

Making Inferences

Often when reading we need to make "inferences" to help us understand what the author's point is or to understand the plot of the story. Inferences are nothing more than educated guesses based on evidence or our experience. You make inferences all of the time, like when you slow to stop at a stop light, your experience tells you that the cars behind you will also slow down.

Here's another example, read the following information:

- * A man wearing dark glasses and mask entered the bank.
- * A minute later an alarm rang.
- * Soon the cops arrived.

What is the inference you can make? (*Logical guess based on evidence*)

- * The man is a bank robber.

Note: *Even though the information does say this, you add up the evidence (man has mask, alarm rang, cops arrived) and make the inference that the man is a bank robber. The text did not actually **say** this. You inferred it.*

You also made two other inferences (1) where the alarm rang and (2) where the cops arrived. You inferred that the location was the bank.

A. When making inferences, ask yourself questions like:

1. What do all the facts and ideas point toward or seem to add up to?
2. Why did the author include these facts and details?

B. Use clues the writer provides - A writer's choice of words often suggests his or her attitude toward a subject. Try to notice descriptive words, emotionally charged words, and words with strong positive or negative meanings.

C. Verify your inference - Once you've made an inference, be sure to check that it is accurate. Look back at the stated facts to be sure you have sufficient evidence to support the inference. Also, be sure you have not overlooked other equally plausible or more plausible inferences that could be drawn from the same set of facts.