

**Lesson Title:**

Inferences

**Grade Level:**

7

**Lesson Objectives:**

- Students will understand the difference between literal and inferential comprehension.
- Students will compare literal text meaning to inferential meaning and cite several pieces of textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.

**Learning Modalities Targeted:** Visual Auditory Kinesthetic/Tactile**Warm-Up:**

- Display pages 1 and 2 from the Display Pages, then ask students what they can tell you about the picture.
- Ask students who the girls are and what they are doing. Students may say they are sisters running a race. Ask them to cite evidence for this.

**Materials Needed:** notebooks, pencil/pens, display device, Display Pages, Independent Practice worksheet, “Flawless” and “Tracking Nellie” passages

**Procedure:**

1. Possible student responses to the Warm-Up question: Their hair is the same color and length, like sisters might have. They are wearing the same type of clothes and shoes. They are running toward a wall like it’s the finish line of a race. They seem to be moving alike the way siblings do. The older girl is probably letting the younger one win.

2. Explain that students have just made inferences about the girls in the picture. Tell students that an inference is making an educated guess about something based on what they know from seeing or reading *and* their personal experiences. Students who have seen siblings know they have similar characteristics. Students who have raced younger siblings know to let the younger one win.
3. Display page 3 from the Display Pages. Read the question and passage aloud. Ask students why Payton’s stomach grumbles loudly. (She had to run a lot farther than she intended.)
4. Explain that an author’s explicit and implicit descriptions lead a reader to make inferences. Tell students that they inferred why she was hungry. The author could have added “because she had run twice as far as she intended” to the last sentence to make sure readers understood the point.
5. The way authors describe characters, scenes, and events and craft dialogue enables readers to make inferences. Explain that when authors “show” their readers what is happening instead of “telling” them explicitly, readers must bring their own experiences to understand and relate to the story.

**Independent Practice:**

- Distribute the Independent Practice worksheet and have students read the two passages. Have students write a characterization of Jeremiah and Black Elk based on inferences. Instruct students to cite textual evidence from the stories to support their inferences. Ask students to describe what kind of boy each one is, what is important to them, what they like, etc.

**Closing Activity:**

- Have students give an example of a time they made an inference.

### Advanced Learner Option

**Procedure:**

1. Distribute copies of “Flawless.” Have students write a characterization about a character in the story. Tell students to encourage inferencing by “showing” not “telling” in their descriptions. Tell them not to use the name of the character in the description.
2. Have students read their characterizations to the group. Have the group make inferences about who the character is. Have students identify the details of the description that led them to make the inferences.

### Struggling Learner Option

**Procedure:**

1. Work with students to identify inferential techniques that authors use. That is, consider what is said and not said in descriptions of characters, scenes, and events as well as dialogue.
2. Distribute copies of “Flawless” and read it aloud.
3. Ask students to make inferences about the characters’ traits based on the techniques that they have identified.
4. Have students share their inferences and the details that led to the inferences.

### Extension Activities

- Divide students into groups of three. Distribute the “Tracking Nellie” passage. Have students read through the story twice. Then, have the members of the group choose roles, either Kara, Stephen, or the narrator. Tell students to read through the excerpt with each student reading the lines of their character. Then, give students ten minutes to write a paragraph making inferences about the character whose lines they read. Discuss the descriptions, and have students cite details in the text and dialogue that led to the inferences they made about their character.
- Distribute the “Tracking Nellie” passage. Have students read the passage. Have students write three paragraphs, making inferences about Kara, Stephen, and the narrator and citing details in the text and dialogue that lead to the inferences.

### ELL Teaching Tips

- **Key Lesson Language: general** – race, hair, clothes, shoes, sibling; **academic** – literal, inferential, comprehension, textual evidence
- **Read aloud** – Support independent reading of a task by reading it aloud to all students. Read the two Independent Practice passages aloud prior to having students complete the assignment.
- **L1 production** – Allow students to demonstrate understanding of a content task by responding in their home language or by doing preparatory work in their home language before responding in English. As students work to complete the Closing Activity, allow them to respond in their first language. Challenge them to translate their example into English with the help of their bilingual dictionary.

# BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Making Inferences

# What's happening here?



# What are you inferring?

Payton jogged down the path, her white ear buds dangling from her ears. Her favorite tunes helped her keep pace on her brisk run before lunch. Half-way down the long road she encountered orange and white barricades blocking her path. A few yards beyond she could see a big hole and men with shovels. A few yards beyond that was her home, and her lunch. Jogging in place, Payton took a deep breath, turned around, and back tracked all the way down the road, rerouting to her home.

When she finally sat down to lunch and looked at the little sandwich on her plate, her stomach grumbled loudly.

# Independent Practice

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## Passage 1

### **Black Elk**

Black Elk looked up at his father who smeared the wet, red clay in broad swipes on the boy's face under his eyes. Twelve winters had now passed, and today, Black Elk would join the men on a big hunt at Willow Creek.

The crier had wandered through the village circle that morning shouting, "Take it down, take it down, down, down!" The people had begun dismantling the teepees and packing them away on the ponies. "Many bison, I have heard," the crier continued. "Many bison, I have heard!"

The sun was high in the sky when the warrior scouts returned with their report. There were indeed many bison nearby. The warriors were fully prepared for the hunt, and Black Elk easily swung himself onto his bay horse. The crier instructed the hunters, "Good warriors, remember the old and feeble ones who have no strong sons to hunt for them. Remember those who have only little children and no strong man to hunt for them. You shall help these and share your success with them today."

The hunt was successful and Black Elk returned with a happy heart. His people would have food enough and animal hides for the winter, and he had been a part of the success. His father had taught him well. Now, he would make a sled for Little Brother Skyhawk from bison jaws and ribs tied together with rawhide.

His people traveled on to spend the winter at White Butte, but Black Elk did not like being so near Soldiers' Town. No one trusted the white Wasichu who made their great iron road come through bison territory and cut the herd in two.

Sure enough, one winter day Black Elk's foolish little brother damaged a flagpole belonging to the Wasichu. Soldiers suddenly surrounded Black Elk's people, but he could not understand their angry words. Red Cloud, who lived in Soldiers' Town among the Wasichu, boldly walked into the middle of the crowd with arms open wide. He explained in both languages to everyone that young boys sometimes do foolish things. How foolish also are men who want to hurt other grown men for a child's foolish play. Did they never do foolish things when they were boys?

The soldiers returned to Soldiers' Town with their heads hanging low.

## Passage 2

### **Jeremiah**

Jeremiah listened to the melancholy notes of the bugler as he played the familiar signal to the day's end. The lone notes wafted through the evening sky as the flag was lowered. Father would soon be calling him in for the night because the Sioux had settled for the



## Independent Practice

winter at nearby White Butte. No one trusted these strange men, and they didn't like that they were so close. Father reminded him daily not to go near the woods. This particular group of Sioux, apparently, was overjoyed with a successful bison hunt and there was no telling what kind of crazy shenanigans they might do. It was common knowledge in Soldiers' Town that these strangers had no regard for each other or especially white people. Jeremiah had listened to many a soldier's horrible tale of how the Sioux would leave their elderly or children in the plain during a hunt so they wouldn't be burdened by them.

Ten-year-old Jeremiah didn't care about natives; he only hoped to find a friend to play with, but Soldiers' Town was occupied only by soldiers.

The next morning, Jeremiah galloped on his homemade stick horse near the forest's edge when a rustle in the trees caught his attention. He glimpsed a boy about his age in the woods. Jeremiah crept curiously into the brush and realized too late the boy was a Sioux. Jeremiah turned to run back to safety only to trip and fall flat. In no time the boy was upon him, but not attacking; he was lifting Jeremiah to his feet. He was also laughing.

Before long, the boys were galloping together in and out of the woods and around the flagpole, mindless to the passage of time. They had been chasing imaginary creatures for some time and didn't notice when a small band of Sioux came near. As the boys rounded the flagpole at full speed, the rope that held the precious flag caught on his friend's stick horse, bringing the banner flopping to the ground. A Sioux boy not much older than Jeremiah stepped forward and grabbed his new friend's arm speaking harsh words. Suddenly, soldiers were everywhere shouting at the natives.

Red Cloud, who lived among the soldiers walked into the midst of them, making speeches to the soldiers and the Sioux. Jeremiah understood him to say something about "foolish playing" and his heart sank. He looked at his feet, knowing Father would be very angry, and hot tears dripped from his eyes. Suddenly, the soldiers' expressions changed and they walked away. Jeremiah's friend ran up to him and put his hand flat on Jeremiah's heart and smiled. Then the Sioux vanished into the forest.

