

To Inferencing and Beyond

Inferencing: A Close Reading Strategy

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Grade Level	11th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	4-5 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	250 minutes
Course	A.P. Literature and Composition, American Literature		

Essential Question

How do prior experiences and daily observations lead us to make informed decisions?

Summary

Inferencing - reading between the lines - is a challenging, yet important, close reading skill. In this lesson, students practice making inferences in a variety of contexts. Through films, picture books, short stories, and works of literature, students make inferences about character, setting, plot, and theme. With the assistance of a graphic organizer, students are able to connect what they see, read, and hear to their prior knowledge and experiences in order to make inferences. As an extension activity, students have a choice to write a letter or create a two voice poem. In the end, students consider thematic issues in light of inferencing skills.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete and share a quickwrite focusing on thematic issues of perseverance and heroism. Then, students are introduced to the concept of inferencing as they make inferences about aspects of a silent film clip, The OceanMaker, using a graphic organizer centered on clues from the film clip and their own prior knowledge and experience.

Explore

To better understand inferencing, students explore a picture book containing no words, making inferences individually and collaboratively along the way with the help of an It Says-I Say-And So graphic organizer.

Explain

In order to practice inferencing with works of literature, students read and analyze two of Langston Hughes's works: the short story "Thank You, M'am" and the poem "Mother to Son." Continuing to use the It Says-I Say-And So graphic organizer, students answer inferencing and other close reading questions during and after reading.

Extend

To dive deeper into the texts, students decide whether they would like to write a letter from a main character's perspective in the future or create a two voice poem using dialogue from the story and surface level dialogue.

Evaluate

If time allows, students share out or perform their compositions. Students then revisit the initial quickwrite question as they reflect on this lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 11)

11.2.R.1: Summarize the main ideas and paraphrase significant parts of increasingly complex texts.
11.2.W.1: Routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop and organize ideas).
11.3.R.6: Analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose.
11.3.W.1: Compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:

- include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts
- establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative
- are intentionally sequenced in a way to achieve a specific effect (e.g., create suspense, establish mood, reflect theme)
- provide clear descriptions, using precise language, sensory details, and dialogue
- include varied syntax to enhance readability
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

Attachments

- Langston Hughes It Says I Say and So.docx
- Langston Hughes It Says I Say and So.pdf
- Langston Hughes Paired Passages.docx
- Langston Hughes Paired Passages.pdf
- The OceanMaker Graphic Organizer.docx
- The OceanMaker Graphic Organizer.pdf
- Two Voice Poem.docx
- Two Voice Poem.pdf
- Window It Says I Say and So.docx
- Window It Says I Say and So.pdf

Materials

- To Inferencing and Beyond PowerPoint
- Copies of handouts located under "Attachments"
- Computer/Internet access
- Colored pencils (red, green, and blue)
- Writing utensils: pencils, pens, paper, highlighters, etc.

Engage

Teacher's Note

A PowerPoint "To Inferencing and Beyond" guides students through this lesson. Before teaching this lesson, you'll want to review this PowerPoint and make any changes or modifications based on your students' needs. Email me at gagerjeter@ou.edu so I can share the Google document with you.

When students enter your classroom, have the quickwrite prompt displayed (PowerPoint Slide 4). You can display the prompt from the PowerPoint, write it on the board, etc. - as long as it is displayed for students to see.

- Consider this saying: “when the going gets tough, the tough get going.” In difficult circumstances, some people do indeed get going. They have a spirit that moves them ahead – pushing them to do heroic deeds. What makes these people so tough, so strong in spirit? Why do they turn out to be good? Why do others go so wrong?

How experienced are you and your students with the idea of quickwriting? If this is new for you and your students, you will want to begin by explaining your expectations:

- Quickwriting is a short activity. For this lesson, students will have five minutes to write. (You'll want to set a timer - try http://www.online-stopwatch.com.)
- Read the posted prompt aloud.
- Allow students a brief amount of think time (just a few seconds), then set the timer.
- Students should write for the entire five minutes. Even if they can't think of what to write, they could draw, or write the same word over and over, or even write "I can't think what to write!"
- Conventions - grammar, usage, and mechanics - are not important during this activity. What is important is for students to get their ideas down on paper.
- During the five minute countdown, periodically encourage students to continue writing, to not stop, to keep going!
- As the teacher, model this strategy and write with your students. If they see you writing, they might be more encouraged to write.

