

Name: _____

Main Idea

Directions: Read each passage and ask yourself, “What is the author doing in this paragraph?” Write your answer in the summary box and then think of an appropriate title for the passage based on the main idea of the passage.

1. A penny for your thoughts? If it’s a 1943 copper penny, it could be worth as much as fifty thousand dollars. In 1943, most pennies were made out of steel since copper was needed for World War II, so the 1943 copper penny is ultra-rare. Another rarity is the 1955 double die penny. These pennies were mistakenly double stamped, so they have overlapping dates and letters. If it’s uncirculated, it’d easily fetch \$25,000 at an auction. Now that’s a pretty penny.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

2. Before you put on that *Angry Birds* costume and exhaust yourself roving from door to door pandering for candy, take a minute to reflect on the tradition in which you are taking part. Halloween is believed to have come from an ancient Celtic festival dating back some 2,000 years. November 1st was the Celtic New Year and marked the end of summer to the Celts, so they celebrated on its eve by wearing costumes made of animal skins and dancing around bon fires. Over the next two millennia, this primitive celebration grew to be candy fueled costume ball that we know today.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

3. When one hears the term “reality” applied to a television show, one might expect that the events portrayed occurred naturally or, at the least, were not scripted, but this is not always the case. Many reality shows occur in unreal environments, like rented mansions occupied by film crews. Such living environments do not reflect what most people understand to be “reality.” Worse, there have been accusations that events not captured on film were later restaged by producers. Worse still, some involved in the production of “reality” television claim that the participants were urged to act out story lines premeditated by producers. With such accusations floating around, it’s no wonder many people take reality TV to be about as real as the sitcom.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

4. It is estimated that over twenty million pounds of candy corn are sold in the US each year. Brach's, the top manufacturer, sells enough candy corn to circle the earth 4.25 times if each piece were laid end to end. That's a lot of candy corn, but that's nothing compared to Tootsie Roll production. Over 64 million Tootsie Rolls are produced every day! But even Tootsie Rolls have got nothing on the candy industry's staple product, chocolate. Confectioners manufacture over twenty billion pounds of chocolate in the United States each year. Now that's a mouthful!

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

5. Screech! When a driver pushes on the brake pedal, it initiates a process that causes the vehicle to stop in motion. You literally trust automotive braking systems with your life every time you get into a vehicle or cross at a busy intersection, but how does this process work? It begins when the pedal is pushed. At this moment brake fluid is released into the area where the breaking mechanisms are. As the fluid collects, this creates a leverage, which causes a friction to be applied. If the breaking system is functioning properly, this friction will create a force that will cause the wheels to stop and allow you to reach your destination safely.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

6. There are many types of lethal venom in the animal kingdom, but perhaps no stranger carrier than the platypus. The platypus is one of few venomous mammals. Males carry a venom cocktail in their ankle spurs that incapacitates victims with excruciating pain. Stranger still, the platypus is the only mammal that uses electroreception. What this means is that the platypus uses its bill to sense the electricity produced by the muscular movements of its prey. The platypus neither sees, hears, nor smells its prey while hunting but, rather, pursues it through electroreception. Perhaps most odd, the platypus is the only mammal that lays eggs rather than giving birth to live young. The platypus is an odd creature indeed.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

An appropriate title: _____

7. Yellowstone National Park is mainly located in Wyoming, although three percent is located in the state of Montana. The Continental Divide of North America runs diagonally through the southwestern part of the park. The park sits on the Yellowstone Plateau, which is an average elevation of 8,000 feet above sea level. This plateau is bounded on nearly all sides by mountain ranges. There are 290 waterfalls that are at least fifteen feet in the park, the highest being the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River, which falls 308 feet.

Summarize this paragraph in one sentence. **Be specific and clearly explain the main idea.**

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