

# FINDING THE **MAIN IDEA**

READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS



# STORM SHELTER

Tornados are fierce storms. They are violently rotating columns of air that stretch down from a storm cloud to the ground. A tornado's winds can be powerful enough to rip roofs off of houses, uproot trees, and lift heavy objects off of the ground. That is why it is so important for people living in places susceptible to tornados to plan for tornado protection. Storm protection is often the key to saving lives.

The best protection from tornadoes is underground. People who live in Tornado Alley often have cyclone cellars. They are underground shelters where people can go until a storm passes. Often the cellars have very strong concrete walls. Spaces that are 6 feet wide, 8 feet long and 7 feet deep are big enough to hold about 8 people. The door to the shelter is designed to face northeast. This is because most tornados come from the southwest. A strong bar is put in place to keep the doors shut. These protective storm cellars are an important way to keep people safe during violent storms.

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## MAIN IDEA

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# LEMONADE FOR GOOD

What is better than a cold glass of lemonade on a hot summer day? A glass of lemonade that can help others, of course. A little girl named Alex did just that when she set up a lemonade stand with her brother. She was four years old when she set the goal to sell lemonade and donate the profits to help cure cancer. Alex, herself, was diagnosed with cancer, and she was determined to help doctors find a cure. Her first lemonade stand raised \$2,000 in just one day. She continued to set up stands every year. Soon, people learned about Alex's mission, and they set up lemonade stands of their own so that they could donate the proceeds to the cause. Sadly, Alex passed away at the age of eight. However, her legacy lives on. Today, Alex's Lemonade Stand is a foundation that is committed to helping everyone impacted by childhood cancer. Alex proved that lemonade can be good in many, many ways.

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## MAIN IDEA

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# BIG TURTLE

This myth was told by the Huron Indians.

A long, long time ago, the world was very different than it is today. Instead of a world with water and land, the world had two separate parts. The world was divided into an upper and lower part. The upper part was called "Sky World." This is where sky people lived among dry land and rich soil. The lower part was filled with animals. It was covered with water.

One day, in Sky World, a girl began to take a walk. She took a long journey over gorgeous mountains and through tranquil valleys. Such a long walk took a toll on her. "My goodness," she sighed, "I'm exhausted." So, she gathered some soft leaves from a nearby fruit tree and made a cozy spot to sleep on the ground.

Her nap had just begun when there was a thunderous rumbling sound coming from the ground. Everything around her began to shake and crack. Within an instant, a huge hole appeared right next to the spot where she had been sleeping only moments before.

"What is happening?" screamed the terrified girl. She tried to get up and away from the dark hole in the Earth, but it was no use. The hole grew bigger. All of the leaves she had gathered and even the fruit tree fell through the hole. She went tumbling head over heels toward the lower part of the world. The girl fell toward the watery world below.

The girl screamed in terror, "Help! Help!"

Fortunately, two swans were swimming below. One swan yelled in amazement, "Oh my! Look at that! A girl is falling from the sky!"

"We have to save her before she hits the water," the other swan commanded. So, they flew into the air. They spread their wings out wide to form a soft spot for the girl to land.

As the girl from Sky World landed on their feathery backs, she said, "You saved me! Thank you so very much! You won't believe what happened. I was just taking a little nap and the next thing I knew I was tumbling toward you. Where am I? How will I ever survive here?"

"These are good questions. We will need to see Big Turtle. He will have the answers," said one of the swans.

Together the girl and the swans made their way to Big Turtle. When they arrived, the girl told her story. Big Turtle listened carefully. Then, he called a meeting for all of the animals in Water World. When all of the animals arrived, Big Turtle began to tell an ancient story about the discovery of dry soil that was once found deep under the water of Water World.



When Big Turtle finished telling the story, he said, "We will need to get some of that soil. We can use the soil to build an island on my back for the girl." Then, he turned to the girl and promised, "Once we have built an island for you, you can live on my back."

All of the animals were eager to help. Everyone wanted to be the hero. "I will do it! I'm the best animal for the job," bragged the Otter.

"Oh no! I'm the strongest swimmer," beamed the bossy Beaver. "I should be the one to get the soil."

"Absolutely not," boomed the Muskrat. "I'm the only animal capable of finding that soil."

