Inferring

Sample pages

Introduction

When we read, we stretch the limits of the literal text by folding our experience and belief into the literal meanings in the text, creating a new interpretation, an inference.
— Keene & Zimmermann, *Mosaic of Thought* (1997), p. 147

What is inferring?

Inferring is being able to 'read between the lines', when the author implies something but doesn't exactly state it. To infer, we need to use both the clues in the text (context, illustrations, etc.) and our own prior knowledge. By using the text and our own prior knowledge, we can interpret what we think the author is really trying to say.

We can make inferences at word level too, by using the context of the text and our own prior knowledge to infer the meaning of the word.

Inferring is closely related to predicting.

How does inferring support reading comprehension?

Students develop deeper understandings of the text when they 'read between the lines' to draw their own conclusions by using prior experience. They create their own unique meaning of the text. As they read, these understandings may be revised as the reader is exposed to new information and confirms or adjusts their thinking.

Language we use when inferring

- Reading between the lines, I think . . .
- I would expect that . . .
- I already know that . . . so I think . . .
- In my experience . . .
- I think the author is really saying . . .
- My conclusion is . . . because in the text it says . . .
- The author's clues were . . .
- I think what's really going on is . . .
- I wonder why . . .
- I wonder if . . .

Inferring support material

Inferring

Inferring is being able to 'read between the lines', when the author implies something but doesn't exactly state it. You need to use the clues in the text and your own prior knowledge to help you understand.

"Sarah's mouth was dry and she had a big knot in her stomach. She wished today was already over."

. . . I think Sarah sounds really nervous about giving her speech to the whole school.

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Inferring strategy starter chart SM29

Inferring

Inferring mini poster SM30

Modelling chart

1 Jack's new labrador puppy, Patch, never left his side.

2 Jan flew into the room with a huge smile on her face.

3 The old lady's mouth quivered as she slowly got up and left the room.

4 "Get me the chief of police immediately!" shouted the president, as he put the phone down.

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Teacher modelling chart SM31

Inference detectives: Looking for clues SM31A
Assignment 1

Your name/s _____ Date _____

Read the excerpts and write your inferences in the box below.
Think about . . .
• Who the character might be (old, young, sporty, brainy etc)
• What kind of person the character is (kind, thoughtful, nasty, selfish, etc)
• How the character is feeling at that moment and why
• Where and when this action is taking place

1 Tom clenched his fists until the knuckles were white. He sighed deeply, stood up and stormed toward the door without saying another word. He opened the door and slammed it behind him. His ten team mates sat staring at each other in stunned silence.

2 Hannah's eyes grew as big as saucers and she began to clap her tiny hands together. As soon as the present was within reach, she grabbed it and began ripping off the paper. She was giggling and squealing with delight.

3 Fred hobbled toward the counter. He reached into his pocket and with a shaking hand pulled out his old leather wallet. As he got his money out, he noticed the picture of his wife Molly. All of a sudden his eyes became sad and after paying for his chocolate he quickly put his wallet back into his pocket. Thanking the shop assistant he left the shop and headed home for a lonely night in front of the television.

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Inference detectives: Looking for clues SM31A

Inference detectives: Looking for clues SM31B
Assignment 2

Your name/s _____ Date _____

Read the excerpts and write your inferences in the box below.
Think about . . .
• Who the character might be (old, young, sporty, brainy etc)
• What kind of person the character is (kind, thoughtful, nasty, selfish etc.)
• How the character is feeling at that moment and why
• Where and when this action is taking place

1 Regan's heart began to race. He could feel it pounding in his chest. His mouth was dry and his breathing shallow. How was he even going to be able to speak he wondered. All Regan could see was a blur of faces. His mother would be sitting there, back upright as still as a statue, waiting. No doubt she would have pushed her way to a seat somewhere in the front row.
  'And now we have Regan Sharp,' announced his teacher.

2 The wind raged like an angry bull in a bad temper. Huge waves crashed mercilessly on the reef. Palm fronds thrashed about uncontrollably and coconuts were falling like bombs to the ground. Sue looked in dismay out the window.
  'I guess snorkelling is out of the question?' her husband joked.

