



Comprehension Strategies

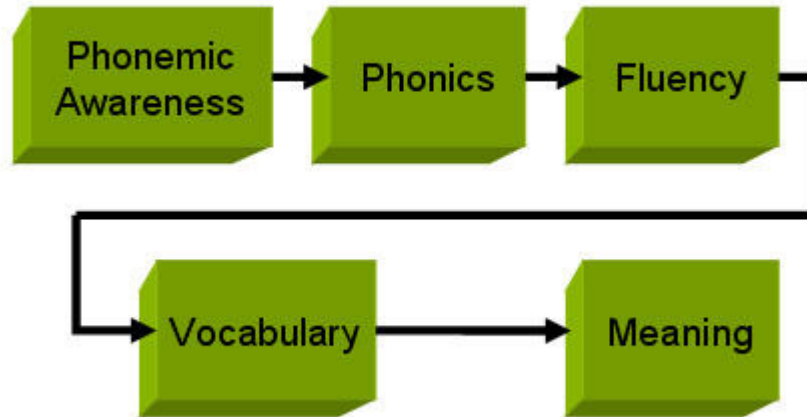
Inferencing

This document is the third in a series of support materials. It contains a synthesis of material from a variety of on-line and printed sources. It has been designed to support the Northern Adelaide Region Comprehension focus 2010-2012

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What does the research say about the reading process?

- There are 5 reading and learning skills in the reading process.
- All 5 skills can be taught.
- All 5 skills must work in an integrated process.



What does the research say about instruction?

- Effective reading instruction involves explicit instruction in the reading process.
- High frequency of instruction can change underlying brain processes.
- Developing readers can benefit from a direct and systematic instruction in these 5 processes.

Levels of Comprehension

The **three** levels of comprehension, or sophistication of thinking, are presented in the following hierarchy from the **least** to the **most** sophisticated level of reading.

- Least = surface, simple reading
- Most = in-depth, complex reading

Level One

LITERAL - what is actually **stated**.

- Facts and details
- Rote learning and memorization
- Surface understanding only

TESTS in this category are **objective** tests dealing with true / false, multiple choice and fill-in-the blank questions. Common questions used to illicit this type of thinking are **who, what, when, and where** questions.

Level Two

INTERPRETIVE - what is **implied** or meant, rather than what is actually stated.

- Drawing inferences
- Tapping into prior knowledge / experience
- Attaching new learning to old information
- Making logical leaps and educated guesses
- Reading between the lines to determine what is **meant** by what is **stated**.

TESTS in this category are **subjective**, and the types of questions asked are open-ended, thought-provoking questions like **why, what if, and how**.

Level Three

APPLIED - taking what was **said** (literal) and then what was **meant** by what was said (interpretive) and then extend (apply) the concepts or ideas beyond the situation.

- Analysing
- Synthesizing
- Applying

In this level we are **analysing** or **synthesizing** information and **applying** it to other information.

Inference and Analysis

Inferences are based on evidence. To infer, we must collect evidence. And evidence is collected by the process of analysis.

Analysis is a particular form of investigation. In general usage, analysis refers to any close, careful, or systematic examination. In the discussion here, the term "analysis" is used in its more technical meaning. Analysis is a process of investigating something by breaking it into parts for closer examination. Complex topics are broken down into simpler ones. Intricate patterns are broken down into less complicated elements. A problem is simplified by limiting the amount that must be examined at any one time.

The goal of analysis is not simply to discover parts within the whole, but to understand the whole. Once the parts are identified, analysis then seeks to determine how those parts are related. From a recognition of

- the nature of the parts, and
- the relationships between the parts

Inference: Denotation

Words, it has been observed, are sneaky—they change meaning when you put them somewhere else. Consider the term "**ate**" in the following examples:

The boy **ate** the apple in the pie.

The acid **ate** the metal.

His guilt **ate** into him.

The stapler **ate** staples

The word ate means different things in each of these sentences. ·

- * took in solid food as nourishment
- * caused to rust or disintegrate
- * produced worry or anxiety
- * used up

The same sequence of letters— a t e —denotes more than one concept.

Whether we think of these various meanings of "ate" as different meanings of the same word or as the meanings of four different words, we still have to recognize the appropriate meaning in any given context. As we read, our brain calls up possible meanings. With barely a pause, we infer an appropriate meaning in each of the remarks.

Dictionary citations with more than one meaning are more the rule than the exception, as in the following example.

table n 1 thin piece of flat wood, stone, etc. 2 article of furniture with a flat top and legs 3 the food served on a table 4 the persons seated at a table 5 arrangement of words, facts, figures, etc., often in columns, for reference 6 index or summary vt 7 to lay aside, as a proposal 8 to postpone indefinitely

Here again, we can think of these eight meanings of table as eight different words, or one word with eight different meanings. Either way, readers must recognize the appropriate meaning when they come upon the sequence of letters t-a-b-l-e in a text.

Anyone familiar with the language will quickly recognize an appropriate meaning whether a word refers to an object (a noun) - Delia sat at the *table*.

of a quality of an object (adjective), - Jessica washed the *table* cover.

or refers to an action (verb), - The committee will *table* the motion.

Readers draw on prior knowledge and past experience to infer the appropriate meaning. They at once "read" both the language and their knowledge of the world. Some of the most striking examples of ambiguity of word meaning can be seen in headlines.

Readers infer word meanings consistent with the surrounding discussion. They infer meaning from contextual clues, whether on the page or, in this case, from our prior knowledge and the news of the day. Examples such as this make clear that we do not simply read words so much as interpret them.

The meanings depend on how you analyse the sentence. The following headlines provide examples of ambiguity.

1. Drunk Gets Nine Months in Violin Case
2. Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
3. Prostitutes Appeal to Pope
4. Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
5. New Vaccine May Contain Rabies
6. New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
7. Include your Children when Baking Cookies
8. Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers
9. Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge
10. Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half

Identify which word in each sentence has multiple meanings.

