ONLINE READING
COMPREHENSION LAB

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
Excelsior Online Writing Lab

Inferencing

Inference: A **conclusion** reached based on **evidence** and **reasoning**. While reading, we often make inferences about either **details** or the **main idea** of a passage. This is called "reading between the lines."

We infer the main idea in situations when:

The main idea is not clearly stated.

The text begins with a question.

The text compares and contrasts two or more things.

Each sentence contains equally specific information.

The text is satirical or the author's tone is ironic.

How to Infer the Main Idea:

1. Observe signposts like abstracts, titles, headings and subheadings, transitions, and summaries.
2. Identify key words that are repeated or referred to by other words (pronouns, substitutes, and associated words).
3. Find a major sentence that almost states the main idea and add a word or phrase to it.
4. Combine two or more key sentences into one sentence.
5. Summarize all the sentences into one sentence.
6. Observe the author's attitude or tone.

We make inferences every day.

When we are with someone, we might infer what they are thinking or feeling based on what they say or do.

In a text message or email, we often infer what someone means based on what they write.

In new situations we infer what's going on by interpreting clues around us.

You can check whether your inference is logical by asking these questions:

Is it based on words and sentences in the text?

Is it based more on the author's words than on your point of view?

Does it manage to avoid contradicting other statements made in the text?

Does it comply with the author's attitude or tone about the topic?

Could it function as the thesis or topic sentence?

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