Once five minutes has passed, ask students to stop writing. Have students pair up with an elbow partner, or pair students up strategically. Instruct students to share their quickwrite with their partner. It is important here that students read word-for-word what they write. They shouldn't "talk about" or paraphrase what they wrote - they should read what they wrote. Allow time for each student to share with his/her partner.

Once elbow partners have shared, ask for a few volunteers to share out. The goal here is for students to "publish" their writing by sharing with their classmates. Also, students are beginning to consider thematic issues they will encounter during this lesson.

Teacher's Note

Alternatively, students can exchange their writing with a partner. Students can read one another's work and then write a comment of praise for their peer. Comments should be detailed and specific: "I like what you wrote" or "I agree with you" are too vague. Ask students to expand on their comments and provide relevant and meaningful feedback. Students could then share out what they liked about their partner's writing.

It is now time to transition to the next portion of the Engage section. Move students through the PowerPoint (Slides 5, 6, and 7) as you introduce the concept of inferencing. Encourage students to consider any prior experience and knowledge they have regarding inferencing (Slide 5). You could ask questions like:

- Have you ever heard of the term inferencing before?
- What do you think making an inference means?
- Have you ever had to read between the lines to figure something out?

Once students have had a chance to activate their prior knowledge and experiences with inferencing, move to Slide 6 and discuss some intricacies of this concept and process. Be sure students receive the following information:

- When you make an inference, you use your observations and prior experience to guess about something you don't know for sure. However, an inference isn't just a random guess. It's an educated guess – because it's based on evidence in the text.
- You get to know people best by talking with them and listening as they speak to others. In the same way, characters in a story reveal themselves to one another – and to the reader – through dialogue, or conversation. As a reader, you eavesdrop on those conversations and form your own opinions about the characters.

For the next activity, students will watch a short (10 minute) film without any words or dialogue. So, prepare students by offering the following information and probing question:

- However, in this short film The OceanMaker, there is no dialogue. What inferences can you make based solely on what you see?

Allow students to consider and discuss how inferences can be made without dialogue. This can take on the formal of an informal, whole-class conversation. If your students need more structure, you could ask them to complete a mini (2 minute) quickwrite addressing the question.

Before watching the video, distribute copies of "The OceanMaker Graphic Organizer" handout (located under Attachments). Briefly go over this graphic organizer, instructing students to jot down and clues they notice in the video and any prior knowledge or experiences they have related to those clues.

Teacher's Note

Slide 7 contains a 10 minute film titled The OceanMaker. This film clip is embedded in the PowerPoint, but you can also access the YouTube link here.

Begin showing the video. It would be beneficial to pause the film clip a few times for students to reflect and write, using their graphic organizer as a tool. For instance, you could pause at the 2:00 mark and ask students to jot down clues and prior knowledge related to what they think the pilot's plan is. They can make an inference in the third column based on clues from the clip and their prior knowledge. You could also pause the clip every few minutes and ask generic, open-ended questions about what is occurring, who the characters are, why things are happening, etc. Students should have plenty of space on their graphic organizer to jot down ideas.

Teacher's Note

Encourage students to use explicit evidence from the flip clip to explain how they arrived at particular inferences.

Once the film has ended, ask students to take a few minutes and complete their graphic organizer. Then, students can share their ideas with a partner or small group. During this time, be sure to float the room and eavesdrop on conversations, encouraging and assisting students as needed.

After a few minutes, ask the class to come together as a whole to discuss the graphic organizer. If you have a SmartBoard, you could pull the graphic organizer up and fill it out based on student responses. You could also recreate the graphic organizer on a chalkboard or whiteboard - whatever works for you. What's important here is that students share out their responses and you create a whole class representation. Students should be encouraged to edit and revise their individual graphic organizers during this discussion.

Explore

For this part of the lesson, students will need a copy of the "Window It Says I Say and So" handout (located under Attachments). Students will also need three colored pencils - red, green, and blue. Pairs or groups can certainly share these supplies as needed.

Move students through Slides 8 and 9 in preparation to view the picture book *Window* by Jeannie Baker. Students will continue to investigate what inferencing means and how it works - this time with a picture book (with no words!).

Ask students to predict what the book will be about based solely on the title and the cover (Slide 9).

Instruct students to use their colored pencils to make inferences during this activity - red for the boy's age, green for the inside of the house, and blue for the outside of the house.

