

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?