

Teaching our Students to
Infer
Through Explicit Instruction

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Dig deep to find the
author's messages.

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Authors on comprehension state that, “Inferring is the bedrock of comprehension. It’s what makes reading fun”. But, when I was in school I was simply taught to *read between the lines*. We know so much more than that now. It’s our job to explicitly teach this valuable skill to our students. In order to do that, we need to dissect this strategy to its core. Please join me to have a detailed look at how we can teach our students this valuable skill.

Resources:
Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement
 2ND edition, Goudvis and Harvey
Comprehension Connections: Bridges to Strategic Reading, Tanny McGregory

The steps to teaching our students how to infer:

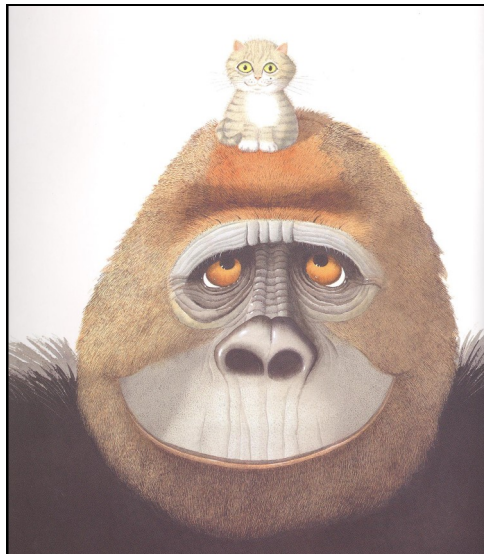
- **reading body language**—we do it all the time.
 Our students need to know that this is an example of an inference. (I’m not going to ask for movie money right now. I can see it’s not a good time)
- **act it out**—make cards with words that reflect different emotions
 e.g. embarrassed - one student leaves the room, the word is shared with everyone else. When the student returns to the room, five students share an example of when they felt this way by saying, “I felt this way when ...”
 The students who is inferring the word, must listen to all 5 examples before guessing.
- **Backpack inference: inferring from objects**
 Bring a backpack to class saying that you found it outside and need to know who owns it. Explain that there isn’t a name on it and that we will have to use its contents as clues.
 Bring out one item at a time e.g. hockey tape and ask students to infer something about its owner. (i.e. the owner plays hockey)
 Another item might be a baseball (I infer that the owner likes sports and must play them)
 Another item might be nail polish (I infer that the owner is a girl since girls usually wear nail polish. This can lead to a fun conversation of course!)
 Pull a flash drive from the backpack and listen for comments.
 When all items have been revealed ask for a final statement about the owner of the backpack
 e.g. “The owner of this backpack is a computer-using, female hockey and baseball player.”
 With this activity introduce the formula:

evidence	+	my brilliant thinking <small>(schema/connections/background knowledge)</small>	=	an inference
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- **Inferring from pictures**
from Anthony Browne's
Little Beauty

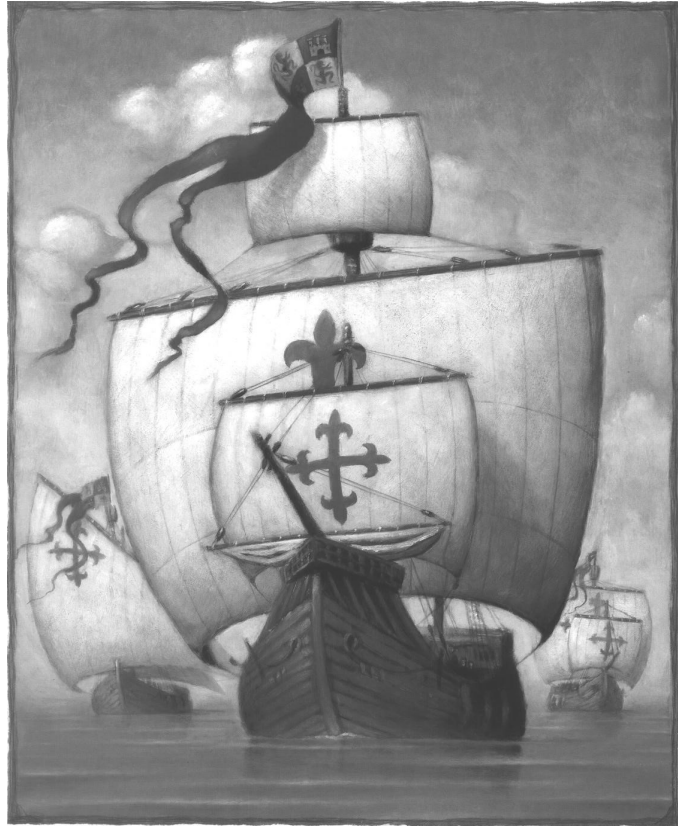


evidence	+	my brilliant thinking (schema/connections/background knowledge)	=	my inference



evidence	+	my brilliant thinking (schema/connections/background knowledge)	=	my inference

- **Inferring from pictures *and* text**
based on Jane Yolen's
Encounter



“When the sun rose, each great canoe gave birth to many little ones that swam awkwardly to our shore.”

