

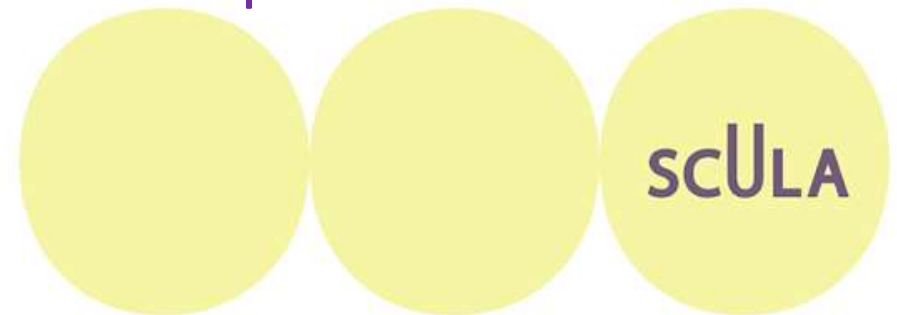
# SAT READING & WRITING SECTION

Central Ideas & Details



# WALKTHROUGH OF THE SESSION

- What are “central ideas and details” questions?
- How should we think about central ideas and details questions?
- How to approach central ideas and details questions?
- Tips & useful strategies



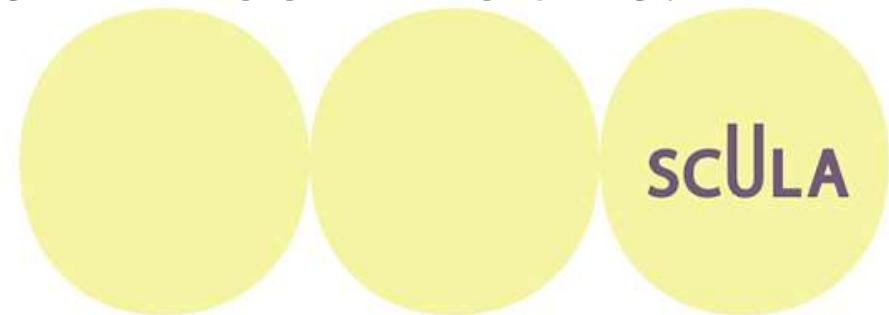
# What are “central ideas and details ”Questions?

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On the Reading and Writing section of your SAT, some questions will present a short passage for you to read. The passage may be excerpted from a work of literature or from a scholarly essay .

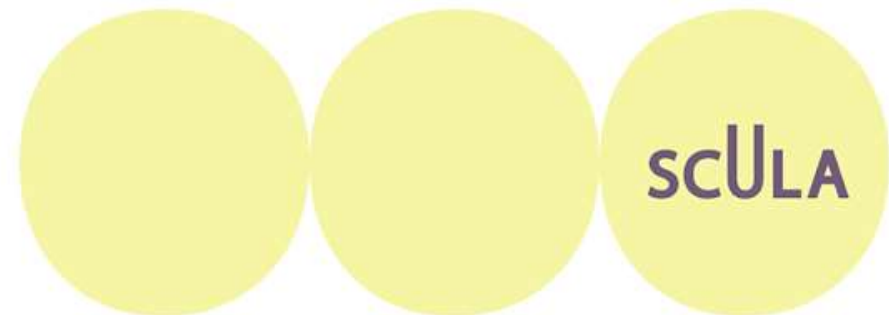
Once you read the passage, you'll be asked either to identify the main idea of the text or to answer a specific question based on the text.

**Central ideas and details questions will look like this:**



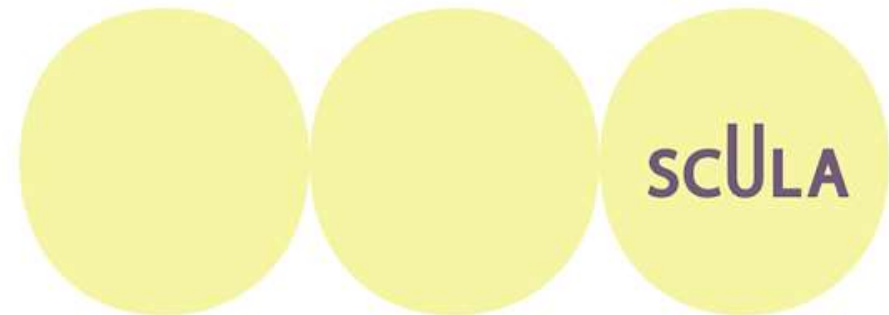
## CENTRAL IDEAS AND DETAILS: EXAMPLE

Many intellectual histories of the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s rely heavily on essays and other explicitly ideological works as primary sources, a tendency that can overrepresent the perspectives of a small number of thinkers, most of whom were male. Historian Ashley D. Farmer has shown that expanding the array of primary sources to encompass more types of print material—including political cartoons, advertisements, and artwork—leads to a much better understanding of the movement and the crucial and diverse roles that Black women played in shaping it .



