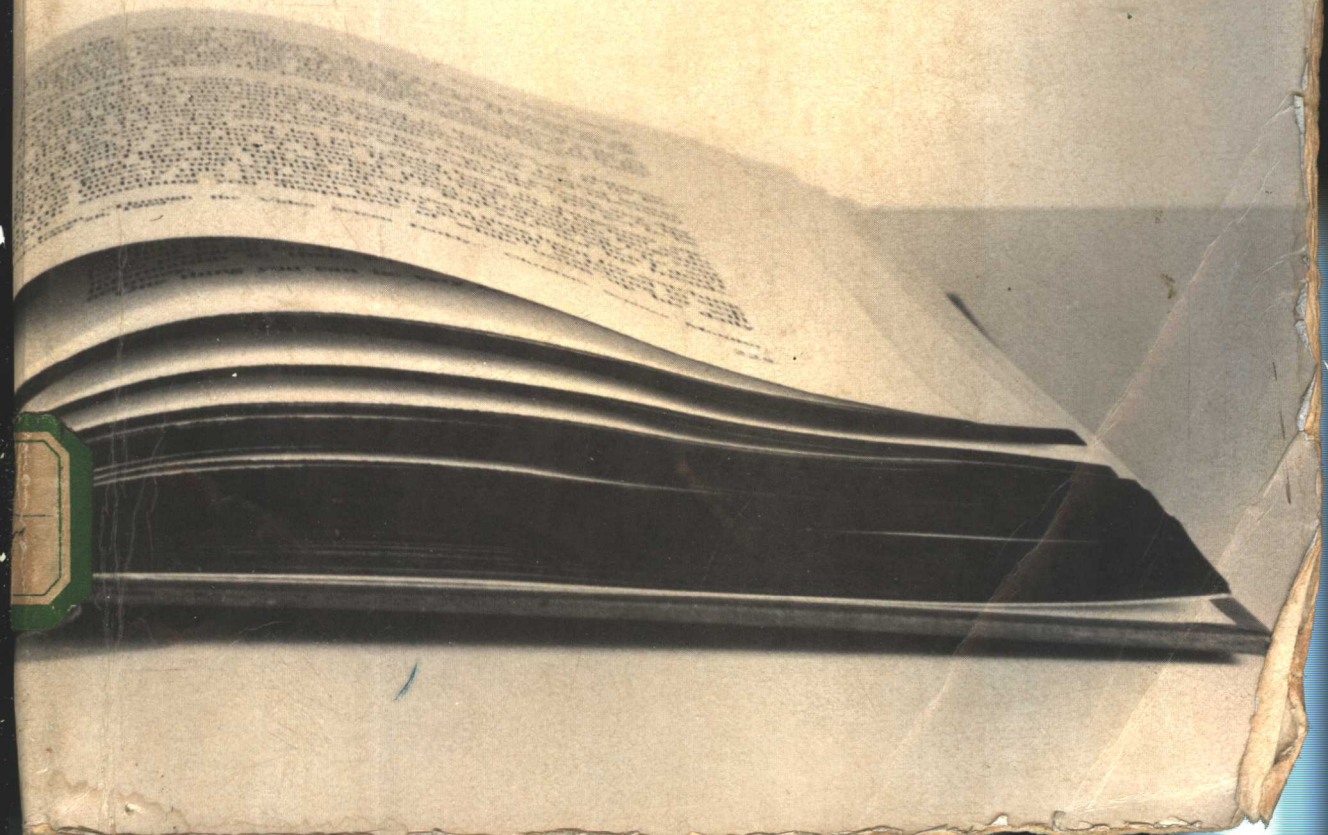


DOROTHY RUBIN

READING & LEARNING POWER



Reading and Learning Power

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Trenton State College

Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

New York

Collier Macmillan Publishers

London

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Printed in the United States of America

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Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
866 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Collier Macmillan Canada, Ltd.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Rubin, Dorothy.
Reading and learning power.

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.

1. Reading. 2. Study, Method of. I. Title.
LB1050.R82 428'.4'3 79-11663
ISBN 0-02-404290-0

Printing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Year: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Preface

It may be true that an old dog cannot be taught new tricks, but that does not necessarily mean that the dog cannot learn any. An old and wise dog may refuse to be taught, especially if the subject is something undignified like playing dead or rolling over. But the same dog will gladly learn new skills almost to the end of its life, skills such as opening lock-top plastic garbage containers. The progressive acquisition of such knowledge makes the difference between a dog's life and a dog's luxury, between "getting by" and "getting on."