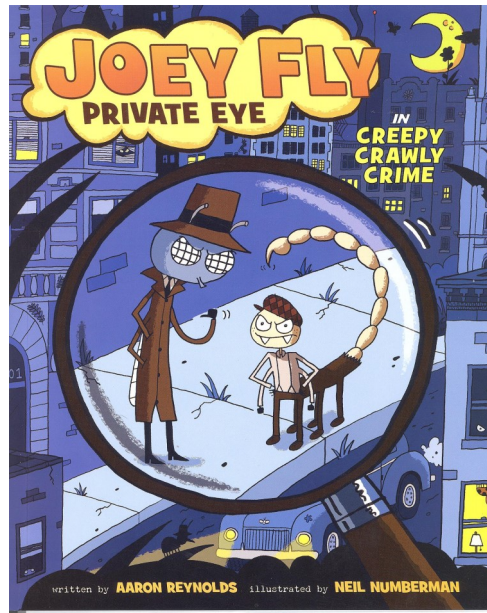
Questions that stem from this picture and text:

- Who would be calling these sailing ships “great canoes”?
- What are “little ones that swim awkwardly”?

evidence	+	my brilliant thinking (schema/connections/background knowledge)	=	my inference

- **Inferring from text only**

- **Inferring figurative language**
based on the book *Joey Fly Private Eye*
Private Eye
by Aaron Reynolds



Figurative language is plentiful in Reynold’s book *Joey Fly Private Eye*. And figurative language begs for some careful dissection using the infer formula.

evidence	+	my brilliant thinking (schema/connections/background knowledge)	=	my inference
Life in the bug city. It ain't easy. <i>Crime sticks to this city like a one-winged fly on a 50 cent swatter.</i>				
I was wrong. This kid was thicker than flies on a day old cowpie.				
Things were about to get messier than a dung beetle's food fight.				

• **Inferring from poems**

INFERRING MEANING FROM POETRY

Based on the book SCORE!: 50 Poems to Motivate and Inspire by Charles Ghinga

Name: _____

Evidence + Brilliant Thinking = An Inference



score: 50 Poems to Motivate and Inspire
by Charles Ghinga

I think this poem is about ...

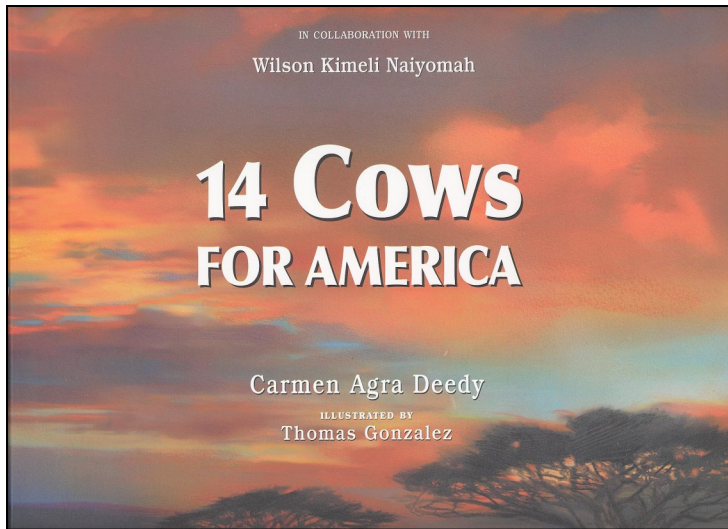
1.

2.

3.

4. Final thoughts

• **Inferring from text only**

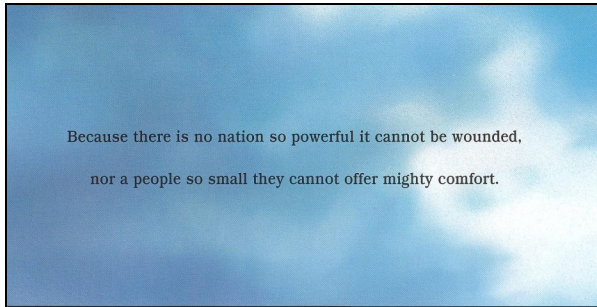


INFERRING MEANING FROM TEXT

Based on the book 14 Cows for America by Carmen Agra Deedy

Name: _____

Evidence + Brilliant Thinking = An Inference



Based on the book
14 Cows for America by Carmen Agra Deedy

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. Final thoughts

• **Inferring word meaning**

“With about as much grace as a leviathan stranded on land, Brody fumbled his way over to his desk.”

So, what’s a leviathan? How did you figure that out?

“Like my abuelo told me Luis, just do the best that you can, and then let it go.”

“I just couldn’t stand to be on the field without my hermano. My days revolved around after-school visits to the cemetery with Carlos, Patricia and Shawanna.”

“Bit by bit they will be broken down into minerals and other nutrients by bacteria, protists, and funguses.