## Which choice best describes the main idea of the text?

- A. Before Farmer's research, historians had largely ignored the intellectual dimensions of the Black Power movement.
- B. Farmer's methods and research have enriched the historical understanding of the Black Power movement and Black women's contributions to it.
- C. Other historians of the Black Power movement have criticized Farmer's use of unconventional primary sources.
- D. The figures in the Black Power movement whom historians tend to cite would have agreed with Farmer's conclusions about women's roles in the movement.



**We should start by paraphrasing the passage in our own words:**

- Histories of the Black Power movement tend to focus on men.
- Ashley D. Farmer studies a wider variety of sources.
- Farmer's work increases understanding of Black Power movement, especially women's roles.

In order to describe "the main idea of the text", the best choice will need to accurately capture these ideas .

**It will also need to avoid introducing information that's *not* in the passage.**

If we were to make a prediction, the main idea might be something like  
**"Farmer has improved the study of the Black Power movement by exploring the roles of women".**

Now let's look at the choices. Do any of them match our prediction?

**Choice A** actually says the *opposite* of what the passage says. The passage says that "many historians believe that the Black Power movement was a response to the civil rights movement." Choice A says that "many historians believe that the Black Power movement was a response to the Black Power movement." This is the opposite of what the passage says.

**Choice C** introduces information not included in the passage. The text doesn't mention what other historians think of Farmer's research. If it's not mentioned, then it can't be a "main idea". We can eliminate this choice.

**Choice D** introduces information not included in the passage.

We're not told about the beliefs of "figures in the Black Power movement." If the text doesn't mention this information, then it can't be a "main idea."

We can eliminate this choice.

**Only choice B** accurately captures the central ideas we identified in the text, including a specific mention of "Black women's contributions" to the Black Power movement.

Choice B also avoids introducing any ideas that can't be found in the passage .

**Choice B is the answer.**

# How Should we Think About “Central Ideas & Details” Questions?

Central ideas and details questions focus on reading comprehension, and they do so in a fairly straightforward way. We won't need any outside knowledge. We won't need to analyze the text too deeply or do any complex reasoning. We'll simply need to read the passage carefully.

## Central ideas

Central ideas questions ask us to identify "the main idea" of the passage. Since the passages for these questions are fairly short, finding this main idea shouldn't be too tricky.

### The main idea should

- cover a majority of the details introduced in the text.
- mention any particular points of emphasis from the text.

### The main idea should *not*

- focus too intently on just one detail from the text.
- introduce new ideas not addressed within the text.
- contradict information from the text.

## Details

Details questions ask us to answer a specific question about an idea contained in the passage. Details questions can usually be answered using information from one particular sentence in the text.

These questions will contain words, phrases, or ideas that direct us to the appropriate part of the text.

Once there, we simply need to find the correct detail needed to answer the question.

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# How to Approach Central Ideas and Details Questions?

<b>Step 1 :</b> <i>Summarize the text in your own words</i>	<b>Step 2:</b> <i>Determine the task</i>	<b>Step 3:</b> <i>Revisit the text</i>	<b>Step 4:</b> <i>Predict and eliminate</i>
Don't just skim the passage. Read it closely, and try to summarize the ideas you encounter in your own words. By the time you finish reading, you should have a strong understanding of the information contained in the passage.	The question that follows the passage will reveal your task. Does it ask about the "main idea"? Or does it ask about a particular piece of information?	<p>If the question is about the main idea, then revisit your summary of the text to find the overarching theme.</p> <p>If the question asks about something specific, then head to that section of the passage to search out the correct detail.</p>	<p>Based on your understanding of the passage, you should be able to answer to the question fairly accurately without even looking at the choices. If someone asked you to summarize the text, what would you say?</p> <p>Once you predict the answer in your own words, it should be pretty easy to find a match among the choices. If you're still not sure, you can eliminate your way to the answer by getting rid of choices that contradict the passage or introduce new ideas.</p>

# Top Tips!

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## Stay specific

Don't stray beyond the focus of the passage. Eliminate choices that broaden or blur the ideas in discussed in the text. And look out for small twists and turns that make a choice *seem* relevant when it actually expresses something unsupported by the passage.

## Keep your prediction as short and simple as possible

If your prediction is just as long as the passage itself, it's not simple enough! Keep simplifying it until you can sum it up in one brief idea, then use that prediction as a test. The more concise your prediction, the quicker and easier it will be to check it against the choices.

## Use keywords as a map

When a question asks about a detail from the passage, it will often do so by referencing key words and phrases from the text. Find those words in the passage: they'll direct you towards the answer you seek!

