

## DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND MAKING INFERENCES

### Drawing Conclusions

Drawing conclusions is something you do all the time. For example, Mary has to wear one of her three dresses tonight. She has a blue dress, a red dress, and an orange dress. The orange and red dresses are at the cleaners. Therefore, you can conclude she will wear the blue dress. When you read a story, you can conclude things about characters and events from the information given in the story.

### Inferences and Facts

**Facts** are clearly stated information that can be proven. They can also suggest other ideas that are not clearly stated. An **inference** is a kind of conclusion you can make that is suggested by the facts. While you use facts as evidence for your inference, you may not be able to prove your inference is true.

See if you can tell the difference between an inference and a fact in the following story.

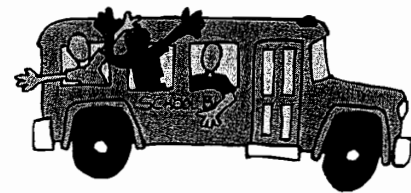
A <sup>1</sup>The sun glistened on the new snow. <sup>2</sup>Almost a foot had fallen since last night. <sup>3</sup>Now the sky was clear as the bus went along. <sup>4</sup>Looking out the bus window, Jorge could see it was going to be a beautiful day. <sup>5</sup>“A perfect day to be sledding,” thought Jorge, as his bus pulled into the school parking lot.

**Fact:** There was new snow.

**Fact:** Jorge is on a school bus.

**Inference:** Jorge is a student.

**Inference:** Jorge would rather be sledding.



The facts above are clearly stated in the story. The inferences are made by the reader using the facts as clues, or evidence.

1. Is the following statement a fact or an inference? \_\_\_\_\_

It is no longer snowing.

Use sentence 3 as a clue.

## Examine the Evidence

When you make an inference, look at what really happens and what is suggested in the story. Often an author gives clues to suggest something he or she wants you to think. When you use evidence to make an inference, your inference could still be either true or false.

For instance, in Jorge's story, the author never says that Jorge is a student riding on the bus. The words "his bus" in sentence 5 suggest that he may be a student. However, it is also possible that Jorge is the bus driver. If the next sentence stated that he got off the bus and went to class, you would have more evidence.

Another example of making an inference is using what a character says and does to decide what kind of person he or she is. The story may not tell you directly what this person is like, so you must make a good guess based on how he or she acts. In the following story, what inference can you make about Kenny's attitude towards Mrs. P?

B <sup>1</sup>I thought I might make it this time. <sup>2</sup>I looked for Mrs. P. <sup>3</sup>When I didn't see her in the yard, I started to walk quickly past the house. <sup>4</sup>As I got to the gate, Mrs. P came around the corner of the house. <sup>5</sup>"Kenny, just the person I wanted to see," she cried. <sup>6</sup>"Can't stop this time, Mrs. P.; I've got to get home," I called. <sup>7</sup>But she was already opening the gate for me. <sup>8</sup>"It will only take a minute, Kenny. <sup>9</sup>Surely, you can spare one minute for an old lady." <sup>10</sup>She'd caught me again. <sup>11</sup>I turned and slowly walked through the gate.

1. You probably guessed that Kenny wants to avoid Mrs. P. Which three sentences are the best evidence? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
2. Can you tell *why* he wants to avoid her? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is it a fact or an inference that Mrs. P. has stopped Kenny before?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which three sentences are the best evidence? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Your Own Knowledge

Sometimes when you make an inference, you use your own knowledge along with the information that is given or suggested in the text. Most people know that some snakes eat small animals. Can you use this information to make an inference about what happened to the gerbils?

- C <sup>1</sup>Amy was pet sitting Kai's pet boa constrictor. <sup>2</sup>When she went to check on him in the morning, the snake was missing. <sup>3</sup>There also seemed to be fewer gerbils in the next cage.



It is possible that the snake and the gerbils escaped together. It is more likely that the snake escaped and ate the gerbils. It is a fact that boas eat small animals, so you can use your own knowledge of boas to support this conclusion. In this case, the inference is probably true, but it could be false. There is not enough evidence given in the story for us to know what really happened to the gerbils.

Read the next paragraph.

- D <sup>1</sup>The plant in the corner looked like it was dying. <sup>2</sup>The soil was still moist, so he knew it didn't need more water. <sup>3</sup>And he had fertilized it just last week. <sup>4</sup>Only a branch nearest the window was lifted slightly. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the plant was drooping.

1. What outside information do you use to make the inference that the plant needs light?

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## INFERENCE PRACTICE ACTIVITY

Read the following story.

- A <sup>1</sup>Fred slowly climbed the slippery slope. <sup>2</sup>Heavy rains had flooded the river, causing it to change its path. <sup>3</sup>Looking at the old map, he knew it would be even harder to find the spot marked with an X.
- B <sup>4</sup>Suddenly the ground gave way, and Fred slid back down the hillside. <sup>5</sup>As he got up, he noticed a small opening between two large rocks. <sup>6</sup>Taking out his flashlight, he peered inside. <sup>7</sup>A sudden glimmer caught his eye. <sup>8</sup>He quickly started to pull away rocks and branches until he could fit through the opening. <sup>9</sup>Inside was a large, dark cave. <sup>10</sup>Pulling out his flashlight again, he wondered if he had only imagined that glimmer. <sup>11</sup>Then he turned and spotted a small gold coin glistening on the floor of the cave. <sup>12</sup>So the tale was true!

1. Paragraph A suggests that Fred

- A. is hiking for the day.
- B. is searching for something.
- C. is lost in the woods.
- D. is caught in a storm.

Which sentence is the best evidence? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In paragraph B, what do you think the sudden glimmer probably was?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which sentence is the best evidence? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In sentence 12, the tale was probably about

\_\_\_\_\_