

## How do writers communicate a main idea?

CCSSW2. Write **informative/explanatory** texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Note to teachers:** *This activity is designed to help students know more about main ideas by having them write to support their own main idea.*

An idea is a way of thinking about something. For example, Chicago is the name of a city. **So if you read a passage called Chicago, you would learn about the city. When you read the passage, then you think about the information to figure out what idea the writer wants you to learn about Chicago.** For example, **Chicago has changed in many ways** is a big idea, a way of thinking about the city. Take a look at the reading on the next page and figure out which of these ideas is the one that the passage explains.

You can figure out the main idea two ways. You can start with what you think is the main idea and look for information and examples that support it. Or you can start with information and use that to infer the main idea they support.

To make sure you know what a main idea is, complete this task. Organize your own passage about Chicago.

First, think of a big idea about Chicago.

***You can choose one of these or use one of your own!***

***Chicago has changed in many ways.***

TOPIC: Chicago

MY IDEA: \_\_\_\_\_

*Examples I will use to make it clear.*

Example

Example

Example

## Chicago Then and Now

CCSSR2. Identify the key supporting details for a main idea.

*Note to teachers: If you give students the main idea of a selection and ask them to support it, that will help them understand the relationship between information and a main idea. Then if they write to support that same idea, they'll learn more about how a nonfiction writer includes information to support an idea.*

Long ago, Chicago was a small town. Families settled here. Everyone knew everyone else. People worked hard to get what they needed. Children worked, too, and there were no schools. People had to get wood to make their houses and to heat them in winter.

Then more people moved to Chicago. As families moved here and grew, they wanted to have a school, so they built one. All the children went to school in that one building. The teacher showed them how to read and write and do math. Then, after school they would go home and help their families.

People built more homes and they built streets, too. They built the streets out of wood. Some people had wagons they would ride on the streets, pulled by horses. At night it was hard to see. The wagons would have lanterns to light the way. A lantern uses a candle or oil to make a light. Sometimes the lanterns would fall off the wagons, and they might set the street on fire because the street was made of wood. So people usually carried buckets of water in their wagons in case they set a fire.

When more people moved to Chicago they opened businesses. One of those businesses was a blacksmith shop. There a worker would fix wagon wheels made of metal. The blacksmith would make horseshoes, too. There was a carpenter shop, too, where workers built furniture for homes.

After many years, there were more people here and many changes. The streets were paved, and there were streetlights. People could shop for clothes in stores. They could buy furniture in stores, too. It was becoming a big city. Every day more people came to live here. Businesses opened. People started a newspaper.

If you look at the city today, it is hard to imagine what it looked like long ago. You can see pictures of those times if you go to the Chicago History Museum. There you will see the first streetcar and many more things that were part of everyday life in Chicago long ago.

### Support the Main Idea

The main idea of this passage is that Chicago has changed a lot.  
Underline five examples in the passage that support that idea.

### Write What You Think

Write about Chicago now. Is it still changing? Use your own examples to support your answer.