IDENTIFY THE TOPIC

Strategy #2
The Topic

- The topic of a piece of writing is what the writing is about. It can usually be stated in one or two words.
- Be able to identify the topic will help us identify the main idea.
  - The topic is usually found in the main idea.
- To identify the topic, follow these steps.
Step 1: Ask Questions

- The first step in identifying the topic is to ask some simple questions:
  - Who or what is this text about?
Once in a long while, four times so far for me, my mother brings out the metal tube that holds her medical diploma. On the tube are gold circles crossed with seven red lines each--"joy" ideographs in abstract. There are also little flowers that look like gears for a gold machine. According to the scraps of labels with Chinese and American addresses, stamps, and postmarks, the family airmailed the _________ from Hong Kong in 1950. It got crushed in the middle, and whoever tried to peel the labels off stopped because the red and gold paint come off too, leaving silver scratches that rust. Somebody tried to pry the end off before discovering that the tube falls apart. When I ________ it, the smell of China flies out, a thousand-year-old bat flying heavy-headed out of the Chinese caverns where bats are as white as dust, a smell that comes from long ago, far back in the brain.

Who or what is the text about?
Step 2: Look for Repeated Words and Ideas

- Often, the topic of the text is a word that is repeated throughout the paragraph or essay.
- Focus on noun or verbs which are major words
- Also look for synonyms
Once in a long while, four times so far for me, my mother brings out the metal tube that holds her medical diploma. On the tube are gold circles crossed with seven red lines each--"joy" ideographs in abstract. There are also little flowers that look like gears for a gold machine. According to the scraps of labels with Chinese and American addresses, stamps, and postmarks, the family airmailed the ________ from Hong Kong in 1950. It got crushed in the middle, and whoever tried to peel the labels off stopped because the red and gold paint come off too, leaving silver scratches that rust. Somebody tried to pry the end off before discovering that the tube falls apart. When I ________ it, the smell of China flies out, a thousand-year-old bat flying heavy-headed out of the Chinese caverns where bats are as white as dust, a smell that comes from long ago, far back in the brain.

- What major word is repeated the most?

http://grammar.about.com/od/developingparagraphs/a/samdescpars.htm
Step 3: Keep in mind the topic/main idea when choosing the missing word.

- Often, the missing word is directly related to the topic.
- Eliminate those words that don’t seem to relate to the topic.
Example

Once in a long while, four times so far for me, my mother brings out the metal tube that holds her medical diploma. On the tube are gold circles crossed with seven red lines each—"joy" ideographs in abstract. There are also little flowers that look like gears for a gold machine. According to the scraps of labels with Chinese and American addresses, stamps, and postmarks, the family airmailed the (1)_________ from Hong Kong in 1950. It got crushed in the middle, and whoever tried to peel the labels off stopped because the red and gold paint come off too, leaving silver scratches that rust. Somebody tried to pry the end off before discovering that the tube falls apart. When I (2) _________ it, the smell of China flies out, a thousand-year-old bat flying heavy-headed out of the Chinese caverns where bats are as white as dust, a smell that comes from long ago, far back in the brain.

1) [ ] A) Letter  [ ] B) Can  [ ] C) Cup  [ ] D) Stamp

2) [ ] A) Open  [ ] B) Close  [ ] C) Paint  [ ] D) Cook