers and **encourage** them to change or improve their details based on their discussion. Randomly **choose** students to share why they kept or changed their details based on the feedback during the discussions.

Pass out the [STUDENT HANDOUT: KEY DETAILS](#) and **ask** students to complete the boxes with their new and improved details. While students are completing the handout, **walk around** and check for understanding.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE KEY DETAILS THAT SUPPORT THE MAIN IDEA OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-3056) :		
▶ Which of the who, what, when, where, and how question does this detail answer?	▶ How would you explain to your friend why you chose this detail as a key detail?	▶ How would you explain to your friend why this detail supports the main idea?

To close the lesson, **collect** both handouts and the text copies.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

KEY DETAILS
STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 2

Topic

Key Detail #1

How does this detail answer who, what, when, where, or how about the topic of the text?

Key Detail #2

How does this detail answer who, what, when, where, or how about the topic of the text?

Key Detail #3

How does this detail answer who, what, when, where, or how about the topic of the text?

Key Detail #4

How does this detail answer who, what, when, where, or how about the topic of the text?

WRITING A SUMMARY

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.4.2, Lesson 3

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students write a summary, which is a brief statement or account of the key details in a text.

STANDARD

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, complete a [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARY](#) to reference as a model during the activity.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ copies of the informational text from the previous lessons
- ▶ completed copies of [STUDENT HANDOUT: KEY DETAILS](#) from Lesson 2
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARY](#)

Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can use the main idea and key details to write a summary.”

Pass back [STUDENT HANDOUT: KEY DETAILS](#) from Lesson 2 and the informational text.

Define *summary* for the class: a brief statement of the key details of a text. **Explain** to students that they will use their knowledge of key details to write a summary of the text.

Project a blank **STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARY** on the board and **discuss** how a good summary includes the who, what, when, where, and how of the text topic. **Think aloud** as you complete the handout with your prepared answers. **Model** the steps to fill in the boxes with the answers from Lesson 2's handout. Then **demonstrate** how to combine all the key details into a summary with a topic sentence and a concluding sentence.

Distribute **STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARY** and **instruct** students to use Lesson 2's handout to fill in the who, what, when, where, and how questions. **Remind** students to use complete sentences because it will make the summary easier to write at the end. If they did not identify a key detail that answered one of the questions, they should find a corresponding key detail from the text.

As students work, **circulate** and **ask** the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can **EXPLAIN HOW THE KEY DETAILS SUPPORT THE MAIN IDEA IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2340)**:

- ▶ Using the who-what-where-when-how strategy is one way to find key details. How else might you find details that support the main idea?

When most students are finalizing their key details, **instruct** them to write a summary by combining the details. As students work, **walk around** and check for understanding.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can **SUMMARIZE AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-468)**:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ▶ Can you circle all the key details in your summary? | ▶ Can explain why you use these key details in your summary? | ▶ On a scale of one to ten, with one being the least understandable, how do you think your friend would rate your summary of the text? Why would your friend give your summary this rating? |
|---|--|---|

To close the lesson, ask students to hand in their [STUDENT HANDOUT: SUMMARY](#).

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

SUMMARY
STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 3

Part 1

Directions: Use your [STUDENT HANDOUT: KEY DETAILS](#) to answer the questions in the boxes. Answer in complete sentences.

WHO or WHAT is the most important subject of the passage?

WHEN does this passage take place?

WHERE does this passage take place?

WHY is this subject important?

HOW do (or did) the events in this passage occur?

Part 2

Directions: Use the sentences in the boxes above to write a summary of the text.

Topic Sentence:

Key Detail(s):

Key Detail(s):

Key Detail(s):

Conclusion:

WRITING A SUMMARY

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Step 1: Write the text's title.

Step 2: Read the text.

Step 3: List key details.

Detail

Detail

Detail

Step 4: Write a summary.

WRITING A SUMMARY

STUDENT ACTIVITY FEEDBACK TOOL

RI.4.2

Directions: For each learning goal, circle the sentence that best matches what you can do.

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
List key details.	I know what a key detail is.	I can find key details in a text.	I can find key details and explain why each is a key detail.
Identify the main idea.	I can find the topic sentence.	I can find the topic sentence and details about the topic.	I can use the topic sentence and details to write the main idea.
Write a summary.	I can write the key details from a text.	I can write a topic sentence and a conclusion for a summary of a text.	I can write a summary that uses a topic sentence, key details, and a conclusion.