3 Sarah deliberately chose holiday destinations that were **remote**, where she could be all alone and not be hounded by the press. Her life was so busy that she usually spent the first few days just sleeping. Best of all, she didn't have to worry about what she looked like here. She could wear her comfortable jeans with the hole in the knee and a baggy T-shirt; a bit different to her normal **attire** when she was on location.

Extra for experts: Use the 'contextual clues' to infer the meaning of the two words in bold in the last excerpt. Go detectives!

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Inference detectives: Looking for clues SM31B

INFERENCE DETECTIVE!

Awarded to _____

for _____
_____

by _____

on _____

Inferring certificate SM32

Character clue bag

Students use their imagination to create or collect a selection of items appropriate to a particular character. These are put in a paper bag. Making an inference bag could also be part of a book assignment for independent readers.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring, synthesising

Materials:
- novel or picture book
- paper bag

Student grouping: individuals or buddies then small groups or whole class

Procedure
1 Students collect or create items that relate to a particular character. Some examples could be:
   - photographs of the place the character comes from
   - items that give clues as to what they like to do: e.g. a movie timetable if they like going to the movies or a pencil and paper if they like to draw
   - a baseball cap if they wear one
   - a magnifying glass – if they have detective tendencies!
2 The students then share their inference bag and other students either guess who the character is, or the creator explains why each item is important to the character.

Variation: Students could create inference bags for themselves as a way of getting to know each other at the beginning of the year.

Character clue bag for the character of Jan in The Silver Sword *by Ian Serraillier*

Inference jigsaw

This activity is designed to support younger students to make inferences.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring

Materials:
- text suitable for inferring, at the instructional level of the students
- Inference jigsaw PM19
- Inference jigsaw PM19 enlarged to A3 size
- text for teacher modelling

Student grouping: individuals or buddies

Procedure
1. **Teacher preparation:** Modelling – Find a quote appropriate for inferring. Write it into the first jigsaw piece of the enlarged A3 Inference jigsaw PM.
2. Photocopy one inference jigsaw PM per student or set of buddies.
3. **With the class:** Use a 'think-aloud' to articulate to students what you have inferred from the text and why.
4. Students read the text selection at their instructional level and record their inferences on the Inference jigsaw PM as shown below.

Inference jigsaw

PM19

Text _Little red riding hood._   Your name/s _Lauren_   Date _17/3_

In the book it says . . .
- Grandma's mouth Dropped Open.
- What big ears you have grandma.

From what I already know I think it means . . .
- Grandma was surprised.
- Little red riding hood thinks grandma doesn't look normal.

![I think icon]

I think . . . T chart

This T chart graphic organiser supports students to make inferences, and to gather evidence from the text to explain why they made them.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring, note-taking

Materials:
- text at the instructional level of the students (suitable for making inferences)
- I think . . . T chart PM20

Student grouping: individuals or buddies then a small group or whole class

Procedure
1   Students read the text, recording the inferences they make on the I think . . . T chart. They must justify their inference with evidence from the text. Page numbers could also be added to show where information was found to make evidence more explicit. The students write their answers in note form. Full sentences are not necessary.
2   After reading they share their inferences and the reasons why they made them with a buddy, in small groups or with the whole class.

![I think icon] **I think . . . T chart**   **PM20**

Text _The lion, the with, and the wardrobe_   Author _C.S. Lewis_

Your name/s _James_   Date _4/4_

I think . . . (your inference)	because . . . (evidence from the text)
The white witch is thinking Edmund could be useful to her	• She suddenly starts being nice to him after she had been really mean. • She gave him some turkish Delight.
Edmund was under the spell of the white witch.	• He who wanted more Turkish Delight. • He was mean to Lucy and the others • He wanted to go back to see the witch
The Beavers were kind people and were enemies of the white witch.	• They gave the children food • They told him the Witch turned people to stone • They made a plan to escape.

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Character quote

This activity requires students to find a quote in the text and explain what can be inferred about the character by the quote.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring

Materials:
* narrative text

Student grouping: individuals or buddies

Procedure

1   Model this activity using suitable quotes, and give the students an opportunity to practise using quotes that you provide before asking them to do it independently. Characters from traditional tales are suitable for this task.

    For example:

    Quote: "Why don't we ask William to join our club?" said Aniel suddenly.

