

Parent School

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...A Monthly Parent Education Newsletter to help explain the what, why and how of your child's new reading vocabulary.

The skill of inferring is a skill we do all day long, similar to “reading” people or “reading” a situation. If it has been snowing outside and some cars have snow on them and some cars do not, we infer that those without snow have been parked in the garage. Inferring is not only about reading expressions, tones and body language, it is about “reading” text, often said as, “reading between the lines” where the answers are not explicitly stated.

Predicting is related to inferring, but we predict events, actions or outcomes that can be checked or confirmed as correct or incorrect by reading on or reading to the end of the story. I've heard it said that predicting is like thinking ahead but inferring is about looking back and reflecting about what has already been read. Predicting is like this, you are reading along, you stop and ask, “What will happen next?” Inferring is like this, you are reading along, you stop and ask, “I wonder what the author meant?”

Inferences are more open-ended and often uncheckable meaning that the reader is unable to truly know if an inference is correct. When students read, think and make an inference about text they have just read, they must use their schema, and prior knowledge and cross-check it with clues and evidence from the text.

When students use the strategy of inferring, they are making meaning of the text. They are adding pieces that are not explicitly there, often sharing personal opinions and forming interpretations. As children begin to make inferences out loud, they must be recognized for doing so and be told all day long, “You just made an inference!” When asking a student simple recall questions, some children feel like they are answering wrong if they don't use words that are exactly in the text, when they are actually using inferring. Another way, I explain it kids is like this, something happens on one page of the book and then you turn the page and ask what just happened, as if somebody ripped out the middle page and you must decide what happened.

When you infer, you might say:
I think that...because...
Maybe it means...because...
My clues from the text are...my schema is...so I infer that...
It could mean...because...

Good books to read to your child to practice inferring are:

- Something Beautiful*
- Big Al*
- The Royal Bee*
- Tight Times*
- Because of Winn Dixie*