Name & Surname: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Central Idea in Action

Find it, trace it, summarize it

About 50 minutes Level ★★★☆☆



Central Idea Basics

The **central idea** is the most important point a text develops. It is bigger than the topic and is built by **supporting ideas** across paragraphs.



- Find the **topic** first, then ask what the author claims about it.
- Trace **development**: note how each paragraph adds a reason, example, or effect.
- Summarize **objectively**: use your own words and leave out opinions.

The Power of Sleep

1. Many middle school students sleep less than they need during the school week. Homework, games, videos, and late messages can push bedtime past midnight. Doctors say teens around 13 to 14 often need eight to ten hours of sleep each night. When they get much less, Monday morning can feel like the middle of the **night**.
2. Sleep helps the **brain** store what it learned during the day. In deep sleep, the brain replays lessons, words, and skills, which makes them easier to remember for a quiz or a tryout. A student who reviews notes and then sleeps well often recalls more than a student who stays up late to reread everything twice.
3. Sleep also steadies **mood** and attention. Tired teens may feel cranky, worried, or quick to argue over small problems. After enough rest, the same student can listen longer, follow multi-step directions more carefully, and handle stress without giving up.
4. Small **habits** can build better sleep over time. Turning off the screen an hour before bed, keeping the room dark and cool, and waking up at the same time each day teach the body when to feel sleepy. These habits do not work in one night, but after a week or two, mornings feel easier. In short, steady sleep supports learning, mood, and health, and teens can improve it with simple nightly choices.

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Central Idea in Action

Task A

Read the passage. State your claim about the statement, cite evidence from numbered paragraphs, then ask a question you still have.

> **The central idea of The Power of Sleep is that steady sleep helps teens learn, feel steady, and stay healthy.**

My claim

Sample claim: I agree. Paragraph 2 shows sleep helps the brain store lessons for a quiz.

Support: what I see or know

A question I still have

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Plan Your Summary

Organize reasons why central idea makes summaries stronger.

Key words

central idea: the most important point the text develops

topic: what the text is about in a word or two

supporting ideas: details and examples that build the main point

development: how an idea grows paragraph by paragraph

objective: based on facts, with no personal opinions

summary: a short retelling with only the main points

Task B

Plan a short speech that persuades a partner using facts and clear reasons.

Goal **Show why starting with the central idea creates a stronger summary.**

Reason 1

It names the main point so the reader is not lost

Fact 1a _____

Fact 1b _____

Fact 1c _____

Reason 2

It links supporting ideas instead of listing random facts

Fact 2a _____

Fact 2b _____

Fact 2c _____

Reason 3

It keeps the summary objective and short

Fact 3a _____

Fact 3b _____

Fact 3c _____

Conclusion

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Think It Through

Look at a summary rule from four points of view.

Task C

Think about the proposal from four sides. Write one thought for each direction.

N Need to know: what else do I need to find out?

W Worried: what worries me?

Every Grade 8 summary must state the central idea first, then show two supporting ideas.

E Excited: what is good about it?

S Stance or suggestion: what do I think now?

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Link Ideas Together

Match terms and sort causes and effects of weak summaries.

Task D

Example done for you

/4

Match each term to its meaning by writing the number in the circle.

1	central idea	(1)	the most important point a text develops
2	supporting ideas	( )	a short retelling with only main points
3	development	( )	how an idea grows paragraph by paragraph
4	objective	( )	details and examples that build the main point
5	summary	( )	based on facts, without personal opinions

Task E

Sort what leads to a weak summary and what results. Think about causes and effects.

Causes

- mixes up the topic with the central idea
- .....
- .....
- .....

→ **weak summary that misses the central idea** →

Effects

- reader cannot find the main point
- .....
- .....
- .....

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Show What Matters

Track development in a new passage and sort key language.

Phones Off, Minds On

1. Last fall, a Grade 8 class tried a two-week **challenge**. Every morning, students placed their cell phones in a box on the teacher's desk and took them back at dismissal. Many expected the days to feel longer and less fun without constant messages and videos.
2. After a few days, most students noticed sharper **focus**. Without buzzes and alerts, they finished reading assignments faster and remembered more details during discussion. The class chart showed missing assignments dropped during the second week because students used free minutes to start homework instead of scrolling.
3. Friendships also changed in a **positive** way. At lunch, students talked face to face instead of looking at screens. They learned new facts about each other, invited different classmates to join games, and settled arguments more quickly because they could hear tone of voice.
4. The challenge was not perfect. Some students felt **uneasy** at first without music or messages from family. By the end, though, the class agreed on a central lesson. Brief breaks from phones can improve attention and friendships, and setting clear limits helps students stay in control of technology instead of letting it control them.

Task F /3

Use Paragraphs 2-4 of Phones Off, Minds On. Track development by finding each supporting idea.

Text part	Supporting idea in your own words
Paragraph 2 — focus	
Paragraph 3 — friendships	
Objective summary in 1-2 sentences	

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Central Idea in Action

Task G Example done for you /5

Sort each box by meaning. Color by group using the app colors.

● **Supports central idea**: color it blue or draw ●

▲ **Detail or opinion**: color it orange or draw ▲

brief breaks from phones can improve attention and friendships ●	phones sat in a box on the teacher's desk each morning	missing assignments dropped during the second week	setting clear limits helps students stay in control
this was the best challenge ever and everyone loved it	students should throw away all phones forever		

How did I do?

Circle a face for each line.

I can determine the central idea of a text.	☹	😐	☺
I can explain how supporting ideas develop the central idea.	☹	😐	☺
I can write an objective summary of a text.	☹	😐	☺

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Answer sheet: Central Idea in Action

Task A

Answers will vary, e.g. Sample claim: I agree. Paragraph 2 shows sleep helps the brain store lessons for a quiz.

Task B

Answers will vary, e.g. It names the main point so the reader is not lost; It links supporting ideas instead of listing random facts; It keeps the summary objective and short

Task C

Answers will vary, e.g. E: I am excited because readers will see the point right away. N: I need to know how long the summary should be. S: My stance is yes, plus show paragraph numbers as proof. W: I am worried students might rush and skip key details.

Task D

1. central idea → the most important point a text develops
2. supporting ideas → details and examples that build the main point
3. development → how an idea grows paragraph by paragraph
4. objective → based on facts, without personal opinions
5. summary → a short retelling with only main points

Task E

Causes: mixes up the topic with the central idea; copies long sentences instead of retelling; adds personal opinions like I loved it

Effects: reader cannot find the main point; summary is too long and copied; summary sounds biased, not objective

Task F

Paragraph 2 — focus | Without alerts, students finished work faster and missing assignments dropped.

Paragraph 3 — friendships | Face-to-face lunch talk helped students learn about each other and solve arguments.

Objective summary in 1-2 sentences | Brief breaks from phones can improve attention and friendships, and clear limits help students stay in control of technology.

Task G

Supports central idea (blue ●): brief breaks from phones can improve attention and friendships, setting clear limits helps students stay in control

Detail or opinion (orange ▲): phones sat in a box on the teacher's desk each morning, missing assignments dropped during the second week, this was the best challenge ever and everyone loved it, students should throw away all phones forever

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