

LESSON 14 • OUTLINING & READING SKILLS

SELECTING MAIN IDEAS OF PARAGRAPHS

Textbook Page 14

Plains Indians Culture & Technology: Read each historical passage carefully. For each paragraph, decide upon the title that expresses the complete main idea without being too narrow or too broad. **Circle the letter** (a, b, or c) of your choice.

1. HONORS OF BRAVERY

Warrior Society & Regalia

Like medals given to courageous soldiers, Indians also had means of displaying bravery. Feather headdresses told a story. According to the way each feather was marked, it meant anything from having killed an enemy or to the warrior, himself, having been wounded. Some tribes wore animal tails tied to their moccasins; others carried locks of hair from enemy scalps as recognition of their bravery.

- ☐ a How Indians displayed bravery
- ☐ b Courageous soldiers in battle
- ☐ c Feather headdresses

2. PLAINS BEADWORK SYMBOLS

Traditional Art & Semiotics

Indian women of the Plains tribes did beautiful beadwork. They designed their own patterns which oftentimes had various meanings. A cross may have signified a "star"; black color meant "night." Red often showed "thunder," "sunset," or "blood." Triangles and diamond patterns were very popular.

- ☐ a Beadwork designs
- ☐ b Meaning of designs in Indian beadwork
- ☐ c Importance of color

3. ORIGIN OF HISTORICAL TERMS

Cultural Anthropology & History

Although the color of Indians' skins varies from nearly white to a deep brown, they are spoken of as "red men" or "red skins." Plains Indians usually painted their faces and bodies before going to war. The designs came to them in dreams. Red paint was used most frequently because it meant strength. It was the early explorers who started this expression by referring to the warriors as "red men" or "redskins."

- ☐ a How did the expressions "red men" and "redskins" begin?
- ☐ b Color of Indians' skins
- ☐ c Why Indians painted their bodies

4. MOUNTED ARCHERY WEAPONRY

Military History & Tactics

Bows and arrows proved to be ideal weapons for Plains Indians on horseback. They were light to carry. Because they could be shot without making a noise, no one could tell where they came from. The Indians could shoot so fast that they were able to keep several arrows in the air at the same time. For that reason, Indians preferred their bows to the early muzzle-loading flintlock muskets which were slower to use.

- ☐ a Why bows and arrows were ideal weapons
- ☐ b Muzzle-loading flintlock muskets
- ☐ c Weapons used by Plains Indians

Pedagogical Purpose & Expository Architecture:
This lesson tests main idea comprehension across four authentic social studies paragraphs. Students must identify the unifying thesis statement and reject distractors that represent introductory analogies, subordinate artistic motifs, or comparative details.

1. Paragraph 1: Honors of Bravery

Correct Title: a

✓ **a. How Indians displayed bravery**
[CORRECT] Encompasses all three cultural emblems described: feather markings on headdresses, animal tails on moccasins, and scalplocks.
[DISTRACTOR b - Analogy Only] "Courageous soldiers in battle" — Mentioned only as a comparison in the first sentence; the text is about Native American customs.
[DISTRACTOR c - Too Narrow] "Feather headdresses" — Only covers one example; omits moccasin tails and locks of hair.

2. Paragraph 2: Beadwork Symbols

Correct Title: b

✓ **b. Meaning of designs in Indian beadwork**
[CORRECT] Matches the thesis: "patterns which oftentimes had various meanings." Explains symbols for star, night, thunder, sunset, and blood.
[DISTRACTOR a - Too Broad] "Beadwork designs" — Omits the central focus on symbolic meaning and iconography.
[DISTRACTOR c - Too Narrow] "Importance of color" — Colors are only part of the symbolism, which also includes geometric crosses, triangles, and diamonds.

3. Paragraph 3: Origin of Historical Terms

Correct Title: a

✓ **a. How did the expressions "red men" and "redskins" begin?**
[CORRECT] Synthesizes the opening premise and concluding sentence: explains that early explorers coined the phrase from red war paint, not natural skin tones.
[DISTRACTOR b - Factually Disproven] "Color of Indians' skins" — The passage explicitly notes skin color varied from white to brown, disproving that skin tone was red.
[DISTRACTOR c - Too Narrow] "Why Indians painted their bodies" — Explains the war custom, but misses the overarching historical inquiry into the expressions.

4. Paragraph 4: Mounted Archery Weaponry

Correct Title: a

✓ **a. Why bows and arrows were ideal weapons**
[CORRECT] Unifies all 4 supporting points: light to carry, silent, rapid fire (multiple in air), and faster than early muskets.
[DISTRACTOR b - Contrast Detail] "Muzzle-loading flintlock muskets" — Only introduced at the very end as a point of comparison.
[DISTRACTOR c - Too Broad] "Weapons used by Plains Indians" — Implies a catalog of spears, clubs, tomahawks, and knives, whereas the text focuses strictly on the bow and arrow.

Evaluation Guide: Distinguishing Primary Themes from Subordinate Elements

Distractor Pattern	Student Misjudgment	Remediation Prompt
Introductory Analogy (Q1 b)	Confusing a rhetorical comparison with the actual topic.	"Are we reading about modern soldiers, or does the author use them to introduce how Indians showed bravery?"
Comparative Contrast (Q4 b)	Latching onto an alternative object introduced to highlight an advantage.	"Why does the author mention muskets? Is the paragraph about muskets, or why bows were preferred over muskets?"