And the difference between *being taught* and *learning* is the difference between receiving and taking. During our early years, education is mainly a process of being taught, of being presented with things to know. As we mature, education comes to consist more of learning and less of being taught. Our teachers or instructors or professors remain vital to the growth of our understanding, but their roles change. Instead of telling us what to know, they begin to help us find out what we want or need to know. At some point, each of us must realize that entering a classroom to have knowledge poured into an open mind is not enough. We must begin learning how to learn.

Reading and Learning Power is a textbook on learning how to learn. Some of the subjects in it will undoubtedly be familiar. I am certain, for instance, that my readers know something about reading, and there are many lessons on reading in this book. But I hope my lessons will put reading in a new light as a practical, purposeful accomplishment vital to learning. Among the components of effective reading that this book presents are reading for the main ideas of paragraphs and groups of paragraphs, skimming, reading for inference, reading and summarizing, reading critically, and reading to understand analogies. The reading instruction and practice in this book develop *reading beyond the page*, reading beyond the printed word.

Of course, anything to be read is made up of words, and words deserve attention by themselves. *Reading and Learning Power* addresses words under two headings: "Vocabulary" and "Word Analysis." Under "Vocabulary" the reader will encounter words and their meanings. He or she will find instruction and practice in deciphering meaning from context and from combining forms, will experiment with figures of speech and their applications, and will be introduced to the specialized vocabularies of such aca-

demical subjects as the social sciences, literature, mathematics, economics, biology, and the physical sciences. The sections headed "Word Analysis" deal with the components of words—with phonics, syllabication, and word parts. Three of the sections discuss the dictionary and its uses. This detailed treatment of words is directly related to the emphasis on reading, for the two topics are inseparable.

The proficiencies in word understanding and reading are essential to the fourth subject presented, learning skills. These are the skills by which we get, keep, and apply information. They include studying, concentrating, listening, following directions, asking questions, taking notes, and preparing for objective and subjective tests. *Reading and Learning Power* treats each of these aspects of learning.

To avoid the monotony of exhausting one subject at a time, I have combined instruction and exercises in each of the four skills—learning, reading, vocabulary, and word analysis—in the separate lessons. Most lessons contain a section on each topic. Each section of each lesson is followed by exercises, for I know that boredom is the enemy of learning and that activity is the antidote to boredom. The answers to each set of exercises are provided at the end of the lesson in which they appear. *Reading and Learning Power* may thus be used as a self-pacing text by the reader who wants immediate news of success. At the end of each unit are three items: a crossword puzzle, homograph riddles, and a true/false test. These offer a change of challenge for variety and a semiformal review of content. Throughout the book I return to topics already introduced to provide overlearning, a chance to practice something to excess and thus fix it in the mind. The book also contains three appendixes for reference and additional information. In them the student will find a list of selected references, instructions for using the library card catalogue, instructions for outlining, and application forms for jobs, credit cards, and so on. In three glossaries I have given lists, with definitions, of special terms presented in the text, of vocabulary words presented in the text, and of combining forms presented in the text.

The organization of the book is flexible. *Reading and Learning Power* can be used with equal success in standard classroom instruction, in a tutorial clinic, or by a student working alone for his or her own improvement. I have done my best to make the book interesting, but I cannot wholly disguise the fact that learning requires hard work. This book will not make studying easy, but it will make studying less frustrating and reduce the possibility of studying to no effect. If the reader adopts the methods I present and perfects them through the exercises I provide, his or her efforts will be rewarded by improved comprehension and assimilation.

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Unit I

LESSON

1

Learning Skills: Introduction to Studying

Reading: Main Idea of a Paragraph I

Vocabulary: Context Clues I

Word Analysis: Vowels, Consonants, and Syllables

Answers

LEARNING SKILLS: INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING

Jane is having difficulty in her first year at college. She can't seem to "get it together," as the saying goes. At high school she did very well, even though she spent very little time on her studies. At college she's spending more time studying, but she's on the brink of failing three courses. Why?

Perhaps Jane's problem is that she never learned how to study. Jane went to a high school that required hardly any homework, and so she had little opportunity for independent work. She was able to do well in school by attending class every day. Her few out-of-class assignments were not very time consuming, and they were clearly spelled out for her. Many of Jane's college courses, on the other hand, require much out-of-class reading, and independent work is a must. It seems that Jane was just not prepared for college.

Although Jane is putting a lot of time into studying at college, she is not learning, because she has poor study habits. With good study habits, Jane could spend *less* time in studying and learn more.

Although there is no simple formula of study that will apply to all students, educational psychologists have found that some procedures help all students. The key is in building good habits, devising a study system that works for you, and *keeping at it*.

A person cannot relax and study at the same time. Studying requires a certain amount of tension, concentration, and effort in a specific direction. Of course, the amount of tension varies with different individuals. The point is that studying is hard work, and people who are not prepared to make a proper effort are wasting their time.

