

Central Idea

6th Grade

What a whole text is about — and how it differs from a topic.

The central idea is the point the whole text makes, not just its subject.

FIND THE TOPIC

1

One or two words: 'bees', 'the moon landing'.

ASK WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT IT

2

That claim is the central idea.

CHECK IT COVERS EVERYTHING

3

It must fit the whole text, not just paragraph one.

FIND THE SUPPORTING DETAILS

4

Two or three that clearly hold it up.

TOPIC VS CENTRAL IDEA

Topic: bees

Central idea: bee populations are falling, and that threatens food supply

In an essay this becomes the thesis. It is the same skill, going the other way.