

# Special Report

Magazine Article, page 977

Political Cartoon, page 978

**COMMON CORE**

**RI 2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text.

**RI 5** Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas are developed and refined. **RI 7** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums.

**L 4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases.

## What’s the Connection?

“American History” takes place on the day that President John F. Kennedy was killed. The magazine article you are about to read will add to your sense of how that tragic event affected the nation and how and why Kennedy’s short presidency remains significant today.

## Standards Focus: Identify Controlling Idea

In a sense, the controlling idea of an informative or explanatory text “controls” the writer’s development of the text—it suggests which important details the writer should include to accomplish his or her purpose and how he or she should organize those details. Since the controlling idea shapes the writer’s work, it should also leave an impression on you, the reader. From the reader’s perspective, the **controlling idea** is the **central idea**, or most important point, that a text conveys.

Here are some tips to help you determine the controlling idea of a magazine article:

- Preview the first paragraph or two of the article. Sometimes the controlling idea will be stated outright at the beginning. More often, however, you’ll have to infer the controlling idea.
- As you read, distinguish between the most important and the less important details in each paragraph. Try to state the key idea of each paragraph in your own words. Taken together, these key ideas should suggest the controlling idea of the entire article.

You can keep track of important details and key ideas in a chart like the one started below.

<i>Paragraph</i>	<i>Important Details</i>	<i>Key Idea</i>
1	<i>After 9/11, many Americans visited the JFK Library and Museum. . . .</i>	<i>Kennedy was a strong and skillful leader during trying times.</i>
2		
<i>Article’s Controlling Idea:</i>		

## Special Report

BY KENNETH T. WALSH  
NOVEMBER 24, 2003

A

In the days immediately after 9/11, Americans in large numbers showed up at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum in Boston, apparently looking for strength and hope at a time of national peril and sorrow. They were drawn in particular to a film recounting the Cuban missile crisis, when Kennedy guided the nation through a confrontation with the Soviet Union that could easily have led to nuclear war. Many visitors seemed comforted by the idea that prudent leadership and common sense could make all the difference, even in the worst of times.

The fact that Kennedy still has such a hold on America's imagination comes as no surprise to historians and other observers of popular culture. This connection will become even more apparent in the coming weeks as the nation marks the 40th anniversary of his assassination, on Nov. 22, 1963.

Yet the reasons for his mystique are less clear. The fact that he was assassinated in the prime of life goes only so far in explaining it. President William McKinley, another popular leader, was murdered in 1901, but his death generated no vast outpouring of emotion and no enduring sense of a lost legacy. In contrast, millions of Americans still recall where they were when they heard that Kennedy had

been shot. (I was attending history class at St. Rose High School in Belmar, N.J., when the principal came on the public-address system and, choking back tears, told us what had happened. Everyone marched to our nearby church, and we spent the next few hours praying for the president's survival and, a bit later, his soul.)

We all seem to have vivid memories of his funeral, carried on live television, with those unforgettable images of his grieving widow and his young son saluting smartly when his father's cortege passed by.

"Kennedy is frozen in our memory at age 46," says historian Robert Dallek, author of *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy 1917–1963*. "People don't realize that this past May 29 he would have been 86 years of age."

Some deft PR by the White House helped to create his charismatic aura in the first place. He and his advisers quickly grasped the power of the new medium of television, and the handsome, eloquent young leader quickly mastered it and went on to convey an image of optimism and charm that still surrounds him today. His performances at live press conferences are remembered as tours de force. His speeches are used as brilliant examples of political communication. And if his legislative

### A CONTROLLING IDEA

On the 40th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination, *U.S. News & World Report* featured this special report. As you read, consider what this detail suggests about Kennedy and his tragic death.

### B CONTROLLING IDEA

Reread the first sentence of the third paragraph. What does this **topic sentence** suggest about the **controlling idea** of this article? Turn that sentence into a question and read on to find an answer.

COMMON CORE L 4

**A FOREIGN PHRASES**

The French expression *tours de force* in lines 67–68 means “feats of unusual skill.” What does the writer’s use of this expression tell you about Kennedy’s press conference?

COMMON CORE L 4

**Language Coach**

**Word Origins** *Tantalize* comes from a Greek myth about Tantalus, who is forced to stand in water up to his neck. Fruit hangs just out of Tantalus’ reach, and he is never able to eat or drink. Reread lines 120–123. What do you think *tantalizing* means?

**D CONTROLLING IDEA**

What is the cartoonist suggesting about the connection between Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy? How might the cartoon relate to the controlling idea of the article?

record fell short, his ideas about ending the Cold War and achieving racial equality at home, at least under the law, eventually took root and became reality. **A**

Further, his glamorous wife, Jacqueline, reinforced the exciting image of Camelot, especially in contrast to his solid but dull predecessor, Dwight Eisenhower. Ike had been the oldest man to serve as president up until that time; Kennedy was the youngest ever elected to the office. The White House never let anyone forget it.

“One of the things President Kennedy did was instill in the American people the idea they could make a difference,” says Deborah Leff, director of the Kennedy Library and Museum. “. . . It was a time when you saw America striving to be its best.”

For his part, Kennedy said in one of his famous speeches, at American University on June 10, 1963: “No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man’s reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable—and we believe they can do it again.”

