

Locating MAIN IDEA

As you may know, the **main idea** of a passage is its central and most important idea. Effective readers look for this central idea as they read. The **main idea** can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a passage.

If you are not sure of an answer, look back at the passage. Some details will help you, even if the exact words are not there. Do the work of locating the main idea—this means going back and forth between the prompt and the questions.

Read the following passage and use the **Hand Strategy** you've already learned (*Somebody, Wanted?, But..., So?, Then*) to answer the questions.

The best place to buy a quick, inexpensive snack or meal in Japan is a train station. For about a dollar, travelers can buy a box lunch on the station platform and take it onto a train. The box lunch for travelers, called *ekiben*, has been popular in Japan for more than eighty years.

Travelers can choose from many different *ekiben*. Some contain small balls of rice wrapped in seaweed or bamboo leaves, with cooked chicken or fish and vegetables on top. Other *ekiben* contain *sushi*—raw fish with rice. As many as eleven different foods are included in a single box lunch. All *ekiben* are healthful, colorful, and attractively arranged.

Some *ekiben* are packed in wooden boxes that are covered with fancy paper and tied up with a string. Other lunches are in pottery containers that are often collected by travelers. A pair of chopsticks and a bottle of soy sauce are packed in every box.

In Japan's big cities, *ekiben* are made in huge kitchens at the train station. Workers prepare thousands of box lunches during the night to have them ready at 7 a.m. for travelers and others on their way to work.

1. Where are *ekiben* sold?
 - a. on trains
 - b. in huge kitchens
 - c. on station platforms
 - d. on street corners
2. According to the article, *ekiben* have which of these advantages for travelers?
 - a. a large variety of foods
 - b. attractive containers
 - c. low cost
 - d. all of the above
3. *Ekiben* are not described as...
 - a. good for the health.
 - b. mixed with soy sauce.
 - c. brightly colored.
 - d. containing raw fish.
4. This passage is mainly about...
 - a. Japan's fast food.
 - b. the Japanese diet.
 - c. Japan's box lunch for travelers.
 - d. how *ekiben* are cooked and served.