# Practice Time!



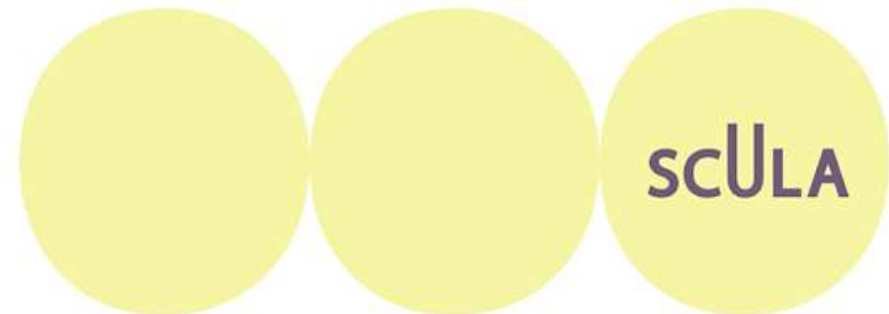
## CENTRAL IDEAS AND DETAILS

The following text is adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel *Treasure Island*.

Bill's parents were not at all pleased with his behaviour.

Every day when [Bill] came back from his stroll he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road. At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question, but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them. When a seaman did [stay] at the Admiral Benbow (as now and then some did) he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the parlour; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present.

According to the text, why does Bill regularly ask about "seafaring men?"



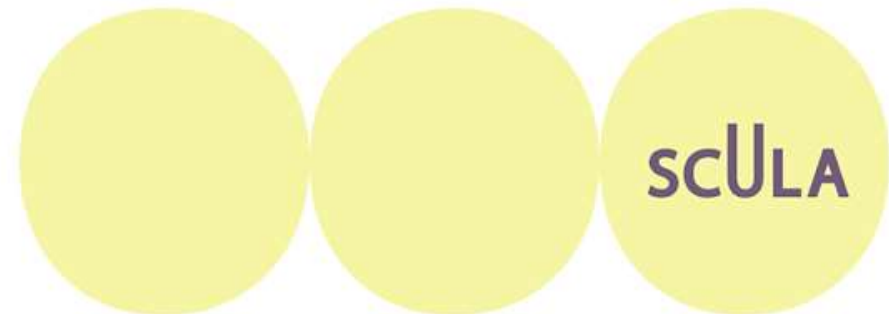
**Choose 1 answer**

A- He isn't sure that other guests at the inn will be welcoming of sailors.

B- He's trying to secure a job as part of the crew on a new ship.

C-He's hoping to find an old friend and fellow sailor.

D- He doesn't want to encounter any other sailor unexpectedly.



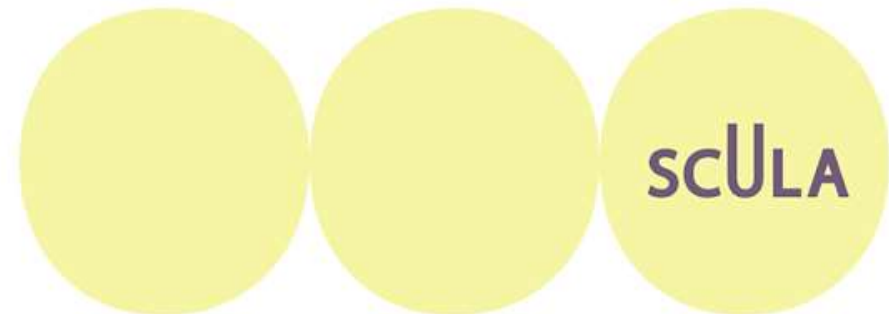
This question asks about a detail from the text.

Specifically, the question references Bill "**nem gnirafaes tuoba gniksa**".

**Let's use that phrase as a guide and find it in the passage:**

Every day when [Bill] came back from his stroll he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road.

Ok, so this just tells us that Bill does ask about "seafaring men", but it doesn't tell us why .



Let's check the next sentence to see if it tells us what we need to know:  
At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question, but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them.

Here we go. This sentence tells us that Bill "was desirous to avoid [seafaring men]". In other words, he wanted to stay away from them!

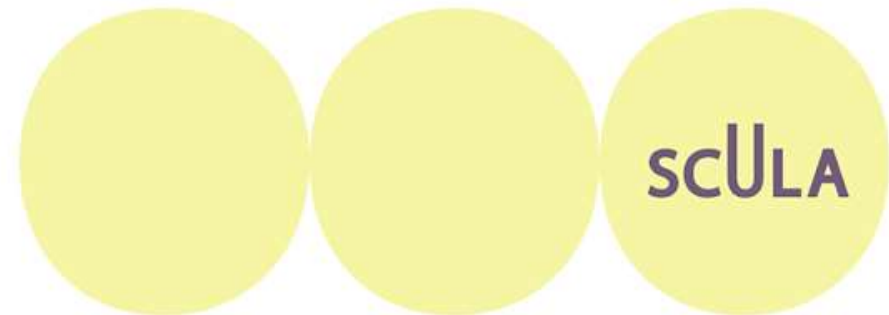
Let's use that as our prediction:

"Bill wants to stay away from sailors."

Which choice says something similar to our prediction?

Choice D is similar to our prediction .

**Choice D is the answer.**



# THANK YOU!

## DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