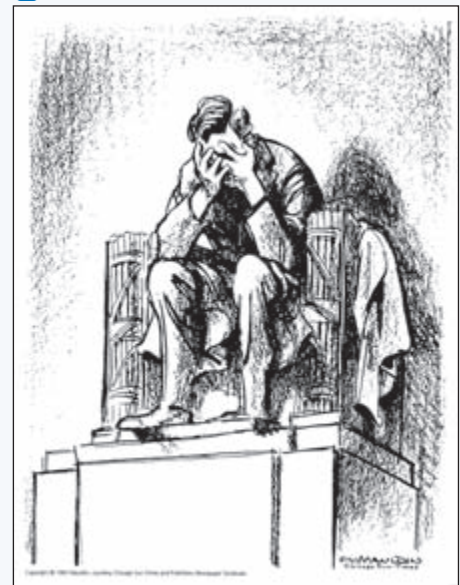
The tragic Kennedy mythology was reinforced when his brother Robert was assassinated in 1968 and, later, when his son, John F. Kennedy Jr., died in a plane crash in 1999. All of this perpetuated the idea that the Kennedys, despite all their advantages, were not immune from life’s calamities. This deepened their connection to the rest of us.

Yet Kennedy governed prior to the age of cynicism brought on by the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal,

and the wrenching social changes of the past four decades (including, of course, his own assassination). Perhaps not even Kennedy could have emerged from this era unscathed had he lived and remained in public life.

120 “The sudden end to Kennedy’s life and presidency has left us with tantalizing ‘might have beens,’” Dallek writes. “Yet even setting these aside and acknowledging some missed opportunities and false steps, it must be acknowledged that the Kennedy thousand days spoke to the country’s better angels, inspired visions of a less divisive nation and world, and demonstrated that America was still the last best hope of mankind.” It is a legacy any president would be proud of.

**D**



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## Comprehension

- 1. Recall** What facts did you learn from the article “Special Report” that you did not learn from the short story “American History”?
- 2. Summarize** What were Kenneth Walsh’s personal experiences on the day of President Kennedy’s assassination?
- 3. Recall** According to the article, in addition to Kennedy’s assassination, what other tragedies befell the Kennedy family?

## Text Analysis

- 4. Synthesize** What does the political cartoon add to your understanding of how Kennedy’s loss affected the nation? Explain.
- 5. Analyze Controlling Idea** Review the chart you filled out as you read. Then state the controlling idea of “Special Report” in your own words.

### COMMON CORE

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**RI 5** Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas are developed and refined. **RI 7** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums.

**W 9b (RI 6)** Draw evidence from informational texts; determine an author’s purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that purpose.

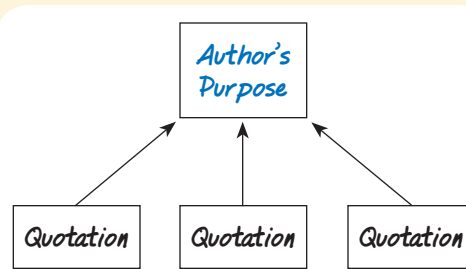
## Read for Information: Analyze Author’s Style and Purpose

### WRITING PROMPT

Notice how the author of “Special Report” uses several quotations in the article. How does this use of quotations advance the author’s purpose?

To answer this prompt, you will need to determine the author’s purpose and then analyze how quotations help the author accomplish that purpose. Following these steps can help:

- Record important quotations that you find in the article.
- In determining the controlling idea, you’ve already answered the question “What point is the author trying to make?” Now answer the question “Why is he making that point?” The answer is the author’s purpose.
- Finally, consider how the quotations you recorded support, either individually or collectively, the purpose you identified.





## Photograph

The short story and magazine article you've just read describe people's reactions to President Kennedy's assassination. You've most likely heard the expression "A picture is worth a thousand words." Study the photograph below and consider what it adds to your understanding of Kennedy's death and his legacy.

### COMMON CORE

**RL 7** Analyze the representation of a subject in different artistic mediums. **RI 7** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums.



#### 1. ANALYZE DETAILS

What characteristics of this photograph suggest when it was taken? Explain.

#### 2. INFER

What inferences can you make about the person who created the sign in the background? Focus on the sign creator's word choice.

#### 3. INTERPRET

Consider the composition of the photograph—how the shot is framed and how the foreground and background images work together. What message does this photograph convey to you?

## Assessment Practice: Short Constructed Response

### LITERARY TEXT: “AMERICAN HISTORY”

On assessments, you’ll have to analyze the literary techniques authors use in their written works. Analyze foreshadowing by answering the **short constructed response** question below.

In “American History,” what event foreshadows the prejudice Eugene’s mother shows toward Elena? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

#### ◀ STRATEGIES IN ACTION

1. Reread the text up to Elena’s encounter with Eugene’s mother.
2. Look for **hints** suggesting that Elena will experience prejudice.
3. Discuss one hint in your answer, supporting it with evidence in the form of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

### NONFICTION TEXT: “SPECIAL REPORT”

Demonstrate that you can recognize and analyze an author’s perspective in a nonfiction text by answering the **short constructed response** question below.

In “Special Report,” what is the author’s attitude toward President John F. Kennedy? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

#### ◀ STRATEGIES IN ACTION

1. Reread the text, noting the **details** the author includes about Kennedy.
2. State what these particular details reveal about the author’s **attitude**, or feelings, about Kennedy.
3. Use evidence from the text to support your statement.

### COMPARING LITERARY AND NONFICTION TEXTS

Some assessment questions ask you to synthesize information from multiple texts. Practice this skill by applying the following **short constructed response** question to “American History” and “Special Report.”

Based on the details in “American History” and “Special Report,” how do you think the majority of Americans reacted to the news of President Kennedy’s death? Support your answer with evidence from both texts.

#### ◀ STRATEGIES IN ACTION

1. Look for details that describe people’s reactions to Kennedy’s death in both texts. Make a **generalization** about how most people reacted.
2. Use the details that helped you form your generalization as evidence.