    Student response: I think this quote shows that Aniel is quite cunning as he doesn't really like William and he only wants him in the club because he has some walkie-talkies Aniel would like to use.

2   Ask the students to find a quote in the story that typifies a particular character.
3   Students write down the quote and then their explanation of what it means.

Book: The Bad Beginning.
By: Lemony Snicket
quote: "I guess you've found me out," Olaf said simply.

I think this quote shows that Olaf is a sneaky guy and he knows he is sneaky because he said "you've found me out".

Cathy

Character inference chart

In this activity, students collect a range of information about a character. This information is then used to discuss whether the information they have collected can be found in the text or whether they have inferred it.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring, note-taking

Materials:
- text at the instructional level of the students
- Character inference chart PM21

Student grouping: individuals, then buddies or small group

Procedure
1   Students read the text selection in its entirety.
2   Students then read the text for a second time using the prompts — facts, quotes, actions and getting inside the character's head — on the Character inference chart PM to gather information. Remind the students that they do not have to write full sentences; rather, just jot down appropriate information in note form.
3   Students then share the information collected and the inferences they have made with a buddy or in a small group.

Character inference chart   PM21

Your name/s Pooja   Date 17·08

Facts – What do you know about the character?
- girl
- moved from Pennsylvania to Arizona
- only child
- 14 years old
- Has a pet rat Cinnamon.

Quotes – What does the character say? Write some brief quotes that help you to understand what the character is like.
- "let's do it!"
- "I named myself Pocket mouse, then Mudpie. Then Hullygully. Then Stargirl!"

Stargirl
by Jerry Spinelli

Actions – What does the character actually do?
- plays the ukelele
- meditates
- writes poetry
- rides bike everywhere
- helps others
- supports people
- sits Cinnamon on her shoulder

Getting inside the character's head – Write down some of the character's thoughts and feelings.
during fire:
- panicking
- frightened

When Cinnamon went missing:
- devastated
- angry with herself for leaving him there

What can you infer about the character?
Star girl is a confident and brave character. She doesn't judge other people and accepts them for who they are.

Real estate inferences

Real estate advertisements often include some great examples of inference. Have fun deciphering what the advertisements really mean!

Strategies and skills practised: inferring

Materials:
- examples of real estate advertisements that use inference (for modelling)
- a selection of real estate pages from magazines or newspapers
- chart paper
- markers
- scissors
- glue sticks
- pencils

Student grouping: individuals or buddies

Procedure

1   Use examples of real estate advertisements to show how advertisers use inference to influence prospective buyers. Discuss what statements such as 'handyman's dream', 'lifestyle starter' or 'entertainers' delight' really mean? Explore the idea of a 'positive spin'.

2   Individually or working with a buddy, students take a page of real estate advertisements and find examples of inferring.

3   They then cut them out and glue them onto chart paper and explain what the advertisement is inferring.

4   As an extension, students could choose one picture of a house and make up their own advertiser's slogan that uses inference. This could then be made into a class real estate page.
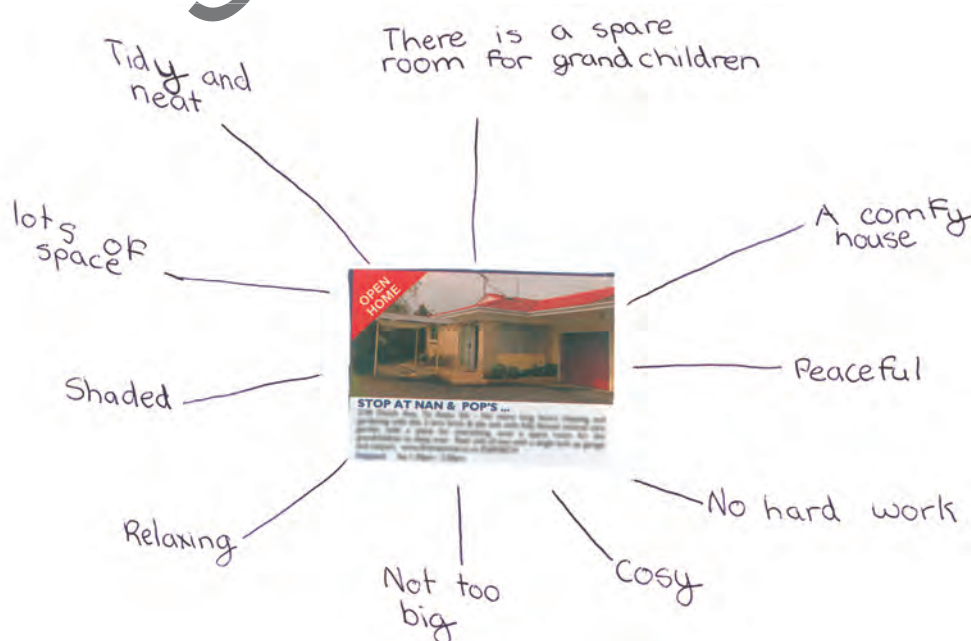
Sociogram