Drawing Inferences in Text: Some Key Ideas

Inferring is the process of creating a *personal* meaning from text. It involves a mental process of combining what is read with relevant prior knowledge (schema). The reader's unique interpretation of text is the product of this blending.

When proficient readers infer, they create a meaning that is not necessarily stated explicitly in the text. The process implies that readers actively search for, or are aware of, implicit meaning.

Inferences are revised based on the inferences and interpretations of other readers. Therefore, it is very important to provide students with multiple opportunities to discuss texts in a variety of settings.

When they infer, proficient readers

- Draw conclusions from text;
- Make reasonable predictions as they read, test and revise those predictions as they read further;
- Create dynamic interpretations of text that are adapted as they continue to read and after they read;
- Use the combination of background knowledge and explicitly stated information from the text to answer questions they have as they read;
- Make connections between conclusions they draw and other beliefs or knowledge;
- Make critical or analytical judgments about what they read.

When proficient readers infer, they are more able to

- Remember and reapply what they have read;
- Create new background knowledge for themselves;
- Discriminate and critically analyse text and authors;
- Engage in conversation and/or other analytical or reflective responses to what they read.

Getting started with kids

Show an apple corer. Make an inference: What is it used for? (After some guesses, introduce an apple)

Show a pill cutter. Make an inference: What is it used for? (After some guesses, introduce a pill)

Give some sample sentences to students to practice making inferences.

- Sue blew out the candles and got presents.
- Mary plays her flute for 2 hours every day.
- The boat drifted in the middle of the lake.
- John went running into the street without looking.
- Rasheeta was the star pitcher but she had a broken finger.
- We bought tickets and some popcorn.
- I forgot to set my alarm clock last night.
- When I woke up, there were branches and leaves all over the yard.
- Yesterday we cleaned out our desks and took everything home.
- Everyone stopped when the referee blew the whistle.

Have cards on tables for students to draw. With a partner, tell what might be implied or inferred.

1. A student yawns several times
2. Two students pass notes to one another.
3. A student falls asleep.
4. One student takes a pen from a classmate's desk.
5. Two students argue over who gets the soccer ball.
6. A group of students has not completed homework.
7. A group of students copies homework from one student.
8. Three students leave the room without permission.
9. A student returns from recess crying.
10. Two students left all their books at home.

Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model to teach Inferencing

DEMONSTRATION

- Model with short pieces, a passage or memorable book that easily forms an image.
- Model building meaning by doing something with the text; predicting, disagreeing, interpreting what the author meant based on prior knowledge.
- Do a "think aloud" of the inferences you are making when reading to students.
- Use the combination of background knowledge and explicitly stated information from the text to infer.
- Demonstrate a written extended reading response.

SHARED

- Explain that you want students to lift ideas out of a book and add their ideas to them. Doing this helps you remember/understand the ideas in the text..
- Continue discussing and encouraging the strategies used in demonstration lessons.
- Class works together to write an extended reading response.

GUIDED

- Continue predicting, disagreeing, interpreting & discussing with books at their instructional level.
- Notice and Share*
- Code Text with Post-it notes when an inference is made.

- Guide students to write their own extended reading response.

INDEPENDENT

- Code Text while reading independently
- Each students writes his/her own extended reading response to text read independently.

**In a guided reading setting students would share their own use of a particular strategy while reading a selection. For example, a connection they made, a question they had, or an inference they made.*

Students should be able to respond to the following questions.

What is an inference?	Give an example of an inference?
When during a typical day do people make inferences?	How are inferring and predicting related?

What It Means To Infer

- Stopping to think and rereading if necessary
- Connecting what you know to the words and pictures
- Recapping what has happened so far
- Asking a question about what could happen next
- Paying attention to details in the pictures
- Thinking about what the words could mean
- Talking to yourself and then stating an opinion about what you have read
- Trying to picture it in your mind
- Combining all the clues left by the author
- Coming up with a conclusion, guess, or bigger idea

Comprehension is often divided into types or levels.

Literal Comprehension

Literal comprehension items measure locating and recognizing information that is presented in a very straightforward fashion. Literal items cover facts and details and relationships between ideas (such as comparison, contrast, sequence of events, or cause and effect) that are stated directly in the passage. If you try to find a “trick” in these questions, you will waste time.

Item Types

1. Recognition of details or facts contained in the passage.
2. Identification of the order of events explicitly stated in the passage (clues—“in the first place,” “subsequently,” or “thereafter”)
3. Identification of similarities and/or differences among events, characters, actions, or ideas explicitly stated in the passage. (clues—“consequently,” “hence,” or “therefore”)
4. Identification of the reason(s) and/or outcome(s) of events, actions, or decisions explicitly stated in the passage.
5. Recognition of the referent (a single word or group of words) for which a word or group of words is substituted. Personal pronouns (“he,” “they,” “it”) and demonstrative pronouns (“the latter,” “this decision”) are included.

Inferential Comprehension

Inferential comprehension questions measure interpretation. These items require you to “read between the lines” or even “beyond the lines.” Making an inference requires the reader to combine prior knowledge and experience with passage information. Making an inference requires using information that is explicit in a passage, determining

which ideas are relevant to answering a particular question, and combining those ideas to create something unique, something that is implied by the information at hand.

Item types:

1. Identification of the main idea of the passage or paragraph.

Typical wording:

This passage deals primarily with . . .

The primary purpose of this passage is to describe . . .

The main idea of this passage is that . . .

2. Use of the passage information to draw conclusions, make generalizations, summarize ideas, identify implied comparison or time relationships, and to generalize the author's beliefs.

Sample Stems:

Which of the following conclusions about the environment is supported by the passage?

Which word would the author most likely use to describe his subject?

The author implies that the 1950s and the 1990s differ in what way?

3. Application of one or more ideas from a passage to a situation not specifically mentioned in the passage.

Sample Stems:

How would a manager use contingency management to supervise employees?

While the writer focuses on women, what are the harmful effects of backlash on men?

