In some stories you can figure out an author’s main idea. The author’s words clearly state the main idea. In other stories it is not so easy to figure out the author’s main idea. You have to add your own ideas to what you have read. Your own ideas plus the author’s words will help you figure out the story’s main idea. This is called drawing conclusions.

Read the following paragraph and figure out the main idea even though the author’s words do not clearly state it.

The man slowly walked up the steps. He could hardly lift one foot after another. His right hand held the railing as he took one step at a time. At last he reached his floor. He opened the apartment door and made his way to the large chair near the window. The man kicked off his shoes, sat back, and closed his eyes.

From what the author tells you, did you add your own ideas and figure out that:

The man was tired.

Or you might have figured out that:

The man was feeling sick.

When you figure out things that the author means but does not come right out and say, you will get more meaning from the things you read.

Villella was one of the greatest dancers in the world. But his life as a dancer cost him more than the pain of practicing. There was no time for a home life with his wife and young son.

From what you read about Villella, you might say that:

His life as a dancer was very hard for his family.
Read the following paragraphs. Circle the letters of the correct answers.

1. When you use a computer, make sure the screen is in the right place for you. If someone was using the computer before you, the screen might be in the right place for that person. But the screen might be too high or too low for you. Put the screen in a good position for you before you start to work.

   If you add your own ideas to what you have read, you can figure out that
   a. someone moved your computer screen and you have to fix it.
   b. you need to move the computer screen so you can see it clearly.

2. Edward Villella knows better than most dancers that some people find it hard to accept ballet. He was raised in New York City. In his home, there were strong opinions about what a man should be and do in his life. His father, most of all, thought ballet had nothing to do with these things. His father was the kind of man who did not think men should dance.

   If you add your own ideas to what you have read, you can figure out that
   a. Villella’s father did not want his son to be a dancer.
   b. Villella’s father thought that Villella should be a boxer.

3. Tyler could not find his cat, Winky. Tyler looked around for Winky. He looked in some places in the house. He looked in some places in the yard. Tyler began to cry. He said, “Winky is gone! He ran away! I will never see my cat again!” Just then, Winkly crawled out from under Tyler’s bed.

   If you add your own ideas to what you have read, you can figure out that
   a. Winky ran away from the house.
   b. Winky had been hiding under Tyler’s bed.