## Flawless

It had been a long week at dance camp, and the various dance teams had only one day to perfect their routines for the judges. Renowned dance teachers and choreographers from across the country had taught master classes in ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, and lyrical to hundreds of aspiring dancers in 5th-8th grades. Placed in random groups of three dancers each, they would be assigned a routine from the week to perform for the judges.

"I'm hoping beyond hope that our group gets to perform the hip-hop routine," Haley said, clasping her fingers together. "It was so energetic and punchy, not to mention my best genre."

"Yes, I prefer hip-hop, too," agreed Frank, "but I'm equally comfortable with the jazz routine."

"That's because you're equally talented in any kind of modern dance," said Kathy. Although Frank was only in the 7th grade, he seemed like a professor to Kathy, but when he took to the dance floor, a completely different personality emerged. His energy and precision could not be matched. Kathy, being the only ballerina in the group, awaited their assignment anxiously. *Please be ballet*, she kept repeating in her head.

"I just hope we don't get *ballet*!" Halley said *ballet* like it was an infectious disease and looked at Kathy. She continued to worry about the possibility.

"I think," Frank began, "we could do the ballet. Dancers must be flexible, you know."

One of the choreographers handed them a card. Frank opened it and, smiling, read, "It's the hip-hop routine!"

"Yes!" Haley jumped. "But, how can we win with the ballerina on our team?"

"Ballet is the foundation of all dance," Kathy said, repeating what the master teacher had told them. "It develops in your body the control, the center of balance, and the flexibility you need for all other dance forms. So, we'll win *because* we have a ballerina on the team." Kathy looked straight at Haley, who had never taken a ballet class until this week.

After their flawless performance before the judges on Friday, they awaited the judges' critique.

"Your energy was high and you executed the steps with precision. Frank and Kathy, your ballet training is obvious. Keep up with your classes. They give you the strength and control needed in this genre. Haley, you're a good hip-hop dancer, but if you want to take your talent to the next level, you might think about adding ballet class this year."

## Tracking Nellie

Nellie was a sweet little beagle and obedience school dropout. She and her owner Kara had enrolled in obedience school with good intentions, but Kara soon found her homework schedule, dance lessons, and book club made it next to impossible for them to graduate. Nellie successfully completed "potty training" and would sit or come on command, but she pulled relentlessly on her leash when Kara took her for a walk. She also bounded out the front door every change she got.

"At least she has a microchip," Kara told her friends one day after they helped her recover the escaped beagle. They had chased Nellie for two blocks before the dog finally obeyed and returned to her master.

"Yeah, but a microchip won't help you find her if she ever really runs away," Stephen informed her. "You need to get one of those GPS tracking collars."

"But a microchip tracks her, doesn't it?" Kara asked, scratching Nellie's ear. She listened intently as Stephen explained how a microchip was equipped with a RFID, or Radio Frequency Identification Device, that had a unique serial number. When the chip is scanned by a nearby "reader," owner information is displayed. The dog has to be close to the reader; therefore, the microchip can't help find a stray dog. It only identifies a stray after it is found by someone or captured by Animal Control.

"But with a GPS tracker, you can see where Nellie is on a map on your computer. We lost Buster once, and if it weren't for the GPS tracker, there's no telling if we ever could've found him." Stephen raised his eyebrows and nodded at Kara. "Get the collar."

That night, Kara looked online at portable, waterproof collars that provided a GPS tracker. She had been saving her allowance for months to get an electronic book reader but decided Nellie's safety was more important. By the end of the week, Kara had the new collar fitted on Nellie.

The next weekend, Kara, Maddie, and Stephen were helping unload groceries for Kara's mom when Nellie darted past them and ran out of the garage and down the street. She had already disappeared into the neighborhood before the friends could see which way she had gone.

"Good thing you decided to get that collar," Stephen said. "Come on, let's see if we can pull up the program on your mom's phone."

Mom navigated the car through the neighborhood, turning down alleys at Kara's and Stephen's directions. Maddie watched out the window for the wandering beagle. Finally, Nellie emerged from some bushes on Tarrant Street, right where the GPS tracker showed her to be. When Kara opened her car door, Nellie jumped in, eager for a new adventure.