4. Identification of the meaning of figurative language.

Typical Item Stem:

The phrase "as the flowers wept" means that . . .

Inferential Strategy seeks to connect a reader's prior knowledge and experiences with their comprehension of a text. This strategy rests on constructivist theory that learners "build" knowledge constructs when they interpret new information in light of past experiences and rethink past knowledge in light of new information.

Unlike many reading strategies, the Inferential Strategy does not encourage "breaking up" a text—stopping throughout the narrative to comment on or evaluate a specific point. Rather, this strategy poses poignant questions prior to reading and encourages discussion after reading.

Steps to the Inferential Strategy:

1. Analyse a reading selection carefully before presenting it to students. Identify 3 or 4 main ideas in the passage prior to assigning the reading selection to the class.
2. Develop a series of pre-reading questions for a planned reading assignment. Specifically, plan 2 questions for each main idea in the text. The first question should elicit previous knowledge of the topic. The second should point beyond past knowledge and encourage students to imagine, speculate, and predict.
3. Have students write their predictions and speculations prior to reading the selection.
4. Again, before reading, encourage students to share both their prior knowledge of the topic and their predictions about the reading selection.
5. Next, ask class members to read the selection carefully. Be sure the students read the passage as a whole without interruption.
6. After reading, have the students review their written predictions about the passage. Ask each student how the new information changed/reshaped his prior knowledge.

Tips for Helping Your Child Make Inferences

- ✓ Model how you make inferences based on what the author says.
- ✓ Ask your child to make predictions about what she/he is reading and explain the reason for that prediction.
- ✓ Use the cartoon section of the newspaper to help your child understand the humor in the comic strip.
- ✓ Encourage your child to talk about his/her response to what is read.
- ✓ Honour your child's thinking about what is read.
- ✓ Talk about the inferences your child makes during the day (when to ask a parent for permission to do something and when not to ask).
- ✓ Point out the inferences that are made based on a person's body language (smile, hands on hips, slouch).
- ✓ Play word games that require inferential thinking (Twenty Questions).
- ✓ Make inferences about unfamiliar vocabulary words.
- ✓ Share riddles and riddle books.
- ✓ Play charades.

Types of Inferences Skilled Readers Use

Skilled readers . . .

- Recognize the antecedents for pronouns
- Figure out the meaning of unknown words from context clues
- Figure out the grammatical function of an unknown words
- Understand intonation of characters' words
- Identify characters' beliefs, personalities, and motivations
- Understand characters' relationships to one another
- Provide details about the setting
- Provide explanations for events or ideas that are presented in the text
- Offer details for events or their own explanations of the events
- Understand the author's view of the world
- Recognize the author's biases
- Relate what is happening in the text to their own knowledge of the world
- Offer conclusions from facts presented in the text

Comments Teachers Can Make to Help Students Make Certain Types of Inferences

- "Look for pronouns and figure out what to connect them to."
- "Figure out explanations for these events."
- "Think about the setting and see what details you can add."
- "Think about something that you know about this (insert topic) and see how that fits with what's in the text."
- "After you read this section, see if you can explain why the character acted this way."
- "Look at how the character said (insert a specific quote). How would you have interpreted what that character said if he had said (change how it was said or stress different words)?"
- "Look for words that you don't know and see if any of the other words in the sentence or surrounding sentences can give you an idea for what those unknown words mean."
- "As you read this section, look for clues that would tell you how the author might feel about (insert a topic or character's name)."

How could I use, adapt or differentiate it?

When first introducing "inferential reading" to students, use an everyday occurrence where they automatically draw inferences; design an activity that uses an inductive approach to identify the types of inferences that they constantly use in their daily activities.

When students already understand what it means to "make inferences" in a real life context, then we need to provide a short piece of text with which they are working and have them annotate as many inferences as they can.

The first time you may want to do this as a whole class using a transparency. After identification, they need to examine the process by which they arrived at their inferences and create a working list of types of inferences that skilled readers use. Post this list in your classroom for easy reference.

Try to read short passages aloud on a regular basis, and use a “think aloud approach” to focus *only on the inferences* that you are making as you read. Have students practice this aloud as well, either in partners or small groups. As they do this, they can reference their list of types of inferences and add to it.

