

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Finding the Main Ideas

The main idea of a section or a whole article is an important idea that the author wants you to know about the topic. Looking at the details can help you figure out what the main idea is. What do the details mainly describe? You can also use the titles of sections as clues.

**Directions:** Complete the chart below. Use the prompts to help you.

Section	Main idea	How do you know?
First section, starting at the beginning of the article	In a daring escape from slavery, Robert Smalls took over a ship and sailed it past Southern troops.	Give two details from this section that describe what Robert Smalls did: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
"A Life of Slavery"	Write the main idea:	The main idea is supported by the details below. Think about what they tell you about slavery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slaves on plantations worked from dawn until dusk without rest and were "brutally whipped" for asking for a drink of water.</li> <li>• Under U.S. law, a slave was not a person but a piece of property.</li> <li>• Slave families were broken up when children were ripped away from their parents and sold.</li> </ul>
"Haunted by Memories"	Write the main idea. Think about the details on the right and the section header:	Give three details from this section that tell what was happening in Robert's life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

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Section	Main idea	How do you know?
"A Bloody War"	Write the main idea. Think about the section header and what the section explains:	We've given you one detail that supports the main idea on the left. Write two more details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people believed that President Abraham Lincoln wanted to abolish slavery in the U.S.</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
"A Bold Plan"	Write the main idea. Think about what the section mainly describes:	Give three details that support the main idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
"The End of Slavery"	Write the main idea:	Give three details that support the main idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>