Amid all of the arguing a tiny Toad named Taskwaye popped out of the water. "I can go. I am very capable of diving in deep water," she squeaked.

Taskwaye's idea was met by an uproar of laughter. None of the animals believed that such a small and weak animal could be of any help. "You must not be feeling well, Taskwaye! You're just a tiny toad!" cried all the animals.

"That's enough!" commanded Big Turtle. All of the animals fell silent. "We are all important. In Water World each animal matters. Therefore, you will all have a chance to try to get the dry soil from deep below the water."

With this, Otter took a deep breath and dove into the water. All of the other animals waited. Then, otter poked his head above the water's surface. "It's no use," he said. "The water is just too deep."

Otter's failure was Beaver's cue to give it a try. "Let me go," he said as he disappeared into the dark blue water. After a long time had passed, he surfaced. "It's impossible," he gasped. "It is too far beneath the surface."

Of course, Muskrat gave it a try. However, he, too, failed.

"I'll take my turn now," squealed Taskwaye the Tiny Toad. She took the deepest breath that she could. Then, she dove into the water. Just like the others, Taskwaye was gone for a very long time.

Just when all of the animals feared that Taskwaye was gone for good, Otter pointed to the water. "Look! Bubbles!" Then, Taskwaye's face appeared. She spat a few grains of soil onto Big Turtle's back. The journey had completely depleted her. After giving the soil to Big Turtle, she fell back into the water. Sadly, she was gone forever. But, her sacrifice had paid off. The animals rubbed the soil around Turtle's back. The grains grew and grew. Soon, a huge island formed on Turtle's back. The Sky Girl climbed onto the island to live. As time passed, the island became bigger until it formed the world that we know today.

Today, some people say that the whole world rests on the back of Big Turtle. Earthquakes happen when he gets tired and shifts. Tiny Toad is very important, too. Native Americans call her "Mashutaha," which means "Our Grandmother," and nothing bad can happen to her.

# ROLLER COASTERS

If you've ever enjoyed the thrill of a roller coaster ride, then you have LaMarus Adna Thompson to thank. Thompson obtained the first roller coaster patent in 1885. At the time, he was building roller coasters out of wood.

Although roller coasters have been around for over a hundred years, they have seen surges of popularity and times of decline. The first surge occurred when the Cyclone roller coaster was built in 1927 at Coney Island. The Cyclone created quite a stir and roller coasters spread across the country. Then, the Great Depression marked the end of the golden age of roller coasters. In general, amusement parks went into decline. However, in 1972, John Allen designed The Racer and built it at Kings Island in Ohio. The Racer began a second golden age in coasters which continues today. Today, amusement parks keep upping the ante as they try to build the biggest and fastest roller coasters. Some roller coasters now have catapult launching, while others have hanging-train designs.

Many roller coaster riders don't even realize that as they're cruising down the track at 60 miles per hour, there is no engine in the roller coaster. The car is pulled to the top of the first hill when the ride begins, but after that the coaster runs completely on its own. It all happens with the conversion of potential energy to kinetic energy. Once the coaster descends the first hill, it has all the kinetic energy it needs to drive the roller coaster. Different types of wheels keep the ride running smoothly and guide the coaster on the track. When the ride comes to an end, compressed air brakes stop the roller coaster.

It's safe to say that most people riding a roller coaster have no idea who invented them, their history, or their mechanics. All they know is that they better hold on for the ride of a lifetime!



# ROLLER COASTERS

## FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

Answer each question. Then, fill in the chart next to the question with details from the passage that support the main idea.

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
- A. Roller coasters were first built out of wood.
  - B. A patent was filed for the invention of the roller coaster.
  - C. LaMarus Adna Thompson patented the first roller coaster.
  - D. Roller coasters are popular.

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2. Identify the best summary for the second paragraph.
- A. Roller coasters have increased and decreased in popularity.
  - B. The first major roller coaster was the Cyclone.
  - C. Thanks to The Racer, roller coasters became popular again.
  - D. The Great Depression negatively impacted roller coasters.

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3. What is paragraph three mostly about?
- A. Roller coasters are equipped with different wheels to perform specific functions.
  - B. Roller coasters operate without a motor.
  - C. Roller coasters are stopped with compressed air brakes.
  - D. Once the coaster goes up the first hill it has all its momentum.

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