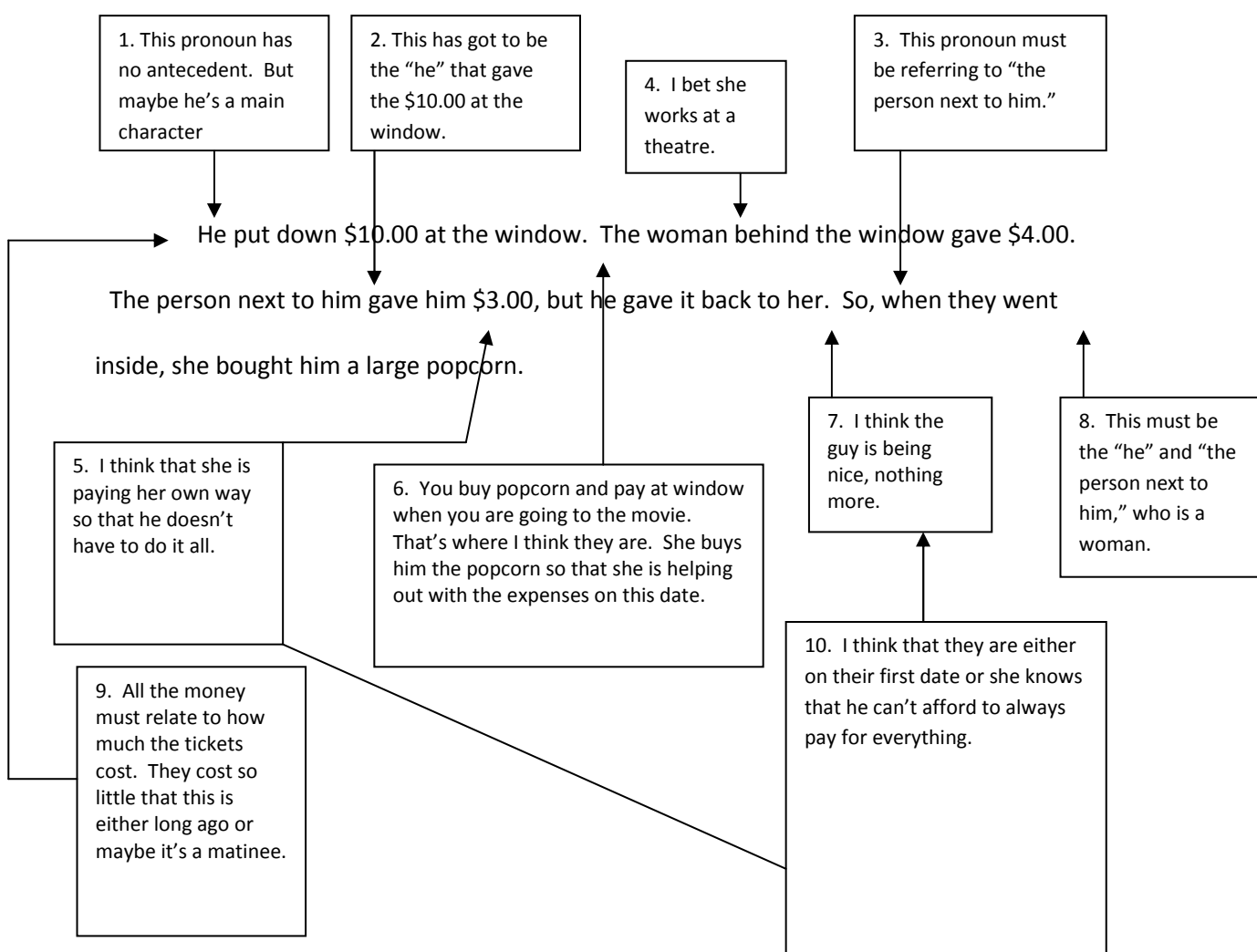
A constant refrain in English classes is, “How do you know the writer meant this?” Beers suggests that we “remind students that authors don’t expect readers to create inferences out of nothing. Authors provide information (that’s the external text); readers use that information in a variety of ways to create their internal text. When authors aren’t providing literal information, then they are implying something. Tell students that readers *infer* and authors *imply*.” This sounds like a great statement to put on a poster; although I might reverse it to read: “Authors imply; therefore, readers have to infer.”

A suggestion Beers makes is to, “cut cartoons from the newspaper and put them onto a transparency. Read them aloud, and then think aloud the inferences that you make that allow you to perceive the cartoon as funny. Then let kids cut out their favourites and bring them in. Eventually, I give extra credit for kids who bring in cartoons they can’t figure out. These allow us to discuss how inferencing doesn’t work if you don’t have the right background knowledge. Most often, students bring in political cartoons for this.”

Another great idea she suggests is to use bumper stickers or signs and have students write the internal text that comes from the external text.

Inferential Reading

The following piece of straightforward text invites rather complex forms of inferential reading and thinking. Consider how the different annotations of this text reveal different types of inferential reading and thinking.



Suggested Strategy:

Find similar examples of seemingly straightforward text and annotate the text to identify the various inferences that are required by the reader.

Have a look at this extract -

"The men walked down the streets to the mine with their heads bent close to their chests. In groups of five or six they scurried on. It was impossible to recognise individuals from the small gaps between their caps, pulled down over their eyes, and the tightly bound scarves tied tightly over the bottom half of their faces".

Now answer this question -

What was the weather like as the men walked to the mine?

You should have been able to work out that it was very cold and windy. You probably arrived at this answer because you associated hats pulled down and scarves with winter or cold weather at least. You know from personal experience people keep their heads down when walking against the wind and the author gave you another clue with the word "scurried" which suggests the men were hurrying to reach their destination.

To tackle this question you have used the skill of **inferring**. This is sometimes called '*reading between the lines*'. Writers expect you to use this skill to get the most out of any piece of reading.

Inference can be used in several ways to help you respond fully to a piece of reading.

- You can infer a general fact or a precise piece of information.
- You can infer emotions and feelings of characters in passage.
- You can infer information about the author - his/her opinions, feelings, point of view.

To infer successfully you can-

- Work out answer from clues or references in the text.
- Work out answer from the **connotations** of words used in text.
- Match something in the text to your own understanding or experience or knowledge to come up with the correct answer.

Examples

Have a look at the following extract and questions and spot how the clues help you come up with the answer.

"Rain lashed against the windows as Jane stamped up and down the room stopping only to check the time on the mantle clock every five minutes. Her book, bought with such enthusiasm the day before, was flung carelessly in the corner beside the abandoned picnic basket.

Jane stamped her feet and began to repeat her earlier tedious complaints against nature. Emily merely smiled to herself and carried on reading the newspaper without as much as a nod of the head".

Question (question to infer information)

What plans had Jane had for the day?

Hint - the abandoned picnic basket

Answer A picnic

Question (question to infer emotion)

How would you describe Jane's mood?

Hint - Unable to sit still, watching the clock, fed-up with reading, complaining

Answer Angry, frustrated, bad-tempered and disappointed

Question (question to infer author's opinion or point of view)

What expression does the author use to suggest her disapproval of the main character?

Hint -The word tedious has negative connotations and suggests disapproval of Jane's tiresome behaviour.

Answer "tedious complaints"

TEACHING INFERENCE

TEN MAJOR INFERENCE TYPES

1. LOCATION: "While we roared down the tracks, we could feel the bounce and sway."
2. AGENT (Occupation or Pastime): "With clippers in one hand and scissors in the other, Chris was ready to begin the task."
3. TIME: "When the porch light burned out, the darkness was total."
4. ACTION: "Carol dribbled down the court and then passed the ball to Ann."
5. INSTRUMENT (Tool or Device): "With a steady hand, she put the buzzing device on the tooth."
6. CAUSE-EFFECT: "In the morning, we noticed that the trees were uprooted and homes were missing their rooftops."
7. OBJECT: "The broad wings were swept back in a "v", and each held two powerful engines."
8. CATEGORY: "The Saab and Volvo were in the garage, and the Audi was out front."
9. PROBLEM-SOLUTION: "The side of his face was swollen, and his tooth ached."
10. FEELING-ATTITUDE: "While I marched past in the junior high band, my dad cheered and his eyes filled with tears."

