

## This handout should be used in conjunction with the “Inference” audio podcast.

If you have not listened to and completed the “Topic and Main Idea” podcast, you will want to do that first.

### Inference

An inference is an educated guess about an idea not directly stated. It is a conclusion one draws based on prior knowledge and details discovered in the text.

You already know how to infer. You do it every day by taking what you know and clues about the situation to come to a conclusion. If you come home to find the garbage ripped open and your dog with her tail between her legs and her sad face, you would infer your dog got into the garbage.

#### Tips for Inference:

- Check your facts. Use what the author implies, gives clues about. Don’t invent your own message. This would be an invalid conclusion or false inference because it is not based on the information.
- Use your prior knowledge, what you already know about the topic or situation to make a logical conclusion.
- Use the text! Authors choose their words carefully. If you recognize why an author chose specific words, you are more likely to know what the author is implying. Look for slanted language, connotation, figurative language, similes, metaphors, idioms and irony. (These will be discussed in detail on a future podcast. You are probably more familiar with these than you think, so use what you know.)
- Watch out for you! You have biases, strong personal views which may mislead you. You also may misjudge information, just like jumping to conclusions, and do not use the facts or jump to conclusions to come up with inference which are not made. Always try to identify the information in the passage which leads you to your inference. This will stop you from coming to a conclusion not implied.

### Practice

These practice examples are discussed on the podcast. Try it on your own before listening to the explanation.

Directions: See if you can infer who the famous person described in the following paragraph is.

1. This founding father of the United States was not only a politician but a printer, satirist, scientist, inventor and diplomat. While his book, *Poor Richards Almanac*, may be one of the most well known books written in his time, his experiments with electricity are probably what most people think of when his name appears. How could we not remember a man who stood out during an electrical storm with a kite and a key to test a theory?

Famous Person: \_\_\_\_\_

2. This Memphis singer combined the styles of R&B and Gospel to become an international sensation. While his accomplishments are many, he is probably best known for his controversial swinging hips. Hundreds of thousands of people still flock to his home, Graceland.

Famous Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: The main idea of each of the following paragraphs is not directly stated. It is implied. Write a main idea which can be inferred from the paragraph. Remember a main idea needs to be a complete sentence.

3. It seems as if everyone is researching the Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil. Looking at these studies, one can see why so much research is occurring. So far, omega-3 has been shown to reduce pain and inflammation, lower cholesterol, triglycerides, LDLs and blood pressure, break up clots in the blood, improve brain function, and prevent several types of cancer.

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Angie was stuck. She looked left and right, but she still didn't know what to do. She stared out the window, but no help was to be found. Every time she thought she had become unstuck, she sunk back into the hole. Finally, she gave up. She put her pencil down and went outside.

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Use what you have learned about inferring to solve this logic problem.

5. A man and his son are driving in a car. The car crashes into a tree, killing the father and seriously injuring his son. At the hospital, the boy needs to have surgery. Upon looking at the boy, the doctor says (telling the truth), "I cannot operate on him. He is my son."

How can this be? \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer Key:** Remember your answers may be worded differently but should have very similar ideas.

1. Benjamin Franklin
2. Elvis Presley
3. There are many benefits of adding omega-3 fatty acids, fish oil, to one's diet.
4. Angie had writer's block.
5. The doctor was the boy's mother.