

Read the tip. Then read the article and put letters for the headings (a–e) next to the correct paragraph.

Each paragraph of a text usually has a different main idea. By identifying the main idea of each paragraph, we can better understand the whole text. Usually, focusing on the nouns and verbs in a paragraph gives you a good idea of its main ideas.

- a Staying in one place
- b The most important workers on the farm
- c Once upon a time
- d Protecting our farms
- e Our greatest achievement
- f A long history together



The Most Important Farmers

44 Before the first farms appeared, humans were hunters, following animals and the seasons from place to place. Along with the meat they killed, they ate fruit, vegetables, and nuts that they found as they traveled. And then, in different places all over the world, people began farming. This happened at least 10,000 years ago.

One requirement of farming is that people stay in one place. Farmers need time to plant crops in the spring, care for them through the summer, and harvest them in the fall. Livestock that are raised for meat need to stay where there is a good supply of food and water.

This required people to work together as a community: some farmed, some tended to the livestock, some built houses or cooked. Farmers had to work hard to keep everyone fed, but none of this would have been possible without one creature: bees. These hardworking insects transfer pollen from plant to plant. This causes healthy plants to produce fruit and vegetables, both on farms and in nature. Without bees, most plants can't make the things people eat—from apples to corn to tomatoes. Eventually, people began keeping bees in order to help with crops as well as provide honey.

Experts believe that bees were domesticated 4,500 years ago in Egypt. This allowed for more crops and bigger cities and towns to grow. As villages and towns

grew, people built more and more houses to live in and buildings to store food. Bees come in handy here, too. Experts think that containers made from beeswax started being used for storage at least 9,000 years ago.

We've been to the moon, but agriculture is probably the biggest human success story. You may not think about it often, but almost everything you eat every day is a product of farming. By growing our food rather than finding it or hunting for it, we have allowed ourselves to think new thoughts and make new things. We have turned our villages into towns and our towns into great cities and created the modern world. Without bees, none of this would have been possible.

Recently, the number of bees has dropped. Why? Some insects eat plants, so farmers use chemicals to kill these insects. But this also can kill bees. We now know that the disappearance of bees around the world is an increasing problem and these chemicals are one of the causes. If we keep losing bees, we may soon have difficulty growing food. Some experts believe that if farmers continue using chemicals, the bee population will continue to fall. Fortunately, farmers are beginning to understand the situation and are finding safer ways to fight the insects that cause problems. Farming will continue to be our greatest success story only if we protect the bees.