

# Main Idea and Supporting Details

1.E.4.a, b, f 2.A.2.f 2.A.3.a 2.A.4.c, e 3.A.6.a

7

The **main idea** is the most important idea. Everything else builds around it. Every piece of writing, short or long, has a main idea.

**Skim** Sometimes the main idea is not stated directly. Look for clues in key areas and features of the text, like the title, or the beginning and end of the passage. If there are different sections, look at their titles, too. The main idea connects *all* of the sections of the passage.

## Example

What is the main idea of "Fiery Neighbors?" Use details from the passage to support your answer.

### Ronnie's Answer

"Fiery Neighbors" is about volcanoes. Lots of people live near them and it can be very scary if they explode and people need to escape.

D  
I  
S  
C  
U  
S  
S

Ronnie begins by identifying volcanoes as the *topic*, or subject, of the passage. But this is not the main idea. Main ideas say something important *about* the topic. Ronnie does write that volcanoes can be scary, but he doesn't build a specific idea about them.

A **supporting detail** explains or builds up an idea. Ideas without support are unconvincing. For example, you might not believe Tysean when he says that he is fast. A list of his recent times in the 100-yard dash would support his claim.



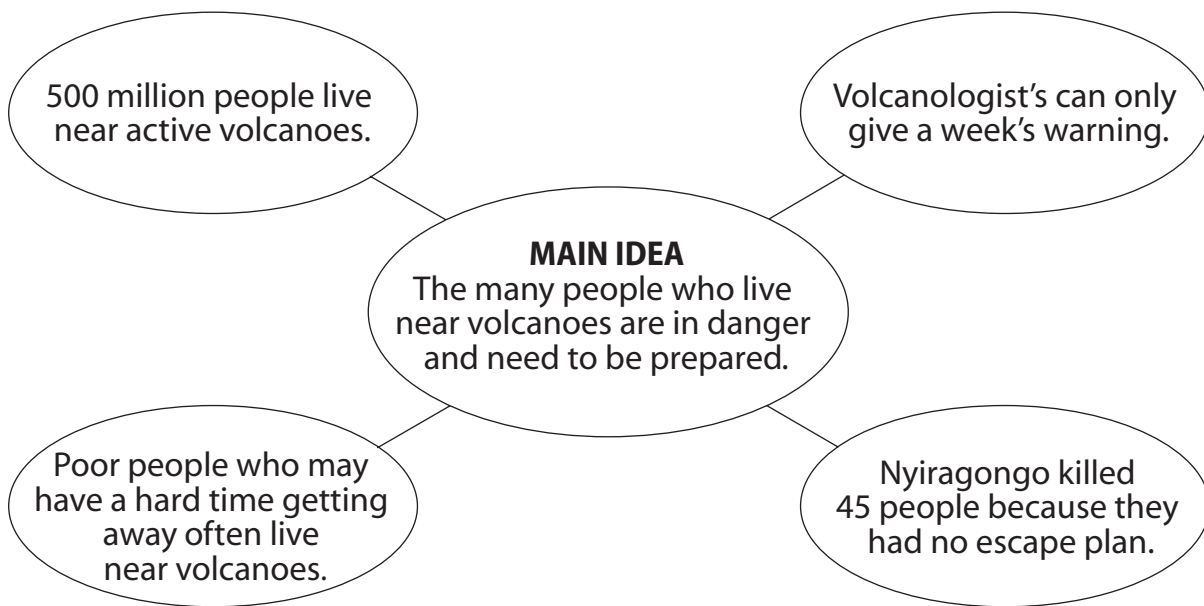
### Improving Ronnie's Answer

Ronnie's answer would be stronger if he started off with a clear main idea and built on it with supporting details.

Nearly 500 million people living near volcanoes are in real danger because there is no easy way to warn them of an eruption. The Nyiragongo volcano killed 45 people because they didn't hear scientist's warnings or couldn't get away.

**Look** Writing is filled with details: names, places, dates, and descriptions. Think about how the details relate to the author’s ideas. Taking notes and underlining as you read will help you find important details later.

Sometimes it is easier to see how things are related when you sketch them out. Here is what a **main idea** and its **supporting details** look like:



**Connections** Some supporting details are ideas on their own. Find supporting details for the idea that “poor people who may have a hard time getting away often live near volcanoes.” Add the details you found to the diagram above.