



Summarizing

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

The **main idea** is what a text is mostly about.

The **supporting details** explain or describe the main idea.

A **summary** includes the **main idea** of each of the paragraphs in a story. It does not include the **details** of the paragraphs.

As you read this story, look for the main idea of each paragraph. These can be put together to make a summary of the whole story.

We know that the planets of our solar system orbit the Sun. Comets also orbit our Sun—more than 4,000 of them. Most comets circle the Sun very slowly. While the Earth circles the Sun once a year, many comets take thousands of years to complete just one orbit of the Sun.

Comets are made of frozen gases and bits of rock and dust. The solid part of most comets can be up to 10 miles across. As a comet gets close to the Sun, the heat causes the comet's frozen gases to turn into a cloud of vapor and dust. The cloud can be thousands of miles across. Solar winds cause this vapor cloud to trail out behind the comet like a tail. This "vapor tail" can be *hundreds of millions* of miles long.

Sometimes comets are visible from Earth. You might think that when this happens you would see the comet whizzing across the sky. But in fact, it would appear to be motionless. This is because both the comet and the Earth are moving.

The most famous comet is Halley's Comet. Its orbit around the Sun takes 76 years. This is pretty fast for a comet. There are records of sightings of Halley's Comet from 2,500 years ago. The next time it will be visible from Earth will be in 2061.



**Multiple choice:**

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
 - a. The planets of our solar system orbit the Sun.
 - b. Comets in our solar system orbit the Sun.
 - c. The Earth circles the Sun once a year.
2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - a. Solar winds cause a comet's vapor cloud to trail out like a tail.
 - b. The solid part of a comet can be 10 miles across.
 - c. Comets are made of frozen gases and bits of rock and dust.
3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - a. A comet's vapor tail can be hundreds of millions of miles long.
 - b. When comets are visible from Earth, they appear to be motionless.
 - c. When comets are visible from Earth, they appear to whiz across the sky.
4. What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
 - a. The most famous comet is Halley's Comet.
 - b. The orbit of Halley's Comet takes 76 years.
 - c. The next time Halley's Comet will be visible will be in 2061.
5. Use the main ideas to write a summary of this passage:



Answers

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
 - a. The planets of our solar system orbit the Sun.
 - ☒ b. Comets in our solar system orbit the Sun.
 - c. The Earth circles the Sun once a year.
2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - a. Solar winds cause a comet's vapor cloud to trail out like a tail.
 - b. The solid part of a comet can be 10 miles across.
 - ☒ c. Comets are made of frozen gasses and bits of rock and dust.
3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - a. A comet's vapor tail can be hundreds of millions of miles long.
 - ☒ b. When comets are visible from Earth, they appear to be motionless.
 - c. When comets are visible from Earth, they appear to whiz across the sky.
4. What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
 - ☒ a. The most famous comet is Halley's Comet.
 - b. The orbit of Halley's Comet takes 76 years.
 - c. The next time Halley's Comet will be visible will be in 2061.
5. Use the main ideas to write a summary of this passage:

Student responses should include these main ideas without extra details:

Comets in our solar system orbit the Sun. They are made of frozen gasses and bits of rock and dust. When comets are visible from Earth, they appear to be motionless. The most famous comet is Halley's Comet.