


Teaching students to make inferences when reading

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OSSPEAC Conference, October 2025 . Columbus, OH



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1 Inferencing



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What’s an inference?

A conclusion or opinion that is reached because of known facts or evidence.



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When you're reading a novel,
an inference looks like

Event

→

Event

→

?

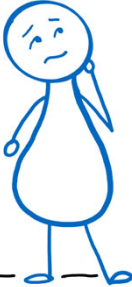
→

Event

Background knowledge

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So what happens when
students don't have enough
background knowledge to
make an inference?

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Two paths for teaching
students to inference

Teach background knowledge

→

Read

→

Elicit background knowledge


Read

→

Stop: teach background knowledge

→

Apply background knowledge



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Use visual tools to make what's important stand still

Time period, setting(s), culture, beliefs, etc.

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Four-step intervention

For kids who struggle with making inferences

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Anatomy of an inference

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Step 1

Inference about a picture

Showing Connections

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Drop Off



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Step 2

Inference about a picture

Showing Connections

Inference about a sentence

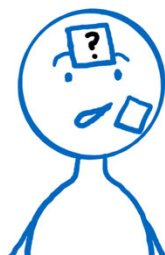
Key word analysis

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Doing that orally taxes working memory!

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Make all the invisible connections visible

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Take 10 to try it...

Use a Brain Frame to show what the key words in the sentence make you think.

Include thought bubbles if you need to.

1. "Eew, those are gross!" she said.

2. "Oh come on," her brother said, "They're not that bad."

3. He tossed them her way, and she swatted them aside.

4. "Hey!" her brother exclaimed as he watched her rummage around in her bag. "Don't waste them."

5. "Fine," she sighed, tossing them back to him. "Here. You can have mine, too. I won't eat them."

6. "I can't believe you don't want them," he said. She shrugged. "Not all candy is created equal," she said and went back to sorting the contents of her own bag.

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Our aha!

This is how you analyze a quote!

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Step 3

Inference about a picture

Inference about a sentence

Inference about a paragraph

Showing Connections

Key word analysis

Thought Bubbles

Underline or highlight

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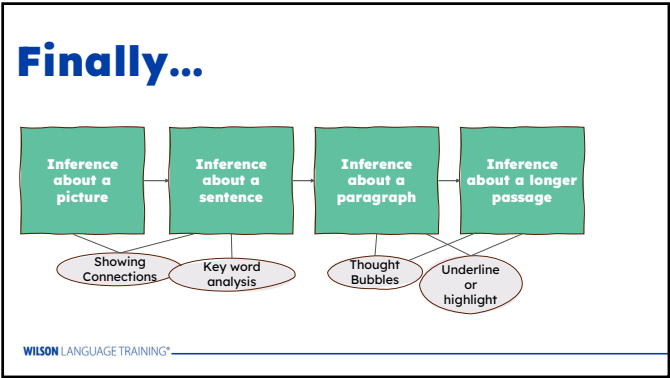
Your turn!

What did he do? Has he done it before?

Mr. Thomas sat on the front porch of his house in a bathrobe and bunny slippers with his head in his hands. He was holding the daily newspaper. The sun shone brightly in the sky. His neighbors were coming out of their houses and getting in their cars. Mr. Thomas sighed. His neighbor Mr. Rosencrantz stepped out on his porch and saw Mr. Thomas. "Did it again, huh?" said Mr. Rosencrantz. Mr. Thomas replied, "Yep." Mr. Rosencrantz chuckled and said, "Here, Mr. Thomas, you can use my cell phone. I could even keep a key over here if you wanted." Tom thankfully grabbed the cell phone and called his wife. "Honey, I did it again." Mr. Rosencrantz heard Mrs. Thomas yelling at Mr. Thomas in a distorted high-pitched squeal. "Yes, dear. I'm so sorry. I'll see you soon," Mr. Thomas returned the phone, sighed deeply, and ran his fingers through his hair.

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What's a prediction?

A statement about what might happen next

Requires

- Future thinking
- Integration of what's known
- Integration with background knowledge

It's a guess, but it's not just a guess. It's an inference!

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When reading a novel, prediction looks like

Background knowledge

Event → Event → ?

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Predictions make text stickier!

- Inferences about what HASN'T HAPPENED yet
- Based on what HAS happened
- Feed-forward mechanism for text comprehension

To make a meaningful future connection, you have to track what you already read

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The goal

Make who's who and what has happened (so far) stand still so you can infer what will come next

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What you need to justify a prediction

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graph LR; BK1((Background knowledge)) --> IKT[I know this...]; IKT --> AT1[And this...]; AT1 --> SIT[So I think...]; BK2((Background knowledge)) --> AT2[And this...]; AT2 --> SIT
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Bottom line take-aways

- No one can inference without background knowledge
- Track the two biggies visually to support inferencing:
 1. plot
 2. characters
- Teach students to justify their predictions
- Make what's invisible visible

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