

# Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Main Idea

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Read the short story and answer each question.



## The Power of Old Trees

In forests across the world, a few trees stand taller, wider, and older than the rest. These ancient trees—sometimes called “mother trees” or “giants of the forest”—do much more than simply survive. They help the entire forest thrive.

**The main idea is that ancient trees are essential to the health of the forest.** Through deep roots, wide canopies, and underground networks, they support plants, animals, and even other trees.

Ancient trees provide **shade** that helps cool the forest floor. Their large branches offer homes to birds, squirrels, and insects. In some rainforests, entire ecosystems live high in the treetops of these giants.

Even underground, old trees are hard at work. Their roots are part of a web called the “**wood wide web**,” where fungi connect trees together. Through these connections, ancient trees can send nutrients to younger trees that are sick or struggling. Some scientists have even recorded trees sending “warning signals” through these underground paths when insects or fire threaten the area.

Because they grow slowly over hundreds of years, ancient trees also **store large amounts of carbon** in their trunks and roots. This helps reduce the effects of climate change by keeping carbon out of the atmosphere.

If an ancient tree falls, it continues helping the forest. Its trunk becomes a shelter for animals and a food source for bugs and fungi. As it breaks down, it adds rich nutrients to the soil.

Ancient trees may look silent, but they are some of the forest's busiest workers.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## How Bridges Stay Strong

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Ancient trees grow faster than young trees
- B. Ancient trees help keep forests healthy in many ways
- C. Only animals benefit from old trees
- D. Forests don't need old trees anymore

2. Which of the following details supports the main idea?

- A. Ancient trees are usually in cities
- B. Ancient trees help store carbon and protect younger trees
- C. Ancient trees grow next to roads
- D. Ancient trees are home to only one animal

3. Fill in the blank:

Through their roots and the **"wood wide web,"** ancient trees can share \_\_\_\_\_ and warning signals with younger trees.

4. Name two ways ancient trees support forest ecosystems. Use details from the text to explain.

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5. Write a short summary of the passage in 2-3 sentences using the main idea and supporting details.

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# Parent and Teacher Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** S

**Lexile Level:** 850L-1000L

**Grade Level:** 4th Grade, End of the Year

**Genre:** Informational Nonfiction – Environmental Science

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## Introducing the Text

*“In this passage, we’ll explore the surprising role ancient trees play in keeping a forest healthy. As we read, we’ll look for the main idea, identify the details that support it, and practice summarizing the most important parts of the text.”*

**Vocabulary:** canopy, ecosystem, nutrients, fungi, carbon

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you think of an old tree?
  2. Why do you think scientists are interested in ancient trees?
  3. What kinds of living things depend on forests to survive?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is the “wood wide web” and how does it help younger trees?
  2. Why are ancient trees important in fighting climate change?
  3. What happens to the forest when an ancient tree falls?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is the main idea of this passage?
  2. Which parts of the text helped you understand how important ancient trees are?
  3. How would you explain this passage to someone in just a few sentences?
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## Activity Idea

Have students create a diagram or labeled drawing of an ancient tree and its role in the forest. Include elements like shade, animal homes, root networks, carbon storage, and decomposition. Then ask students to write a one-paragraph summary based on their diagram, reinforcing the main idea and supporting details.