Johnson & Johnson, 1986

FIVE DIRECT INSTRUCTION STEPS

1. TEACH. The teacher reads a passage and specifies the type of inference to be made. The teacher models/demonstrates, talks, exemplifies after reading the passage. The teacher identifies and lists WORD CLUES, and in a "think aloud" discussion explains just what the WORD CLUES clarified to help make the inference accurate.
2. PRACTICE. Students read a passage, individually or in groups. As they read they are to scrutinize/analyze the text to identify WORD CLUES that provide evidence to justify the inference category specified. List the students' WORD CLUES on the board. Encourage full and rich discussion as they talk about why each WORD CLUE made a contribution to the inferences.
3. APPLY. Identify the types of inference being applied. The students see (read) a passage, one line at a time, and jot down their inferences. After each line is exposed students reject/revise their inferences. At the conclusion students take ownership for this step in the task of inferencing.
4. EXTEND. Move into students' textbooks. Practice expository passages. Ask questions such as: "What kind of inference category is needed?" "What are the key words that lead to it?" "What is the inference we can make?" Extension takes students to the real world of their own textbooks.
5. ASSESS. Find out if students can do the inference procedure. "If word clues + experience = inference, what do you do if students don't have the prior knowledge or experiences?" The SEMANTIC MAPPING procedure helps call prior knowledge to the surface, builds bridges necessary to make inferences.

Johnson & Johnson, 1986

Inference Exercises

Time (when) Questions

The following exercises are an introduction to inference and time.

Age Range: 8 – 10

Hint: To understand how inference works, pay attention to key words or phrases in the text. Particular words will give clues that point the way to a passage's implied meaning.

Example: Greg turned on the car's headlights because it was starting to get dark.

Question: When did Greg turn the headlights on?

Answer: In the early evening. Dusk.

Key Words: starting to get dark...

1) The sun's light began to filter into the kitchen just as Peter began to sip his first coffee of the day.

Question: What part of the day is it?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

2) Dad positioned the tree in the corner of the lounge room. We then draped tinsel and decorations on the tree.

Question: What part of the year is it?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

3) Kathy scraped ice off her windshield. She blew on her mittened fingers to help warm them.

Question: What season is it likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

4) Sam stripped to his board shorts, ran down to the beach and joyfully threw himself into the surf.

Question: What season is it likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

5) Ben stayed in the bath till his fingertips began to go all wrinkly.

Question: How long was Ben in the bath?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

6) I got to the post office just in time. It was about to close for the day.

Question: What time is it likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

7) I forgot to check on the roast potatoes. By the time I remembered, it was too late. They were burnt. They were only meant to be in the oven for 20 minutes.

Question: How long were the potatoes in the oven?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

8) The alarm clock went off. I reached over and turned it off. It was still a little dark but would soon become lighter.

Question: What part of the day is it?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

9) I needed to go to the bank, but it was still early. When I arrived the bank manager opened the doors and indicated that the bank was now open.

Question: What time of the day is it likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

10) I put on my school uniform, brushed my teeth and ran down to catch the school bus. I made it just in time.

Question: What time of the day is it likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

Inference Exercises

Agent (what) Questions

The following exercises are an introduction to inference and agent.

Age Range: 8 – 10

Hint: To understand how inference works, pay attention to key words or phrases in the text. Particular words will give clues that point the way to a passage's implied meaning.

Example: The kettle whistled noisily on top of the stove, so James got the milk out of the fridge and teabags out of the cupboard.

Question: What was James about to do?

Answer: Make a cup of tea.

Key Words: kettle whistled, milk, teabags.

1) Kelly reached into her pocket for the keys. She clicked the button, opened the back door and then placed her parcels on the back seat.

Question: What was Kelly doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

2) David through the yellow ball above his head and then whacked it with his racket. The ball landed in the middle of the net. 'Fault,' said the umpire.

Question: What was David doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

3) Katie placed the saddle on old Toby's back. She secured the straps and then placed her left foot into the stirrup.

Question: What is Katie about to do?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

4) Tom heard a muffled ringing sound. He took the device out of his pocket, flipped it open and said, 'Hello?'

Question: What was Tom doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

5) The boy opened the lid, unwrapped the contents of the box - which his mother had prepared - and took a big bite.

Question: What is the child doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

6) Paul was woken sometime in the night by a deep rumbling sound and a constant pattering on the roof. The next morning there were large puddles everywhere.

Question: What happened during the night?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

7) Captain Reynolds checked his oxygen, adjusted his helmet's visor, made certain he was safely secured to the shuttle and then floated off into space.

Question: What was Captain Reynolds doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

8) The girl pushed off with one foot on the ground and the other on the pedal. She held tightly on the handlebars to gain her balance.

Question: What is the girl doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

9) The cat crept quietly. All its attention was focused on the little cheese stealing creature in front of it.

Question: What is the cat doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

10) Melissa through the device into the windy sky and then ran holding the string.

Question: What is Melissa doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

Inference Exercises

Time (where) Questions

The following exercises are an introduction to inference and location.

Age Range: 8 – 10

Hint: To understand how inference works, pay attention to key words or phrases in the text. Particular words will give clues that point the way to a passage's implied meaning.

Example: Our school class looked at the lion in its enclosure. It sat in the shade of a tree and panted noisily.

Question: Where was the school class?

Answer: At the zoo.

Key Words: looked at the lion in its enclosure...

1) Sam looked through the window at the city far below. The light came on informing all those aboard to fasten their seat belts. We were about to land.

