

# RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA: SHORT STORIES

*"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world." - Robert McKee*

## WHAT IS THE TOPIC OF THE READING?

- Does the **title** indicate a topic?
- **General topics** that authors often write about:
  - relationships, family, friendship, love, neglect, death, grief, facing adversity, challenges, physical or mental disabilities, conflict, corruption, power, prejudice, injustice, war, liberation, survival, change, identity, moral dilemma, stages of life, etc.

## WHAT IDEA IS THE AUTHOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE TOPIC?

- There is usually more than one **main idea** in a text.
- Main ideas are usually stated **indirectly** by authors.
- Some stories may not have one principal character but actually have a pair or group of main characters, particularly if the topic of the text is a relationship or family.
- **Focus on the main character(s)** to understand the author's point or purpose for writing.

## USE GUIDING QUESTIONS TO RECOGNIZE A MAIN IDEA THAT IS PRESENT THROUGHOUT A STORY:

### Who is/are the main character(s)?

- Is one of the characters telling the story (first-person narration)?
- Does one character seem more significant than the others?
- Which character(s) is/are the reader left with at the end of the story?

### What happens to the main character(s)?

- Does one character(s) experience any problems or conflicts? What kind?
- If not, does the story illustrate a crucial moment in the life of a character(s)?
- Or does the story demonstrate a particular lifestyle of a character?

### How does the main character(s) develop?

- If there is a problem or conflict, how does the character cope, react, or resolve it?
- If there is a problem or conflict, has the character changed because of this? If yes, how?

### What is one main idea present throughout the story?

- Does the experience of the character(s) provide insight into a particular topic?
- Does it imply anything about life? Many authors can convey serious or negative ideas.
- Does the experience of the character(s) suggest one thing in particular is important or difficult in life?