PEANUTS®

By Charles M. Schulz



READING: MAIN IDEA OF A PARAGRAPH I

Recognition of the main idea of a paragraph is important to studying because it not only helps you understand the paragraph on first reading but also helps you remember the content later. (See lessons on studying.)

1. The main idea of a paragraph is what the paragraph develops. It's the central thought of the paragraph. The main idea provides order, progression, and unity to the paragraph by tying together the sentences of the paragraph. Without a main idea, the paragraph would be nothing but a confusion of unrelated, undeveloped parts of different ideas.

Special Note

A paragraph is the smallest developmental unit of a written piece. Development of a paragraph happens when the information in it is demonstrated, explained, applied, defended, described, expanded, or modified in some other way to give it unique meaning, either in its own right or in relation to other bits of information. Not surprisingly, most paragraphs are composed of several sentences, for a single sentence usually cannot deal with all the necessary aspects of development. But the paragraph is a *unit*—that is, something whole in itself. The sentences making up a paragraph must therefore be *unified* in their relation to the information being developed. The sentences in a paragraph are dependent on a core, and we call this core the *main idea*.

2. To find the main idea of a paragraph, you must find what common element the sentences share. Some textbook writers place the main idea at the beginning of a paragraph and may actually put the topic of the paragraph in bold print in order to emphasize it. However, in a literary piece this isn't done. In some paragraphs the main idea is indirectly given, and you have to find it from the clues given by the author.

3. Although there is no foolproof method for finding the main idea, there is a widely used procedure that helps. In order to use this procedure, you should know that a well-written paragraph is always written about *someone* or *something*. The *someone* or *something* is the *topic* of the paragraph. *To find the main idea of a paragraph, you must determine the topic of the paragraph and what the author is trying to say that is special about the topic.* When you put the two together, you should have the main idea of the paragraph.

Special Notes

1. The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph, and it states what the paragraph will be about by naming the topic. From the topic sentence you can usually anticipate certain events. You can usually determine that the following sentences will supply supporting details as examples, contrasts, similarities, sequence of events, cause-and-effect situations, and so on to support the main idea.

2. The main idea can be developed in many different ways. Whatever technique is used to develop the main idea, it must support and add meaning to the main idea.

3. A topic sentence may or may not contain the main idea.

4. It is possible for any sentence in the paragraph to be the topic sentence.

5. Some paragraphs may not have a topic sentence.

6. Do not confuse the topic sentence with the main idea. The topic sentence usually anticipates both the main idea and the development of the main idea.

7. Even though the topic sentence is stated explicitly (fully and clearly) in a paragraph, the main idea may not be stated explicitly.

4. Read these two example paragraphs. The first one makes sense because it is well organized. You can tell what the author is trying to say because there is only one main idea and all the sentences in the paragraph expand on the main idea. Notice how disorganized the second paragraph is and how difficult it is to discover what the main idea is because each sentence seems to be about a different topic.

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Examples:

Organized Paragraph

In high school and in college, John's one goal was athletic success so that he could be in the Olympics. John's goal to be in the Olympics became such an obsession that he could not do anything that did not directly or indirectly relate to achieving his goal. He practiced for hours every day. He exercised, ate well, and slept at least eight hours every night. Throughout school, John allowed nothing and no one to deter him from his goal.

Disorganized Paragraph

In high school and in college, John's one goal was to be the best so that he could be in the Olympics. He practiced for hours every day. John's family was unhappy about John's obsession to be in the Olympics. John's social life was more like a monk's than that of a star athlete. John's coach was a difficult man to please.

Reread the first paragraph and then choose the word(s) that *best* answers these two questions:

a. What is the topic of the first paragraph?

1. exercise and practice.
2. work.
3. Olympics.
4. John's goal.
5. athletic success.
6. attempts.

Answer: #4

b. What is the author saying about John's goal to be in the Olympics (the topic) that is special and that helps tie the details together? John's goal:

1. meant that John needed time and patience.
2. was a good one.
3. meant that John needed exercise.

4. was not a reasonable one.
5. was the most important thing in John's life.
6. was too much for John.

Answer: #5

If you put the two answers together, you should have the main idea of the first paragraph. Main idea: *The goal, being in the Olympics, was the most important thing in John's life.*

Try one more. After you read this short paragraph, choose the statement that *best* states the main idea.

Frank Yano looked like an old man, but he was only thirty. Born to parents who were alcoholics, Frank himself started drinking when he was only eight. He actually had tasted alcohol earlier, but it wasn't until he was eight or nine that he became a habitual drinker. His whole life since then has been dedicated to seeking the bottle.

1. Frank Yano looks old, but he's not.
2. Frank Yano enjoys being an alcoholic.
3. Frank Yano was a child alcoholic.
4. Frank Yano has been an alcoholic since childhood.
5. Frank Yano would like to change his life of drinking, but he can't.
6. Frank Yano's parents helped him become an alcoholic.

