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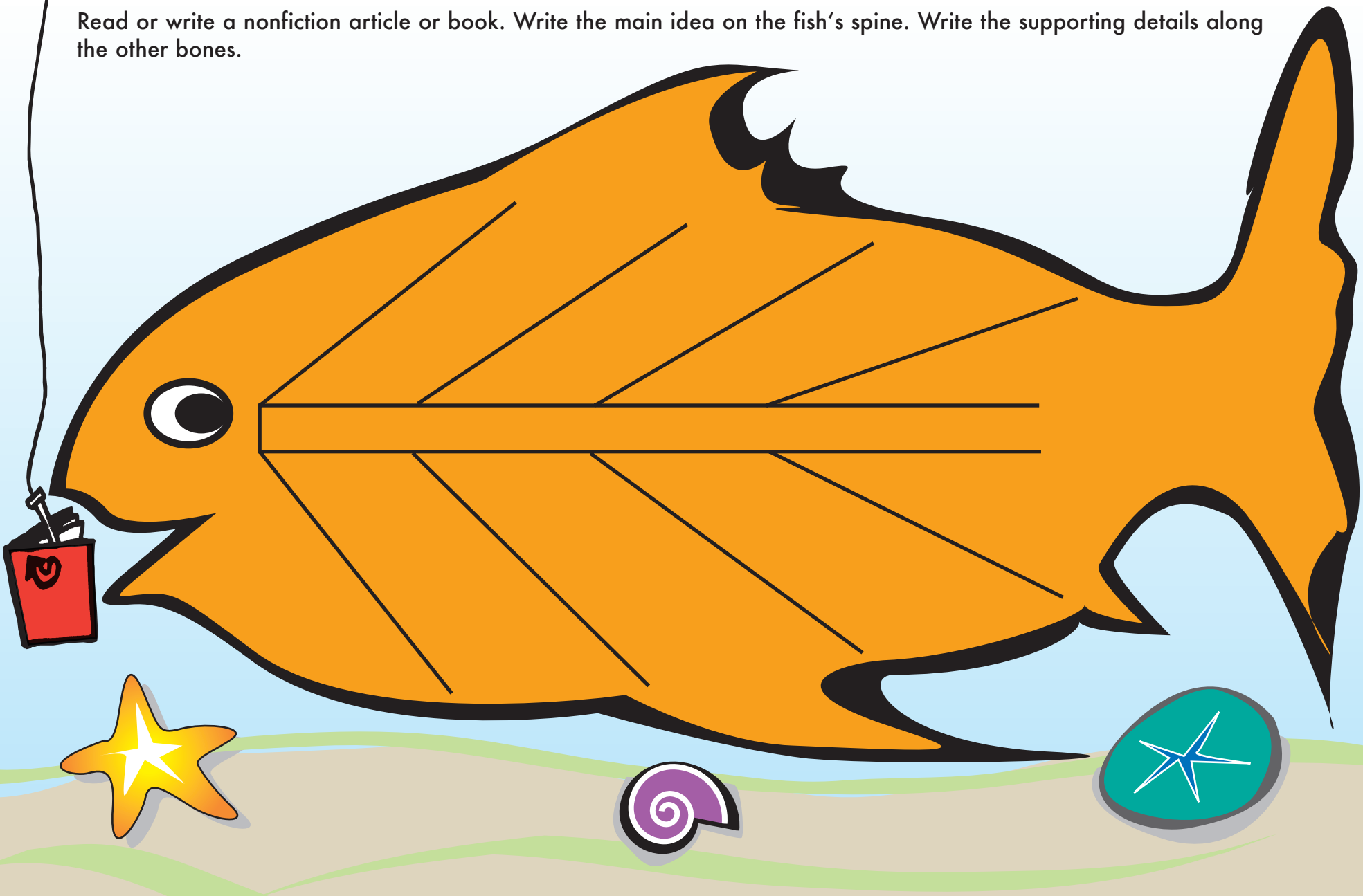
Name: _____ **Date:** _____

What's the Main Idea?

Read or write a nonfiction article or book. Write the main idea on the fish's spine. Write the supporting details along the other bones.



WHAT'S THE MAIN IDEA?

Skills

Students will:

- **determine the main idea of an article**
- **identify supporting details**
- **recognize extraneous information**

Purpose

The fishbone organizer helps students recognize that nonfiction articles and expository writing contain a main idea and supporting details. As they isolate specific information to record on the organizer, students make decisions regarding its relevance, thereby increasing their understanding that not all text is of equal importance. Students who are writing essays or articles can use the graphic during prewriting to ensure that their work contains a main idea and to help them develop a structure for their piece.

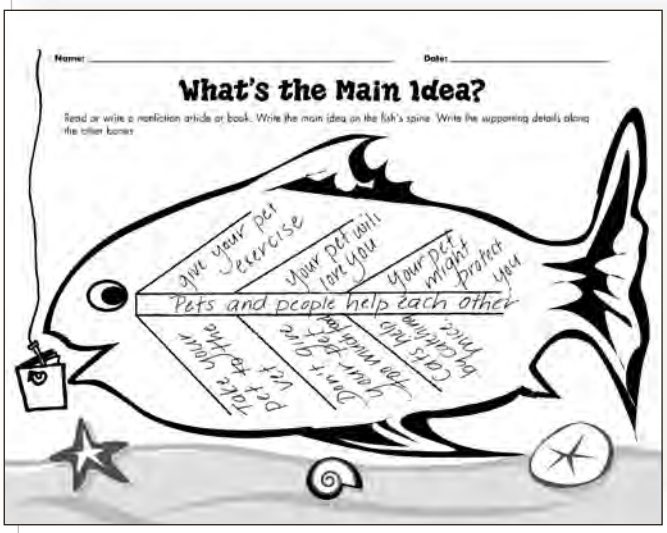
How to Use the Organizer

After reading an article, have students determine the main idea and write it on the spine of the fish. Then encourage them to write the details that support the main idea inside the divisions made by the other bones. Students who wish to use the graphic organizer to plan their own writing can begin with the main idea or record facts first, which may lead them to the development of a main idea.

