

Reading Workshop

Reading is a Strategic Thinking Process

INFERRING

To infer as we read is to make a logical conclusion based on evidence, it is to interpret something beyond the print and to open a world of meaning deeply connected to our lives.

It can be a conclusion drawn after considering what is read in relation to one's beliefs, knowledge, and experience. Inference can be a critical analysis of a text: a mental or expressed argument with an author. Predictions are inferences. We base a prediction on what has been stated in the text, but we add to it an informed guess about what is to come.

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 analyze 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 ocean.
- John went running into the street without looking.
- 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 during class.
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.