Read text silently on your own first

😊

Then, one group member is to lead a shared oral reading session - aim for a paragraph per person.

😊

A new group member now leads a discussion to develop your understanding of this week's comprehension focus.

Use the questions and multiple-choice answers to guide the discussion. Students should all participate and share their answers and justify why?

😊

Your turn! Open up your workbooks and complete the comprehension questions.
Identifying the main idea - 1

If you know what the main idea of a text is, you will have a much better chance of understanding what it is about.

Read the report.

Cane toads in Australia

1. The cane toad was introduced into Australia in 1935. Its mission was to eradicate the cane beetle, which was destroying the sugar crops in Northern Queensland. However, it soon became evident that the toads were unable to perform this task and were becoming greater pests themselves.

2. The cane toad is a deadly amphibian. At all stages of its life, from egg to adult, it is poisonous. An adult oozes venom from the numerous glands on its back and two bulging shoulder sacs. While some animals may have learned to avoid the toad, any that do eat it die very quickly. The poison is absorbed easily through body tissue, so even if an animal chooses not to eat the toad, if it has used its mouth to investigate it, it will be adversely affected by the venom. Kangaroos, snakes, lizards, quolls, dingoes, water fowl and crocodiles are among the animals falling victim to cane toad poison.

3. While normally preying on insects, it is apparent that in an effort to satisfy its hunger, the cane toad will eat anything that will fit into its mouth. It feasts on small reptiles and mammals, frogs and birds. The impact on the environment of the cane toad’s venom and appetite is devastating. The number of many native species is declining at an alarming rate with some, such as the threatened Northern quoll, disappearing completely from areas invaded by the cane toad.

4. For over seventy years, the cane toad has maintained an invasive attack on the native wildlife population of Australia, establishing itself across great areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory. It is extending its territory each year as numbers continue to rise. The rapid breeding cycle and high number of eggs produced with each spawning has helped the population of the handy cane toad in Australia exceed one hundred million.

5. There is currently no effective means of halting the progress of cane toad numbers and migration. Capturing and killing adult toads and collecting and destroying the long jelly-like strings of eggs from the water would reduce numbers in a local area but it would have to be an ongoing process with constant monitoring. In remote, inaccessible areas such as Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory, this would be an impossible task to implement.

6. It has been discovered that there may be a natural exterminator of the cane toad. The humble Lavender beetle may hold the key to its extinction. Native to the Northern Territory, this species of beetle is poisonous to amphibians. Frogs ignore it but the insatiable toads do not and it kills them when it is eaten. Introducing the Lavender beetle to areas affected by the cane toad is considered by many to be the preferred alternative to using genetically modified viruses to exterminate the pests.
Identifying the main idea

Learning about the skill

Learn how to work out the main idea and why it is important.

There are often many ideas in text, but one idea is the link that joins the other ideas together—this is the main idea.

Read the text then ask yourself, ‘What is it mainly about?’
The title is a useful clue to the main idea because a good title often tells the reader what the text is about.
Always check all the possible answers before making a decision.

1. The main idea of Cane toads in Australia is:
   (a) Why cane toads were brought to Australia.
   (b) The life cycle of cane toads in Australia.
   (c) How to get rid of the cane toad.
   (d) The introduction of cane toads to Australia and the devastation they have caused on the environment.

Choosing the best answer
   (a) The first paragraph talks about why cane toads were introduced to Australia, but that isn’t what the whole text is about. This isn’t a good answer.
   (b) The life cycle of the cane toad is not discussed in the text. This wouldn’t be a good answer.
   (c) The text does talk about eradicating the cane toad in the final paragraph, but this isn’t what the entire text is about. This wouldn’t be the best answer.
   (d) The text talks in depth about the introduction of the cane toad to Australia and the effect the cane toad has had on many animal species. So this is the best answer.

2. The main idea of Paragraph 3 is:
   (a) the various native animals found in Australian bushland.
   (b) that cane toads couldn’t actually do the job they were introduced to do and became pests themselves.
   (c) the devastating impact the cane toad’s appetite has on the Australian environment.
   (d) the deadly effect of the cane toad’s venom on wildlife.

Choosing the best answer
   (a) The paragraph does mention some Australian native animals, but the paragraph is expressing ideas about a different idea. So, not the best answer.
   (b) This is talked about in the third sentence, not the third paragraph. So this couldn’t be the right answer.
   (c) The paragraph talks about the devastation of Australia’s wildlife and environment in great detail. So this would be a good choice, but you need to consider all answers.
   (d) Venom is mentioned in this paragraph, but the second paragraph talks about it in depth. This wouldn’t be the best answer.
1. What is the main idea of Paragraph 1?
   (a) When cane toads were first introduced to Australia.
   (b) The reason the cane toad was introduced to Australia, when this happened and the result.
   (c) The cane toad has become a pest in Australia.
   (d) What was happening in Australia in 1935.

   The best answer is ___.

2. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?
   (a) What frogs don’t like to eat.
   (b) The natural habitat of the Lavender beetle.
   (c) Genetically modified viruses being used to exterminate pests.
   (d) How a natural resource could be used to control the cane toad population and how it works.

   The best answer is ___.

3. Use the text and your ideas to answer these.
   (a) What is the title of the text?

   ______________

   (b) A good title often tells the main idea.

   Do you think this is a good title?  ○ Yes  ○ No

   (c) Explain why you think this.

   ______________

   ______________

   ______________

   (d) Suggest another title which would be suitable.

   ______________

4. Paragraph 4 is mainly about...
   (a) how the cane toad reproduces.
   (b) where the cane toad lives.
   (c) the increase in cane toads living in Australia.
   (d) how many cane toads live in Australia.

   The best answer is ___.

   Think!
   Which answer tells what it is mainly about and links all the ideas?
Identifying the main idea

Think about the strategies you have been using and work out these answers on your own.

1. **Paragraph 2 is mainly about ...**
   - (a) the deadly effect of the cane toad's poison on other animals.
   - (b) the life stages of the cane toad.
   - (c) the types of animals which can be killed by the cane toad's poison.
   - (d) how the cane toad kills its victims.

   The best answer is [ ]

2. **What is the main idea of Paragraph 5?**
   - (a) What the cane toad's eggs look like.
   - (b) How to reduce cane toad numbers.
   - (c) Cane toads have now spread to Kakadu National Park.
   - (d) The difficulties of stopping the spread of the cane toad.

   The best answer is [ ]

3. **State the main idea of Paragraph 3.**

4. **Tick the paragraphs in which the main idea is contained in the first sentence.**
   - Paragraph 1 [ ]
   - Paragraph 2 [ ]
   - Paragraph 3 [ ]
   - Paragraph 4 [ ]
   - Paragraph 5 [ ]
   - Paragraph 6 [ ]

5. **Think about the main idea of each paragraph. Write the number of the paragraph where you think each of these statements belong.**
   - (a) 'I didn't realise how rapidly the cane toad has spread.'
     - Paragraph [ ]
   - (b) 'Instead of getting rid of the cane beetle, the cane toad became an even greater pest than the cane beetle ever was.'
     - Paragraph [ ]
   - (c) 'The cane toad has an enormous appetite.'
     - Paragraph [ ]
   - (d) 'Hopefully, the Lavender beetle will solve the problem of the cane toad.'
     - Paragraph [ ]
   - (e) 'The cane toad is extremely poisonous.'
     - Paragraph [ ]