A sociogram is a graphic organiser that investigates the relationships between people. It may be used to focus on what can be inferred about characters. Sociograms are suitable for both narrative and factual text.

Strategies and skills practised: inferring

Materials:
- text to summarise
- paper
- pencils

Student grouping: individuals or buddies

Procedure
1. After the students have read the text, ask them to think about the different characters or people in the text.
2. Students then record the characters or people in circles and draw arrows to show the relationships they have with one another. This can be as simple as mother, friend, teacher, etc., or more complex relationships where inferred information is used.

Sociogram for Journey to Tangiwai
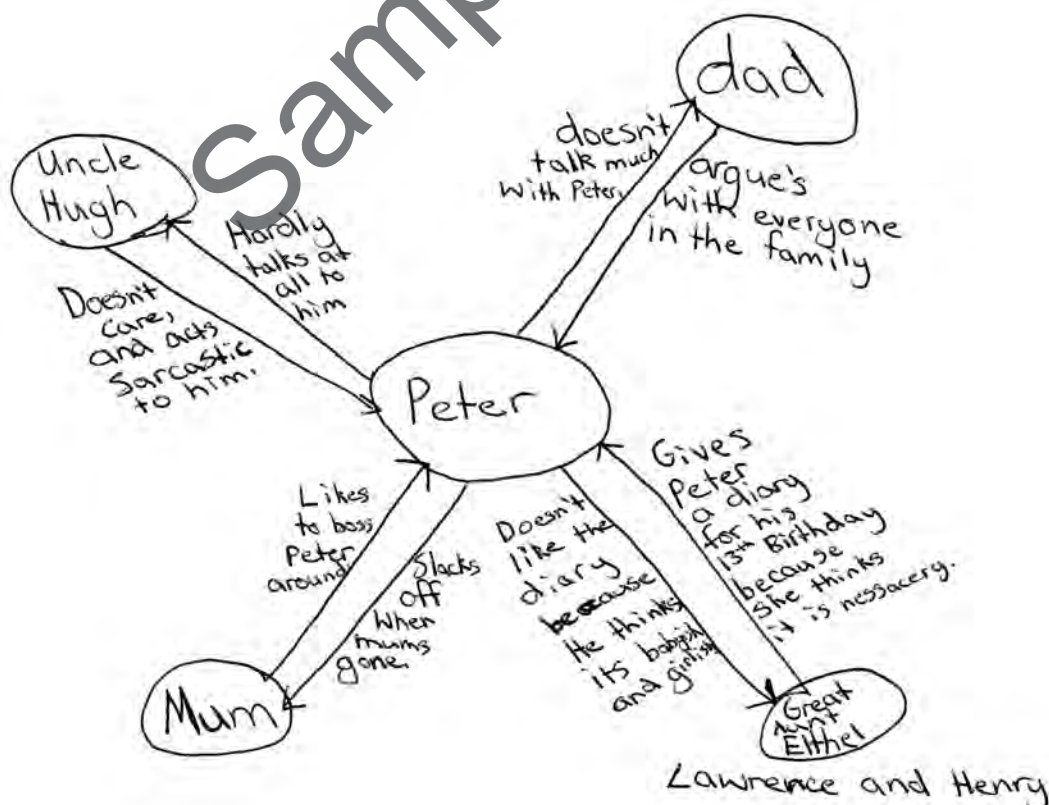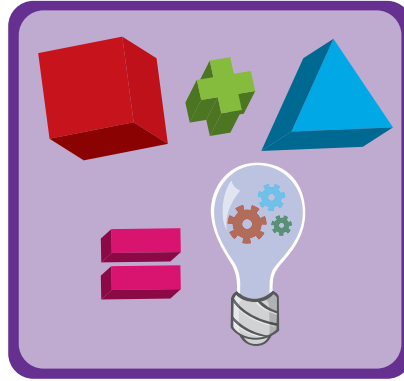
Synthesising

Introduction

What is synthesising?