Question: Where was Sam?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

2) Diane sat in the chair and asked for a trim. The assistant draped a large apron around her to protect her clothes from hair cuttings.

Question: Where was Diane?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

3) Karen attached the skis to her feet. She stood with the two poles in her hand and readied to launch herself onto the inviting, white terrain.

Question: Where is Karen likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

4) Paul stripped to his board shorts, ran over the sand and joyfully threw himself into the waves.

Question: Where is Paul likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

5) Barry handed the usher his ticket. He walked into the room and sat before a large screen and waited for the show to start.

Question: Where is Barry?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

6) Leanne positioned her goggles to protect her eyes from the chlorine. She then started swimming laps

Question: Where is Leanne?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

7) The ship docked and the passengers got ready to leave.

Question: Where was the ship?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

8) The alarm clock went off. Sally reached over and turned it off. She pulled the doona over her head and went back to sleep.

Question: Where is Sally?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

9) The captain barked orders at the crew. 'Dive! Dive!' All hatches were secured and the periscope retracted.

Question: Where are the captain and his crew?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

10) Emma pushed on the clutch with her left foot and changed gears with her hand. She then touched the accelerator with her right foot and released the clutch. She held the steering wheel tightly.

Question: Where is Emma likely to be?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

Inference Exercises

Action (what) Questions

The following exercises are an introduction to inference and action.

Age Range: 8 – 10

Hint: To understand how inference works, pay attention to key words or phrases in the text. Particular words will give clues that point the way to a passage's implied meaning.

Example: Paul tightened the strap that encircled Buster's stomach. He gripped the two leather straps in his left hand to steady the animal's head. He placed his foot in the metal stirrup and launched himself onto Buster's back.

Question: What is Paul doing?

Answer: Climbing onto a horse's back while holding the reins.

Key Words: metal stirrup, Buster's back.

1) Sam carefully threaded the hook through the bit of bait and then through the line into the water.

Question: What is Sam doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

2) The wolf lay flat on its stomach in the snow, not making a sound. A herd of deer ate grass just downwind of it. The wolf shuffled forward inch by inch, its mouth salivating.

Question: What is the wolf doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

3) Large grey clouds hovered menacingly above the court. The boys, dressed in their shorts and t-shirt sheltered under a tree when the first drops fell.

Question: What is about to happen?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

4) The magician conjured up dark energies and released them. Bolts of light arced out noisily from his hands and destroyed the monster.

Question: What type of story is this?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

5) The earth shifted and heaved. Suddenly, with a tremendous roar, the top of the mountain literally exploded. Large plumes of ash, smoke, and super heated gases soared high into the sky.

Question: What is happening?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

6) The man scrunched up tiny bits of paper and then laid very thin sticks on top. He lit a match and quickly laid the burning stick onto the paper. The paper started to burn and gave off a soft warming glow.

Question: What is the man doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

7) The girls quickly raced across the platform and jumped, giggling onto the cylindrical structure before the doors could close.

Question: What are the girls doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

8) The children scraped large amounts of the white stuff with their mittened hands. Their breath plumed in the icy air as they fashioned the creature. They placed a beanie on its head and used a carrot as its nose.

Question: What are the children doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

9) The lady held a comb in one hand and scissors in the other. She skilfully lifted a large section of hair with the comb and trimmed the ends with her scissors.

Question: What is the lady doing?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

10) It ran for its life. Behind it the predator closed the distance. With a flying leap the cotton tailed animal sailed through the air and found the safety of its burrow. The red furred predator crashed noisily into the burrows narrow entrance.

Question: What is happening here?

Answer: _____

Key words: _____

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Making Inferences about Characters

Making an inference about a character requires you to act like a detective. Based on the different facts given in the text (A+B+C), you have to make a judgment, or inference (D), about that character. What makes inference-making hard is that the word you come up with must come out of your own brain, for the text very rarely will supply you with it (A+B+C=D). The following lists of words may help you in your inference-making about a character. They are loosely divided into positive inferences and negative inferences, but many fall into a gray area in between. You should be able to support your inference with evidence from the text.

Positive

caring - showing feeling for others

compassionate - showing sympathy for and connection to others' pain

sensitive - easily affected by one's own and others' needs and emotions

kindhearted - understanding, considerate of others, generous

proud - showing self-respect, dignity, self-esteem

obedient - being respectful of the law, one's elders, one's superiors

concerned - interested and involved in the problems of others

aggressive - initiating action, leading attacks, being bold

naive - unsophisticated, like a child in one's understanding of the world and people

gullible - easily tricked, deceived, or taken in by others

easily controlled - manipulated easily by others

secure - feeling safe and free from self-doubt

loyal - faithful to a person, a job, or an idea

intelligent - smart

dedicated - whole committed to a particular thought, action, or job

bold - fearless, daring, courageous, brave

conscientious - guided by a sense of right and wrong; showing principles in one's actions and thoughts

cautious - being careful in what one says or does

trusting - believing that one can rely on or depend on others

generous - willing to give to and share with others

modest - not want to call attention to oneself, either through one's appearance or behavior

gentle - kind, considerate, and tender in the way one deals with others

optimistic - taking a positive view of things

rational - being logical in one's actions and/or thoughts

imaginative - creative

passionate - controlled by powerful emotions

carefree - without worries or responsibilities

open-minded - accepting of new or different ideas or opinions

straightforward - being plain and direct in one's dealings with others

loving - showing tender feelings and affection for others

humane - showing kindness, mercy, and compassion

conciliatory - trying to overcome distrust, resolve differences, and gain goodwill through pleasant behavior

content - happy with oneself; satisfied with the way things are

understanding - showing sympathy to and comprehension of others' situations and feelings

