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## Main Idea and Supporting Details

P.C.P.7 P.D.P.9 I.C.I.3 I.F.I.2

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

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

**Solve** When you are asked for a main idea, you should usually look for an actual *idea* or *opinion*. For example, “carrots are good for you and taste great” could be a main idea. If you are asked what a selection is mostly about, try looking for an *overall subject*. For example, a passage could be mostly about “the history and uses of carrots.”

## Example

What is the article “Mountain Lions” mostly about?

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| <p>(A) what mountain lions are like and the need to save them</p> <p>(B) where mountain lions live and what they eat</p> | <p>(C) the size of mountain lions</p> <p>(D) how to save mountain lions from dying out</p> |
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DISCUSS

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| <p>(A) Everything in the story is related to what mountain lions are like and why they need to be saved. This seems like a good choice.</p> <p>(B) The author does write about where mountain lions live and that they hunt deer. But she also talks about what they look like, the different kinds of mountain lions, and the fact that they are dying out.</p> | <p>(C) The selection does talk about the size of mountain lions. But that is just one part of the selection. It covers a lot more than that.</p> <p>(D) You might think this is what the whole passage is about because it comes at the end of the selection. But it is the subject of the section called “Saving the Cats.”</p> |
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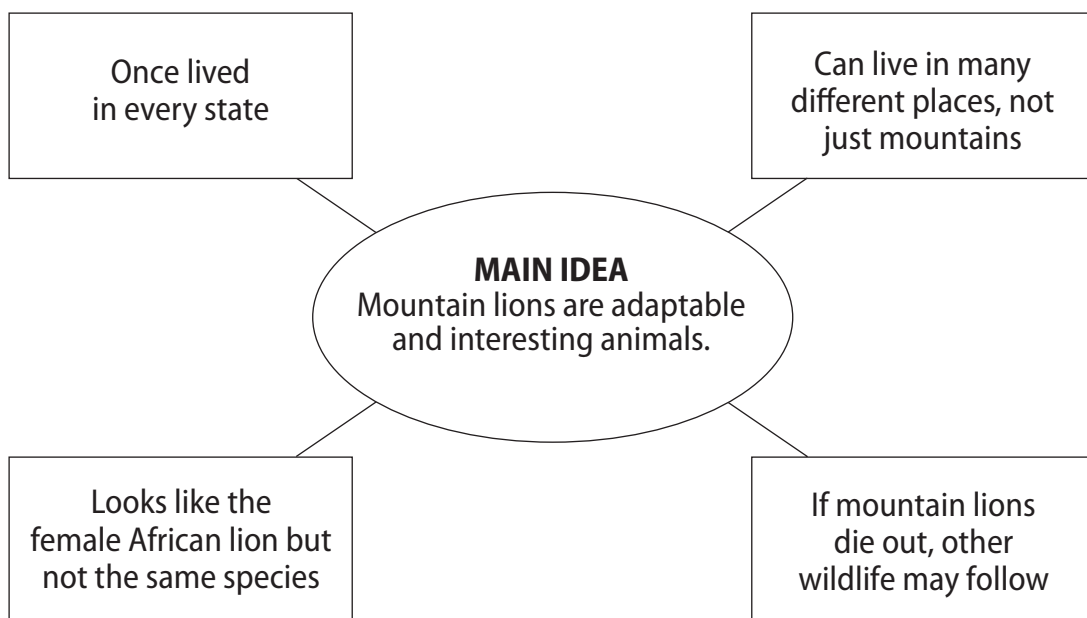
**Connections** As you read, you can also look for main ideas and important information in each paragraph or section of text. Identify two important questions that the section called “Different Lions” answers.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

A **supporting detail** tells more about the main idea. Ideas without support are weak. For example, you might not believe mountain lions are in danger of dying out. But the details that they were once in every state but now are mostly found in just 12 states, and that there are no more than 50 Florida Panthers left, both support that belief.

**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 key 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 in a web:



**Connections** There are many different sources to search for more information on a topic. For example, you might look in a book, a magazine, a newspaper, an encyclopedia, or a website.

Suppose that you want to find out more about mountain lions in Ohio. On the lines below, identify one source of information you might use, and explain why you would choose that source.

Source: \_\_\_\_\_

I chose that source because \_\_\_\_\_