

CHAPTER
7

SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE *Determining Main Ideas*

Section 3

A main idea is a statement that summarizes the main point of a speech, an article, a section of a book, or a paragraph. Sometimes main ideas are stated clearly. Other times readers must figure out the main idea by studying the entire passage. Read the two excerpts below and write the main idea on the line that follows. (See Skillbuilder Handbook.)

India and China Establish Empires

Asoka became king of the Mauryan Empire in India in 269 B.C. At first, he followed Kautilya's philosophy of waging war to expand his power. He led a long campaign against his neighbors to the southeast in the state of Kalinga. During this bloody war, 100,000 soldiers were slain and even more civilians perished. Although victorious, Asoka felt sorrow over the slaughter at Kalinga. As a result, he studied Buddhism and decided to rule by Buddha's teaching of nonviolence and "peace to all beings." Throughout the empire, Asoka erected huge stone pillars inscribed with his new policies. Some edicts guaranteed that Asoka would treat his subjects fairly and humanely. Others preached nonviolence and acceptance of people who held different beliefs.

1. Main Idea: _____

When Emperor Liu Bang of China died in 195 B.C., his young son became emperor, but in name only. The real ruler was the boy's mother, Empress Lü. Although Lü had not been Liu Bang's only wife, she had powerful friends at court who helped her seize power. The empress outlived her son and retained control of the throne by naming first one infant and then another as emperor. Because the infants were too young to rule, she remained in control. When Empress Lü died in 180 B.C., people who remained loyal to Liu Bang's family, rather than to Lü's family, came back into power. They rid the palace of the old empress's relatives by executing them. Such palace plots occurred often during the Han Dynasty.

2. Main Idea: _____
