

## **Skill: Infer and Support the Main Idea**

**Space Food**

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade Nonfiction**

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You really know how important a clean kitchen is if you live in the same small place for weeks. Everyone needs to have a clean kitchen so they are healthy. A dirty kitchen can make people sick. Astronauts are people who travel on space ships. They need to have a very clean home. They travel far from Earth. We need clean kitchens everywhere on earth and in space.

Astronauts have to solve two problems: how to get food and how to keep their spaceship clean. They need to solve them in order to stay alive. They are in a spaceship far from Earth, and they need to take care of everything themselves. They need to be sure they have what they need to live there, because the astronauts may be in space for weeks.

Here is how they solved the food problem. At first, the astronauts took tubes of food with them into space. They would squeeze a tube and eat semi-liquid food. It did not taste great, but since they did not need to take dishes or silverware with them, they had no dishes to wash.

Today's spaceships have a bigger menu. Astronauts can eat from bowls. In fact, they take cereal and other standard foods with them. The foods are packaged in special containers to keep them fresh. They use knives, forks, and spoons. One unusual item on their table is a pair of scissors. They use the scissors to open the food packages. They can eat right from the package.

They have a kitchen on the spaceship. Its oven can heat food to 170 degrees. The kitchen has water and sets of meals that come on trays. The astronauts choose their menu before they go into space. They take a lot of food with them.

The astronauts keep bread and fresh fruits and vegetables in a special food locker. Most flights take tortillas. They package the tortillas in an oxygen-free wrap so they stay safe.

How do they keep the kitchen clean? They do not have to worry about mice or other rodents. They make sure that there are no rodents before the ship leaves. But sometimes mice travel on the ship. Those mice are part of experiments. They live in cages.

How do astronauts keep their trays clean? That is another health problem the astronauts solve. They need to stay healthy in space. To carry a lot of water to wash trays would be a lot of extra weight. They pack wet wipes in plastic bags. They use them to clean trays. So, their kitchen is clean and they stay healthy.

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?

- a. Astronauts travel in space.
- b. Space ships are small.
- c. It is important to keep kitchens clean.
- d. Astronauts need food.

2. What is the main idea of the whole passage?

- a. Space travel is challenging.
- b. Astronauts experiment.
- c. Astronauts live in small places.
- d. A clean kitchen is important.

3. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

- a. Astronauts prevent health problems.
- b. Astronauts wash their trays every day.
- c. Astronauts have many problems.
- d. Astronauts need clean trays.

4. What is a better title for this passage?

- a. The Clean Kitchen
- b. Astronauts in Space
- c. Food and Dishes on Spaceship
- d. Experiments in Space

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What is the main idea of the second paragraph?

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**TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	c	d	a	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. Answers should include that they have to solve problems.

## Skill: Infer and Support the Main Idea

### The Challenge

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Fiction

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Mrs. Bertram loved her son, but she worried about him. He was always losing things, and he did not take care of his toys or clothes. She wanted him to be more careful. She wanted him to be responsible.

She was reading a book one morning, or at least she was trying to. It was not easy to do so because Robert was in the hall playing with his drum. Suddenly the drumming stopped and Robert rushed into the room crying.

"I broke it! I broke it," he sobbed.

"Your drum?" asked his mother. "How did you do that?"

"I was beating it with the knives and--"

"With the knives!" exclaimed his mother. "Where were your drumsticks?"

"I--I--don't know," sobbed Robert.

"Have you lost them?" said Mrs. Bertram. She needed no words to know the answer. Robert's manner was quite enough. "You know, Robert, what I said would happen the next time you lost anything."

"Yes," said Robert, "You said I must give away all my toys to some little boys who would know how to take care of them."

"Yes," said his mother. "I see you remember. I will send them all to the children's hospital tonight."

"But, mama," said Robert, "if I don't have any toys to take care of, how can I learn to take care of them?"

Mrs. Bertram had to turn away so that Robert would not see her smile. "I will have to think of some other way to teach you to be careful. I will think of something, and I will tell you what to do tonight."

That night, she told him, "I have decided that there is another way you can show how careful you are. I want you to do the laundry every week for two months."

Robert looked astonished. "Boys don't wash clothes," he said.

"Sometimes," said his mother, smilingly. "Now if you do this every day for two months, I will know you have become more responsible. Being careful is part of growing up. It means you are responsible, and it means people can trust you. This is a challenge. It is something to do that is not easy. It will help everyone in the family."

The next week Robert began his work. At first, he disliked it very much. But after a while he changed his mind. He wanted to show his mother he was responsible. He not only washed the clothes, but he also folded them neatly. He kept his toys in a box where he could find them. He was careful with everything.

The day when his two months would be up was Christmas Day. Imagine Robert's delight when he saw he had a new coat, a video game and a new drum and drumsticks. On them was a note: "For Robert, who is very responsible." He felt proud.

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.*

6. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?

- a. Robert's mother loves him.
- b. Robert loses things.
- c. Robert's mother wants him to change.
- d. Robert breaks things.

7. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

- a. Robert has met the challenge.
- b. Robert needs to change.
- c. Robert has more toys.
- d. Robert has new clothes.

8. What is the main idea of the passage?

- a. You should be careful with toys.
- b. Children need to help their family.
- c. Robert is careless.
- d. It is important to be responsible.

9. What is another good title for the story?

- a. Responsible Robert
- b. Helping My Family
- c. Robert Gets New Toys and Clothes
- d. Robert's Family Needs Him

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

Robert learns a lesson in the story. What is the lesson he learns?

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**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	c	a	d	a

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. Answers should include that he learns how important it is to be careful or responsible.