helpful - assisting others; providing support

emotional - easily affected by one's feelings

Negative

uncaring - not showing feelings for others
insensitive - not affected by others' needs or others' pain
coldhearted - lacking sympathy or feelings for others
coldhearted - lacking sympathy or feelings for others
critical - finding fault in and judging others harshly
defiant - boldly opposing authority
rebellious - refusing to be controlled by others, even to the point of violence or organized resistance
indifferent - having no particular feeling or interest in anyone or anything; apathetic
passive - accepting what happens or what others do to you without argument or resistance
shrewd - showing cleverness and intelligence in practical matters, such as business or politics
domineering - tending to rule over and control others
insecure - lacking confidence in or doubting one's abilities
disloyal - not faithful to a person, job, or idea
unintelligent - not smart in one's thinking or judgments
apathetic - showing little concern or interest in events or people
distant - emotionally removed from others
timid - shy, meek
withdrawn - emotionally distant from others; not sociable
guilt-ridden - feeling a sense of guilt at having done something wrong
impulsive - acting as a result of sudden urges or wishes, rather than a careful plan or thought
suspicious - doubting others' motives
manipulative - smart in the way one uses others to one's own advantage
selfish - concerned chiefly with oneself; not generous
conceited - having an unreasonably high opinion of oneself
ruthless - having no pity or compassion for others; showing no mercy
pessimistic - taking the most negative and gloomy view of things
irrational - not logical in one's actions and/or thoughts
reckless - uncaring about danger or the dangerous consequences of one's behavior
destructive - wanting to destroy people, things, or institutions
unimaginative - lacking in creativity; dull
unemotional - unfeeling; not easily affected in terms of one's feelings
troubled - mentally distressed, worried, anxious
narrow-minded - unwilling to accept new or different ideas; intolerant of others
devious - using roundabout means to get what one wants; shifty
hostile - treating others as enemies; antagonistic; showing ill will
cruel - enjoying the harming of others
inhumane - showing no sympathy or feelings for the suffering of others
competitive - enjoying rivalry, contests, or other tests that put one in competition with others
stubborn - unreasonably unwilling to do something; obstinate

Making Inferences:

Reading between the Lines





Question: (from the book, our group, or my teacher)





What I know from the *book*:

What I know from my *brain*:

My Inference

(be sure to use at least one “because”)

 <p>Can you infer where I am and what I am doing?</p> <p>I see bubbles rising. I hear my own breathing. There are fish swimming <u>above</u> me. I feel the seaweed swaying.</p> <p>Answer: Scuba diving in the sea!</p>	 <p>Can you infer where I am and what I am doing?</p> <p>I hear screaming. My stomach feels funny. Can you see my hair blowing? I'm feeling excited!</p> <p>Answer: I'm on an amusement park ride.</p>
 <p>Can you infer where I am?</p> <p>It's so dark in here. What's that squeaky sound? Ooh, I feel something sticky and stringy touching my face. I'm getting nervous!</p> <p>Answer: I'm in a spook house!</p>	 <p>Can you infer where I am?</p> <p>I hear a loud "thwack" as the ball leaves the ballpark and the crowd roars with cheers!</p> <p>Answer: I'm at a baseball game.</p>

 <p>What can you infer from this?</p> <p>Ray always carried his flute with him.</p> <p>Inference: The flute was important to him.</p>	 <p>What can you infer about Tamika's father?</p> <p>After Tamika broke the trophy, her father turned and walked away without saying anything.</p> <p>Inference: Tamika's father is upset.</p>
 <p>What can you infer from this?</p> <p>"It's both of us or nothing!"</p> <p>Inference: They are good friends.</p>	 <p>What can you infer about grandma?</p> <p>Grandma's mouth dropped open. Her hands flew to her face.</p> <p>Inference: Grandma is surprised.</p>

ACTIVE NOTES: MAKING INFERENCES • DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Note See the pages 46-47 in *The Reader's Handbook* for information about drawing conclusions and making inferences. When explaining "Why you think that," you should provide specific details, examples, and quotations to support your claims. You should also be sure to explain why something matters (i.e., why it is important).

MAKING AN INFERENCE		
WHAT HAPPENED?	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?

