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Name: _____

Date: _____

INTRODUCTION

You might have already read part of the following passage, in which you practiced finding facts. Now let's read *Bobby Boy* to try **finding the main idea**.

When reading paragraphs, you will often be asked to find the main idea. The main idea is often the same as the topic sentence. It is the most important piece of information for the reader. All other sentences in the paragraph add to the meaning of the topic sentence. They are often called supporting details.

The topic sentence is often the first sentence, but it can come in the middle of the paragraph or at the end. You will be asked to search for answers to questions that help you understand the story. The topic sentence, if it is quite long, may sometimes contain more information than just the main idea.

Paragraphs are usually made up of more than one sentence. (See Understanding Paragraphs, page 54.) Titles and headings often give the main idea of a book or of a chapter. If we look at the story *Bobby Boy* again, we use it to start finding the main idea. Any piece of writing can be used for more than one type of comprehension question.

Now read the passage *Bobby Boy* by Errol Broome.

<p>Young Tommy Woodcock helped with the horses in Mr. Telford's Sydney stables. (<i>main idea/topic sentence</i>; There is no supporting detail in this paragraph.)</p> <p>Tommy was small and shy and his voice was gentle. (<i>main idea/topic sentence</i>) He did not look tough enough to handle the sturdy animals. But his arms were strong, and he understood horses. He talked to them, rubbed them down, and coaxed them until they did as they were told. (<i>supporting detail</i>; The last three sentences support the main idea and give the reader more information about the shy and gentle Tommy.)</p>	<p>The horses did not win many races. (<i>main idea/topic sentence</i>) But there was always hope. Perhaps, one day, one of them would win the Melbourne Cup. Anyone can hope. (<i>supporting detail</i>)</p> <p>One summer's day, Mr. Telford's new horse arrived. (<i>main idea/topic sentence</i>) Tommy called him Bobby Boy because his real name was too grand for the poor, straggly yearling that limped off the ship from New Zealand. How could this animal ever live up to the name of Phar Lap? It meant "lightning"! One thing looked certain—he would never win the Melbourne Cup. (<i>supporting detail</i>)</p>
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1. How many paragraphs are in this passage? _____
2. How many topic sentences would you expect to find? _____
3. Give two words that help describe Bobby Boy. (supporting detail in Paragraph 4)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
4. Circle the best title for this passage.

The New Horse The Melbourne Cup Rubbing Down Horses

Answers:

1. four 2. four 3. a. poor b. straggly (Other possible answers: lame/limping, yearling) 4. The New Horse

QUIET PONY FOR SALE

by Mary Small

When Hannah came with her parents to live in the small country town of Bakers Flat, she had to catch the bus to school each day. On the first morning, while she was waiting at the end of the road for the bus to arrive, she saw a sign nailed to a gate on the other side of the highway. "Quiet pony for sale," it read.

Hannah loved horses. That afternoon, back from school, she went to the gate and looked over. There in the middle of the paddock was the pony. His rough coat was matted with mud, his mane and tail were long and scraggly. He stared at her with sad brown eyes.

"Here, pony!" said Hannah, stretching out her hand. She felt annoyed that she had nothing to give him.

The pony stood still.

"I'll bring you something tomorrow," said Hannah, and she hurried home.

The next morning, she took two apples for her lunchbox. Back from school, she went straight to the gate. The pony was busy grazing.

"Here, pony!" called Hannah, holding out an apple. "Come on! Look what I've got for you."

1. How many paragraphs are in this story? _____

2. What is the topic sentence of the second paragraph? _____

3. What did Hannah do in paragraph 6? The next morning, Hannah _____

4. Paragraph 1 tells the reader

- about Hannah's day at school.
- how Hannah came to see the notice.
- what the pony looked like.
- what Hannah fed the pony.



5. What did the pony do when Hannah called it the first time? _____

6. Which of these would be another good title for this story?

- Apples for Lunch A Day at School
- Sad Eyes Making Friends

7. What important information can you learn from paragraph 2?