



Critical Reading: Inferences

For: Dev Com 037, Los Angeles Harbor College

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What Critical Thinkers Do: Make Inferences

When you're asked to make an inference, you are asked to:

- Infer something after you read
- Draw a conclusion after you read
- Choose the best conclusion after you read
- Draw an inference



What is an Inference?

- Inferences are ideas that the writer does not directly say. He suggests them through the details in his story or paragraph.
- What kind of ideas?
 - The purpose or point of something
 - How a character feels
 - The setting (time and place) of a story
 - The author's opinion and attitude on a subject

How do you make inferences?

- Read the entire passage or paragraph first and then read the question.
- In order to make or choose an inference, you have to use the details from the reading. The details are the clues that will support your inference.
- If you can't use one of the writer's details to support your inference, it is just an opinion assumption.

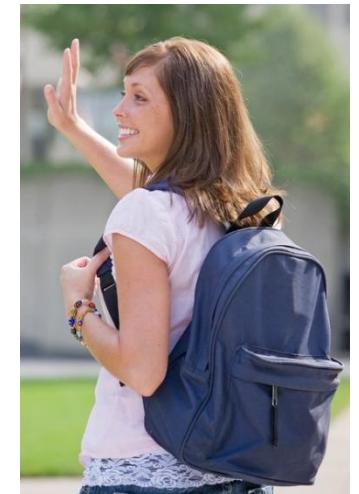


We Make Inferences Everyday

- Situation I: On your way to class, you wave to a friend, but she does not wave back.

Possible Conclusions:

- (1) She's angry.
- (2) Her mind's on something else.
- (3) She did not see you.



Situation II: The professor spoke for 2 hours without stopping about computers. Half the people left before he was finished.

What made half the people leave?

What detail helped you see this?
Underline that sentence.



Situation II: The professor spoke for 2 hours without stopping about computers. Half the people left before he was finished.

What made half the people leave?
The professor's lecture was too long without any breaks. The students got bored.

What detail helped you see this?
Underline that sentence. (see above)



Looking at Reading Passages

■ You have just gotten a pit bull puppy from an animal shelter. He's lovable but nervous. If you raise your voice for any reason, he cowers and trembles. If you scold him, he hides. When you got him from the shelter, he had a slight limp and a deep scratch across his nose.

Question: what can you infer about the puppy's past experiences with owners?

- a. He probably used to fight with his previous owners.
- b. His previous owners most likely abused him.
- c. He was very loving with his owners.

Looking at Reading Passages

(explanation)

- You have just gotten a pit bull puppy from an animal shelter. He's lovable but nervous. If you **raise your voice for any reason, he cowers and trembles**. If you **scold him, he hides**. When you got him from the shelter, he had a **slight limp** and a **deep scratch across his nose**.

Question: what can you infer about the puppy's past experiences with owners?

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More Reading Passages...

For you to see, there must be light. Seeing depends on a certain amount of reflected light. It does not matter how small. Still, just being able to tell light from darkness is not sight as we know it. Sight involves much more. It requires that the eye and the brain form an image. Light and darkness can be distinguished by organisms that have not eyes of any kind. Think about houseplants. Don't they always grow from the dark spots in a room toward the window or light source? Green plants can "tell" light from darkness. They have special cells that are sensitive to light. These cells are part of their life-support systems.

- I. You can infer that the author believes that plants
 - a. Have eyes.
 - b. Form images.
 - c. Do not need light to live.
 - d. Can tell light from dark but can't see.

More Reading Passages... (explanation)

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 - a. Have eyes.
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 - c. Do not need light to live.
 - d. **Can tell light from dark but can't see.**

One More Reading Passage

I was sick-sick to death after that long wait. When they at last untied me, I was allowed to sit. I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence – the dread sentence of death – was the last clear sound that I heard. After that, the harsh sound of voices seemed to mix into one dreamy, faint hum. It brought to my soul the idea of *revolution*. This came perhaps from its similarity in my mind out the sound of a mill wheel. This thought lasted only for a brief period. Then I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw. I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me whiter than the sheet upon which I write these words – and thin, intense, determined. I saw that my fate was coming from those lips.

1. You can infer that the narrator (the person telling the story)
 - a. Is being held prisoner
 - b. Is a judge
 - c. Is relaxed and confident
 - d. Will soon be released
2. The passage suggests that
 - a. One of the judges will try to help the narrator
 - b. The narrator faints or nearly faints
 - c. A revolution is starting outside
 - d. The narrator is deaf

One More Reading Passage (explanation)

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Inferences Review

- Remember:
 - Inferences are the hidden ideas or meanings writers want you to figure out using clues in their writing.
 - The clues are the supporting details in the passage.
 - If you can't find a detail to support your choice, it is just an opinion or assumption.