DRAWING A CONCLUSION		
INFORMATION	INFORMATION	INFORMATION
MY CONCLUSION		

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Inference Notes

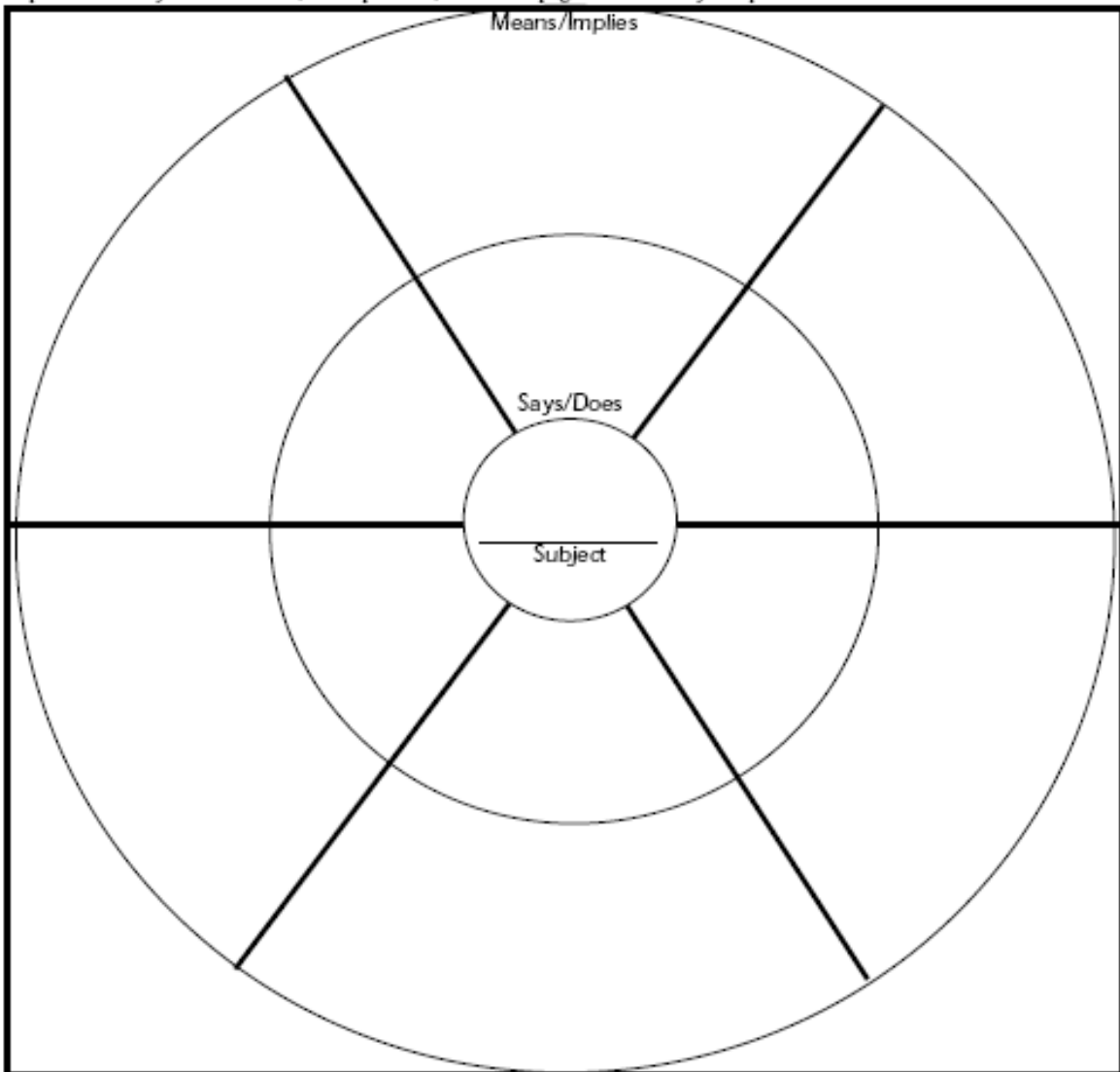
Name _____

Date _____

Subject _____

Period _____

Directions: Find six quotes or examples that reveal important or different aspects of your subject. Then in the outer strand, explain what they mean. Be sure, when possible, to include page citations for your quotes.



Making Inferences: Using the notes from your target, draw some conclusions about your subject. If you are writing about a fictional character, for example, explain what kind of person they are. Be sure to use *direct quotations* and citation information (e.g., l, ii, 35-40) when supporting your analysis.

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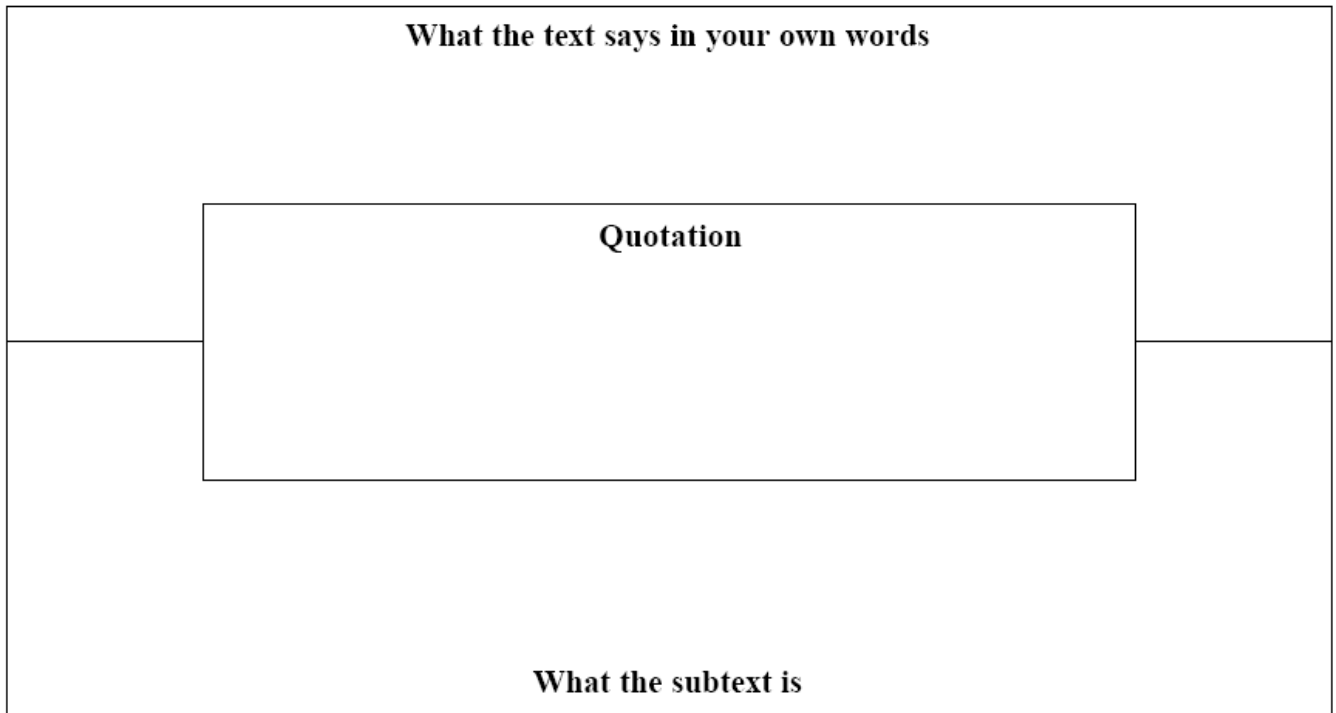
Inferring



Figure out what it really means
from clues in the text



Text & Subtext: Drawing Inferences



Sources:

Inferencing

<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/Inferences%20handout%20by%20Deb%20Smith.pdf>

<http://dyslexia.wordpress.com/2008/01/19/comprehension-skills-inference-strategies/>

http://www.mandygregory.com/Inferencing_mini_lessons.htm

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