Teaching Inference
Rebecca Binks
Consultant
Adjunct, National Louis University
Teaching Inference

- Inference is a complex skill and is included in many other types of reading strategies.
- Good readers need to be able to coordinate many strategies at once.
- It is important to remember that this strategy should not be taught in isolation. National Reading Panel report (2000), states that learning a variety of reading strategies together is most effective.
Inference v. Observation

- Observation is what you see
- Inference is what you figure out
Kylene Beers’ Types of Inferences

1. Recognize the antecedents for pronouns
2. Figure out the meaning of unknown words from context clues
3. Figure out the grammatical function of an unknown word
4. Understand intonation of characters’ words
Kylene Beers’ Types of Inferences

5. Identify characters’ beliefs, personalities, and motivations
6. Understand characters’ relationships to one another
7. Provide details about the setting
8. Provide explanations for events or ideas that are presented in the text
Kylene Beers’ Types of Inferences

9. Offer details for events or their own explanations of the events presented in the text
10. Understand the author’s view of the world
11. Recognize the author’s biases
12. Relate what is happening in the text to their own knowledge of the world
13. Offer conclusions from facts presented in the text

Source: When Kids Can’t Read What Can Teachers Do?
Another Way to Describe Inference

- **Basic**
  - Inferences draw text and background knowledge together

- **Anaphoric Relations**
  - Inferences based on two parts of the text—more complex:

- **Antecedent or referent/substitution**
  - Associations between words where one word or group of words is used in place of another word of group of words.
    - We just got a new puppy. That ball of energy is taking over our lives
Inferential Thinking

- Inferring requires higher order thinking skills, which makes it a difficult skill for many students.
- Inferential thinking skill: when a reader combines clues from the text with their own background knowledge or from other parts of the text in order to draw conclusions.
What We Know About Inferences

- We need to find clues to get some answers.
- We need to add those clues to what we already know or have read.
- There can be more than one correct answer.
- We need to be able to support inferences.
Ways to Teach Inference

- Trash Bags
  - Put items in a bag and tell the students you found it on your way to school.
  - Take the articles on one by one and make a list of them on the board or on chart paper.
  - Ask the students to make a case about the owner of the items in the bags.

- Example: Axe spray, a Hollister clothes tag, church flyer, magazine
Variation on Trash Bags

• Be a Historian
  ◦ Same process as trash bags, but the items could be put in a purse or a suitcase
  ◦ Ask the students to act like historians and using the historical method describe the owner of the items
    • Example: a pink bootie, a paperback, a post card from Paris
Aesop’s Fables

- Have the student's read one (or more) of Aesop’s Fables.
- Have the students use their own words to write the moral of the fable.
- You can find the fables online—just cut and paste!
The Fox and the Grapes

One afternoon a fox was walking through the forest and spotted a bunch of grapes hanging from over a lofty branch.

"Just the thing to quench my thirst," said he.

Taking a few steps back, the fox jumped and just missed the hanging grapes. Again the fox took a few paces back and tried to reach them but still failed.

Finally, giving up, the fox turned up his nose and said, "They're probably sour anyway," and proceeded to walk away.
A lion used to prowl about a field in which four oxen used to dwell. Many a time he tried to attack them; but whenever he came near they turned their tails to one another, so that whichever way he approached them he was met by the horns of one of them.

At last, however, they fell a-quarrelling among themselves, and each went off to pasture alone in a separate corner of the field. Then the lion attacked them one by one and soon made an end of all four.
Visual Puns

- Use as sponge activities
Visual Puns

DOCTOR

DOCTOR

Paradox
Visual Puns

MCE  3 Blind Mice
MCE  (No Letter i)
Visual Puns

SHCRYAME

Crying Shame

(Cry in “Shame”)

SHCRYAME
A silver-scaled dragon with jaws flaming red
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.
I hand him fat slices, and then, one by one,
He hands them back when he sees they are done.

--William Jay Smith
The Toaster
“The old law of ‘an eye for an eye’ leaves everybody blind.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.

A. Violence is a necessary evil.
B. Responding to violence with violence leads to destruction.
C. Old laws are the best laws.
D. There are better ways of responding to injustice than with violence.

Source: Townsend Press: Ten Steps
“A hero is a man who does what he can.”—Romain Rolland

A. Heroism doesn’t always consist of noticeable actions.
B. Many people do not do all they can to help others.
C. It is easy to be a hero.
D. People don’t have to be outstandingly brave to be heroic.

Source: Townsend Press: Ten Steps
“Help your brother’s boat across, and your own will reach the shore.” —Hindu proverb

A. We need each other to help us reach our goals.

B. Helping someone benefits the helper as well as the receiver of help.

C. People should sacrifice their well-being for the sake of others.

D. Boats tend to reach shore no matter who pilots them.
KIS Strategy

• Key Words, Infer, Support.
  ◦ This mnemonic strategy helps students remember the three steps in making and supporting inferences.

