

Using Inference

In this lesson, students will learn about the role inference plays in the critical reading process, and how awareness of it can strengthen their own reading and writing skills. An engaging video tutorial kicks off the exercise, setting the foundation for students to then employ the act of inference as they read a text example, analyze a visual argument, and finally, craft paragraphs of their own. Librarians can coordinate with classroom teachers to provide instruction, as well as select alternative source examples more applicable to particular course subjects.

SUBJECT:

English / Language Arts

GRADE LEVEL:

Middle School

OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn what it means to infer meaning and apply the practice to strengthen critical reading and writing skills.

MATERIALS:

Video tutorial "Making and Using Inference," available in "[Recognizing Inference in Action](#)"

Inference exercise worksheets, online or hard copy (below)

TIME NEEDED:

Two days

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURE

Day 1:

Have students watch video tutorial: "Making and Using Inference" and engage in informal class discussion on the act of inference and different real-life occasions when it is used. Students will look at recent scenarios when they have engaged in inference, interpreting a) experiential details and b) general knowledge.

As an in-class collaborative activity, assign students "Part 1: Using Inference When We Read," from the handout, in which students will read a short text, note important details, and draw inferred conclusions about the text in discussion. (The most obvious inference will likely be clear; to further the dialogue, consider asking students to come up with more creative/outlandish inferences in response to the paragraph, to illustrate the process further. For example, what else might be wrong with Daria? What are the most unlikely possibilities that might still be inferred by the excerpt's details?) Conclude the discussion by listing all of the inferred conclusions on the board, ranking them from most likely to least likely, acknowledging what determined the order.

Assign "Part 2: Using Inference When We Analyze" from the handout as homework. In this exercise, students examine a selected visual image and engage in the inference process similar to the text in Part 1.

Outcome of Day 1: Students gain an overall understanding of inference and its importance, moving from guided instruction to independent analysis.

Day 2:

After students have completed the handout for Part 2, instructors can choose the option of having students find and bring in additional examples of visual imagery (photographs, advertisements, political ads) to bring and present to the class, offering peers the opportunity to engage in further inference.

As a concluding exercise, assign students to complete "Part 3: Using Inference When We Write," from the handout, in which students will choose one of three scenarios and write a paragraph encouraging their readers to make an intended inference. Students can turn paragraphs in to the instructor or share in small groups.

Outcome of Day 2: Students gain confidence as both critical readers and writers, employing strategy in the latter role to engage in the act of persuasion.

DIFFERENTIATION

Students can work through the exercises alone or in collaboration, at home or in the classroom. Instructors can use the provided materials or bring in sources from existing course curriculum that will help students engage in inference with subject-specific texts. Librarians can use the exercise sequence as separate workshop in the library space

or collaborate with classroom teachers.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inference process
- Engage in the act of inference as critical readers
- Employ strategic awareness of inference as writers influencing audiences

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about inference in Seth's editorial, "[Recognizing Inference in Action](#)."

Carrol, Joyce Armstrong, et al. *Guided by Meaning in Primary Literacy*. Libraries Unlimited, 2016. <https://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOCorporate/product.aspx?pc=A5062P>.

Stripling, Barbara K., and Violet H. Harada. "Designing Learning Experiences for Deeper Understanding." *School Library Monthly*, 29, no. 3, December 2012. *School Library Connection*, <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/1967498>.

Tilley, Carol L. "Reading Instruction and School Librarians." *School Library Monthly*, 30, no. 3, December 2013. *School Library Connection*, <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/1966992>.

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