Examples

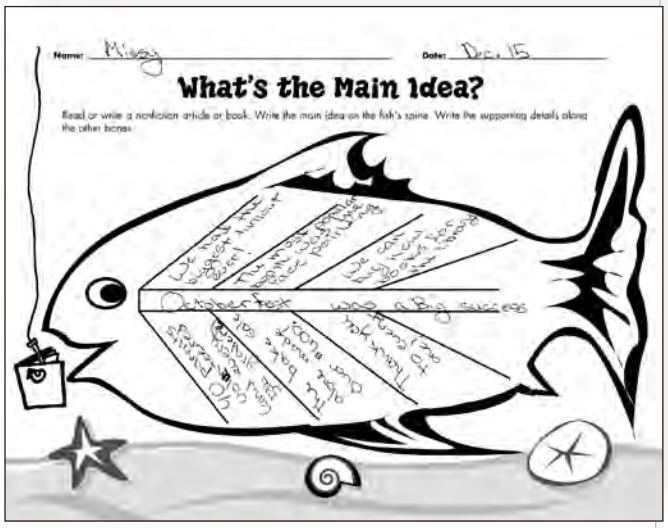
Primary Grades

After reading an article from their weekly news magazine, second graders helped their teacher complete the What's the Main Idea organizer on the interactive whiteboard.



Intermediate Grades

A small group of fourth graders used What's the Main Idea? to organize an article they were composing for the school newspaper.



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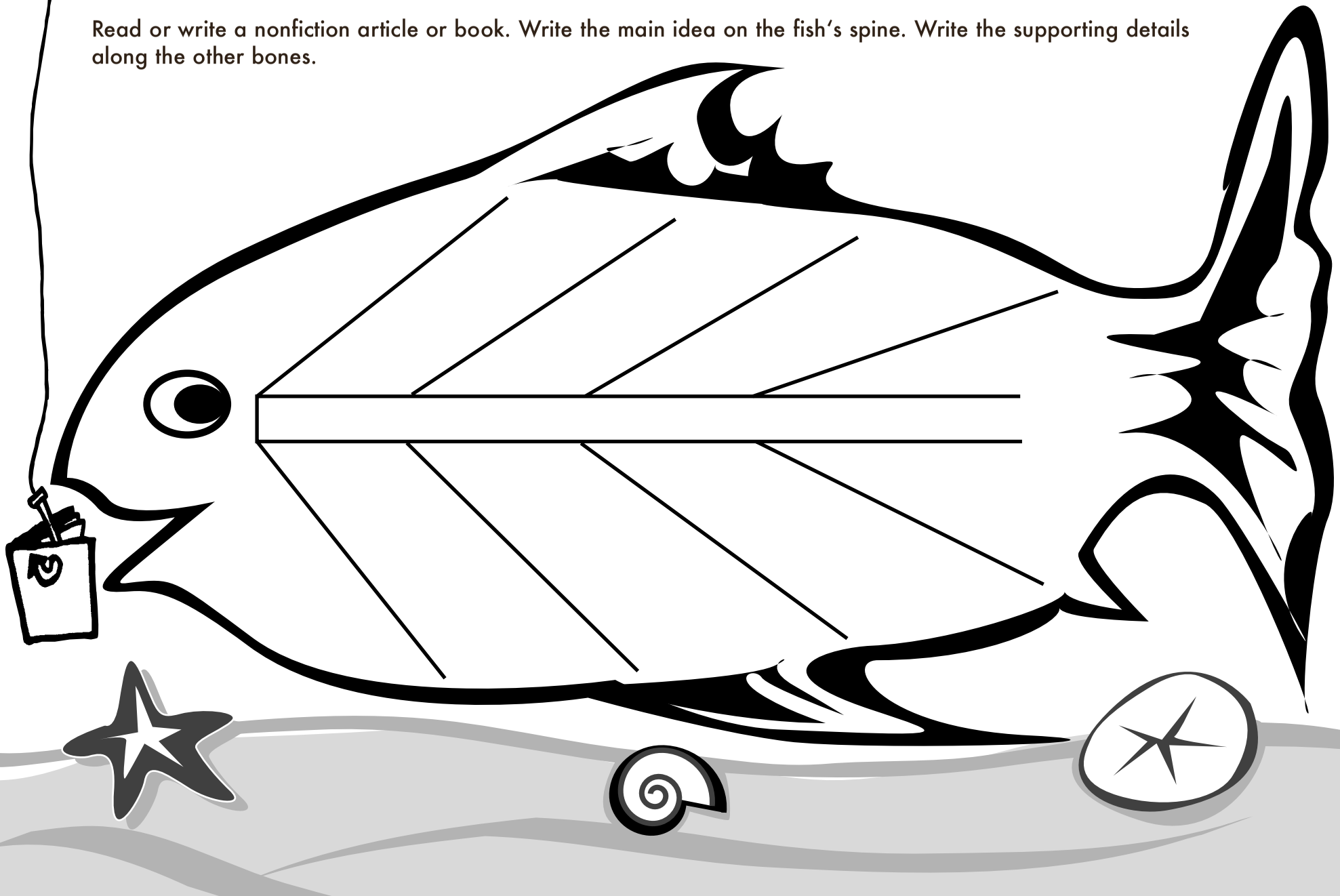

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