Answer: #4

Numbers 1 and 3 are too specific because they each relate to only one detail in the paragraph. Numbers 2 and 5 are not found in the paragraph; that is, no clues are given about Frank Yano's wanting to change his life or about his enjoying his life as an alcoholic. Number 6 is also too specific to be the main idea because it relates to only one detail. Number 4 is the answer because what is special about Frank Yano is that he has been an alcoholic since early childhood. All the details in the paragraph support this main idea.

Special Note

The main idea of a paragraph is a general statement of the content of the paragraph. You must be careful, however, that your main idea statement is not so general that it suggests information that is not given in the paragraph.

Practice A.

Read these paragraphs. Then choose the statement after each selection that *best* states the main idea of the selection.

1. From "Fathering: It's a Major Role" by Ross D. Parke and Douglas B. Sawin in *Psychology Today*, November 1977.

Vocabulary:

valid—sound, well-founded, having value.

Fathers are clearly not forgotten. Nor is Mead's famous claim that "fathers are a biological necessity but a social accident" still valid. Fathers are alive, well, and playing an active and important role in infancy—a role that is likely to increase in the future.

- a. Fathers are forgotten people.
- b. Margaret Mead does not feel that fathers are important in child rearing.
- c. Fathers have an important role to play in the life of their infants.
- d. Fathers are biologically necessary but are not necessary for fathering.
- e. Fathers' role will increase in the future.

2. From "The Intimacy Gap" by Perry London in *Psychology Today*, May 1978.

Vocabulary:

gamut—an entire range from one extreme to the other; *scorn*—an emotion involving both anger and disgust, contempt; *spouse*—a husband or a wife; *ambiguous*—having two or more meanings.

In the old days when a couple announced plans for a divorce or separation, their friends knew the proper social response. It ran the gamut from expressions of surprise and sympathy, to offers of support in a time of crisis, to outbursts of anger and scorn directed at one spouse or the other. Nowadays, as anyone with social skills should know, the reaction is much more ambiguous. It is likely to be a vaguely sympathetic "Oh."

- a. People know proper social responses to divorce.
 - b. Divorce is not greeted with such strong reactions today.
 - c. Friends make many responses to plans for divorce.
 - d. Divorce is not as unusual today as it was earlier.
 - e. Friends' responses to announced plans for divorce have changed.
3. From "Confessions of the First Number" by Cliff Owsley in *The Bedside Phoenix Nest*, Van Rees Press, 1960.

It was inevitable. Sooner or later somebody had to be picked for the rare honor of being the first to give up his name for a digit. The first, that is, outside of regular prisons. My number (or name, as I've come to call it) is now 420 03 2557. My first number is 420, not much different from a three-syllable name such as Adelbert. The middle name or initial is 03, no more difficult than any two-syllable name, say Jasper. And the last or surname is 2557, no more unwieldy than a name such as Vanlandingham.

- a. Choosing a name.
 - b. Giving up my name.
 - c. Choosing a digit.
 - d. Giving up my name for a digit.
 - e. We should give up our names for a digit.
4. From *The Art of Creative Writing* by Lajos Egri, Citadel Press, 1965.

Voltaire's *Candide* is a bitter satire on the concept that "all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." Candide finds a woman who loves him dearly. Right after that, his father-in-law

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kicks him out of his estate. War breaks out. Candide is forced into the army. His wife is raped, becomes the mistress of the Inquisitor, and is mutilated by pirates. He survives illness, shipwreck, shooting, and all manner of disasters one after the other, until he becomes very old and ill. But this good, simple-minded man never loses his optimism.

- a. The story of Candide is a sad one.
- b. Candide is optimistic.
- c. Candide suffers a lot of hardships.
- d. Voltaire's *Candide* is a satire.
- e. Candide never loses his optimism despite all of the misfortunes that befall him.

STOP. Check answers at the end of Lesson 1.

Practice B.

In each of these paragraphs the main idea is stated directly. Read the paragraphs. Find the main idea for each, state it, and state where it is found in the paragraph.

1. From "The Element of Success: Competitiveness Isn't That Important" by Jack C. Horn in *Psychology Today*, April 1978.

Vocabulary:

competitiveness—rivalry, the act of seeking to get what someone else is trying to get; *preference*—one's first choice; *to the fore*—to the front, into view.

Research by two University of Texas psychologists suggests that competitiveness may be overrated as a contributor to success. Among the most successful scientists, students, and businessmen they studied, the desire to work hard and a preference for challenging tasks were much more important factors. Only when these traits were absent, did competitiveness come to the fore, supplying the push that made for success.