Synthesising is when students combine their own prior knowledge with new ideas or information to create new complete thoughts, ideas, opinions or perspectives. This is the highest and most complex form of comprehension.

Responses and interpretations to the text that show synthesis can be oral, written, dramatic or artistic.

Synthesising can often result in a product. For example, after studying gardening by reading books, watching an online video and interviewing a gardener, students could plan and create a school garden.

How does synthesising support reading comprehension?

Synthesising supports reading comprehension because it requires students to combine their prior knowledge with new knowledge and put it into their own words. This creates ownership of the thinking. This can be a powerful experience that makes it more likely the student will remember the information and transfer it to new situations, which will help to further reinforce their new thinking.

Language we use when synthesising

- Has my thinking changed after reading this text?
- How can I use what I have read to create my own ideas?
- Reading this text has made me think. My new understanding is that _____.
- How else could I use this information _____?
- Can the connections I made reading this text help me to create a generalisation about information in this text?
- Can the connections I made reading this text help me to gain a new perspective on _____?

Teacher questions

- What would happen if _____?
- Can you see a possible solution to _____?
- What would be an alternative to _____?
- How would you deal with _____?

144

. . . and challenges

- Design a machine that would _____.
- Develop a proposal to _____.
- Build a scale model _____.
- Create a new product _____.
- Suggest new and unusual uses for _____.

Synthesising support material

Synthesising

Synthesising is putting together information from the text with your own prior knowledge to develop new ideas and understandings. It can mean using your new knowledge to create something like a model or a plan.

My thinking has changed since I read this story. I used to think people in wheelchairs could go pretty much all of the places I can. Now I realise that is nowhere near the truth. After reading about Meg, I now understand some of the difficulties people with disabilities face when trying to get around in public places.

Synthesising strategy starter chart SM41

Synthesising

Synthesising mini poster SM42

GREAT THINKING!

Awarded to _____

for _____

_____

by _____

on _____

Synthesising certificate SM43

145

Point of view chart

Point of view charts help students to understand that people can look at the same issue from different perspectives.

Strategies and skills practised: dentifying different points of view in a story by finding specific examples or evidence from the text

Materials:
- suitable text at instructional level of students
- Point of view chart PM40

Student grouping: individuals then small groups

Procedure
1   Students read the text through in its entirety.
2   Have the students compile a list of factors that could influence a person's viewpoint, e.g. age, gender, cultural group, religion, etc. Have them discuss how people's viewpoints change. What makes people change their viewpoint? Have you ever changed your viewpoint?
3   Students read the text again. During the second reading, they note the different viewpoints of people in the text.
4   When they have completed the point of view chart, students share their charts in small groups.

Synthesis eggs

This graphic organiser provides a framework to support students through the process of synthesising.

Strategies and skills practised: activating prior knowledge, synthesising

Materials:
- text suitable for synthesising at students' instructional level
- Synthesising eggs PM41

Student grouping: individuals then small groups

Procedure
1   Before reading the text, students record their prior knowledge in the first egg shape.
2   During and after reading they record new information in the second egg shape.
3   After doing this, they combine their prior knowledge and the new information they have learnt and record their new understandings in the third egg shape.
4   Students share their synthesis eggs in a small group.

Synthesis eggs – watch a new idea hatch!   **PM41**

Text _Exoskeletons_   Your name/s _Shakeel_   Date _05·07_

prior knowledge
what I already know

- about skeletons
- made of bones
- bones are hard

new information
what I read in the text

- exoskeletons are on the outside of the body
- used for protection
- like a coat of armour
- mainly insects or sea life have exoskeletons

synthesis
my new understanding is

- An exoskeleton is a hard shell on big or small creatures that have no bones.
- Its purpose is to protect the creature from being harmed by bigger creatures.