• Students need to underline key words and facts from the text.

• Next students make inferences using the key words or facts to answer the question.

• Lastly, the students list background knowledge used to support their answers.
Marking Texts with Sticky Notes

• Sticky notes help students focus their reading on specific goals such as finding inferences.
• Sticky notes are one way to help students keep track of their thinking while reading.
• Teachers can have the students jot down questions or thoughts during reading.
• Students then can refer to the sticky notes during class discussions, conferences, or writing assignments.
Graphic Organizer

- Quote from Text
- Page
- Number I Infer...
Perplexors mindware.com

- See back of handout
Minute Mysteries

- Two children born in the same hospital, in the same hour, day, and year, have the same mother and father, but are not twins.
- A couple will build a square house. In each wall they'll have a window, and each window will face north.
- There are a pipe, a carrot and a pile of pebbles together in the middle of a field.
- An ordinary American citizen, with a clean police record but no passport, managed to visit over thirty foreign countries. He was welcomed in each country, and left each one of his own accord. He did this in one day.
PICTURE BOOKS
Wordless Picture Books
The Stinky Cheese Man
See the Ocean

By Estelle Condra
Illustrated by Linda Crockett-Blassingame
Nellie loved the ocean. She loved going to the beach with her parents and her two older brothers, Gerald and Jamin. Once a year Nellie's family took the long road that led through the flat desert plains and across the Black Mountains to their beach house at the ocean.
But then a soft, salty breeze crept up the mountain and through the open window, brushing over Nellie's cheek and whispering in her ear, and suddenly she said, “I see it!”

“No fair, Mother! She can’t,” complained Jamin.

“No one can see it from here today,” Gerald joined in.


“She’s cheating! She can’t see it!” complained the boys.

“If she sees it, let her tell us what it looks like,” said their father.
Slowly Nellie started. “The ocean is an old, old man born at the beginning of time. He breathes a loud, salty breath, and his beard blows white on the sandy beach. Fish swim in his long, wavy hair. On his head he wears a crown of pearls. On his feet he wears shoes of shells.

“Sometimes the wind blows his hair about in big wild waves. Then he gets angry, and he roars and hisses and spits. When the sun shines, he laughs and gurgles and prattles in the rock pools. He smiles a wide silver and green smile on the beach. On his shoulders he carries ships and boats.

“But at night he’s more beautiful than ever. At night he wears a dark, silvery gray cloak with moons and stars sprinkled upon it. Every night before he goes to sleep, he pulls a soft, misty blanket over himself.”
For a long while, no one spoke. They just looked and looked at Nellie. Then Nellie’s mother turned around in her seat and stroked Nellie’s cheek.

Jamin grumbled, “It’s still not fair.”

“How could she see through the mist when we can’t? She can’t even see!” said Gerald.
Nellie smiled to herself as she thought how very much she loved the ocean.
CARTOONS
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Dr. Seuss
"LET'S GET A LOCK FOR THIS THING"
"There's money enough to support both of you .... now, doesn't that make you feel better?"
Glad to give thee a lift, neighbor.
HANG ON!
BUSH IS ON
THE WAY!!

WHITE
HOUSE

HOUSING
CRISIS

KATRINA
LITERATURE
Open-Ended Stories

• “The Lady or the Tiger?” by Frank Stockton (Google Books)
• The Best American Mystery Stories of the Century, Tony Hillerman ed., Houghton Mifflin
  ◦ “The Moment of Decision” by Stanley Ellin
Other Stories of Interest

- “Nine Mile Walk” by Harry Kemelman
- “An Error in Chemistry” by William Faulkner
PARENTS
Things Parents Can Do

- In a non-judgmental way regularly ask the child what they think about things and what reasoning did they use to come to that conclusion.
- Explain that we make inferences all day long, not just when we’re reading. Encourage a conversation about this. For instance, what does he learn from a person’s facial expression? How does he know that?
- Make your own thinking processes more apparent to the child. (Teachers call this a think-aloud). For example, you notice that the sky is turning dark, explain to the child that this means that it is probably going to rain.
Things Parents Can Do

- Play guessing games like “Twenty Questions.”
- Ask the child higher order thinking questions like “Where do birds go when it rains?” “What would have happened if the South had won the Civil War?” Ask the child to explain his reasoning. Ask follow up questions to model how thinking evolves over time.
- Ask the child to figure out unknown words using context clues and ask her to explain how she figured out what the word meant.
Things Parents Can Do

- Let your child express his own conclusions and have him describe his thinking. Let him decide whether he has come to the best conclusion or not.
- Have the child make predictions at places in the book that are the “cause” of an effect. Again, have the child describe her thinking.
- Help the child think about the bigger picture by discussing the title or significant events in a story. Guide the child to realize that thinking changes over time as more is learned.
Questions?

- Becky Binks
- rebeccabinks@yahoo.com