Move students through Slides 10-22. Spend a short amount of time on each slide, asking students to make inferences about the boy's age, the inside of the house, and the outside of the house based on the pictures provided. Encourage students to think about the clues and their prior knowledge and experiences. Although there are no words, students can certainly make inferences about what is occurring.

Students can take a few minutes after and complete their graphic organizers. Slide 23 asks some questions you might want students to consider, too:

1. What could we predict would happen next if the story were to continue?
2. What inferences did you make from the picture that makes you think that?
3. How did humans impact (change) the environment in the story?

Now, divide the class into three groups: red group, green group, and blue group. You can do this quickly by asking students to number off 1, 2, 3 and then assigning each number a color (1 = red, 2 = green, 3 = blue). Ask students to efficiently form groups and discuss just that color. So, group 1 will discuss just the boy's age, group 2 will discuss just the inside of the house, and group 3 will discuss just the outside of the house.

Give the groups a few minutes to talk, and then ask each group to point out a few inferences they made. Be sure the groups share what clues and prior knowledge/experiences led them to these inferences. Ask students to consider the challenges they faced when making inferences about a text without words. They could also reflect on making inferences from the film clip with no dialogue in the first part of the lesson.

Ask students to return to their original seats for the next activity.

Explain

So far, students have been making some inferences on what they see - via a film clip and a picture book. Now, it's time to take inferencing one step further by reading a short story and a poem - both by Langston Hughes. For this activity, students will need a copy of the short story "Thank You, Ma'm" and also the poem "Mother to Son." If possible, provide students with highlighters for annotating purposes. Students will also need a pencil or pen, as well as another handout: "Langston Hughes It Says I Say and So" (located under Attachments).

How you choose to complete the readings is up to you. Some ideas include popcorn reading aloud as a whole class, you read aloud to your students, ask a few student volunteers to read, students could read independently, students could read in pairs or groups - you decide what works best for you and your students.

Teacher's Note

There is a good audio version of the poem "Mother to Son" here. Actress Viola Davis reads the poem first, then poet Langston Hughes reads it. You could play this for students as they follow along. Here's a version of a high school student reciting the poem at a competition.

During reading, encourage students to consider the questions on the handout. It would be wise to stop periodically to allow students to jot down their ideas - what the text says (direct quotes), what I say (prior knowledge and experiences), and so (what inferences they can make based on textual evidence and their own prior knowledge and experiences).

Teacher's Note

See the attached document "Langston Hughes Paired Passages TEACHER COPY" for annotations with strategically placed questions and possible student responses.

Students can practice annotating during reading, too, via the Why-lighting strategy. The purpose is to have students analyze and reflect upon their thinking process of why they chose a particular passage as important to understanding a text.

1. For this strategy, students will need both a pen or pencil and a highlighting marker.
2. Students will be told to highlight passages, sentences, or statements in a document that are significant or important to their understanding.
3. Students write in the margins of each highlighted passage WHY they chose this passage as important.
4. Students discuss in small or large group discussion, the passages they chose and why they chose them.

After reading both the short story and the poem, ask students to work on their It Says-I Say-And So graphic organizers as they reference their annotations. Students can certainly collaborate with a partner or small group during this time. If students struggle, or after some time has passed, ask students to join in a whole-class conversation about the questions on the graphic organizer. Again, you can create a collaborative graphic organizer on the board as students share their responses. Here you can reference the teacher copy of the texts if needed.

Extend

For an extension activity, students will have two options (Slide 25).

1. Students can choose to write a letter from the perspective of Roger. Students should consider what they think Roger will be like when he is on his own, ten years after his encounter with Mrs. Jones. Considering that, left on his own, Roger gets in trouble at the beginning of the story. Students will compose a letter from Roger, writing in the first person using "I". Students should be sure to state the purpose of his communication after all these years.
2. Alternatively, students can choose to create a Two Voice Poem. Students should pair up and have one student write dialogue from the story and another student create below-the-surface dialogue. As in a real conversation, there is plenty in "Thank You, Ma'm" that is left unsaid. Point out to students that what the characters say only scratches the surface of what they are thinking, feeling, and communicating in other ways - the subtext. Invite students to work in pairs to create subtext for the dialogue in the story. Suggest that student pairs isolate the dialogue on one page of the story. Then, for everything said (Voice 1), ask them to record what could have been said but wasn't (Voice 2) - any thoughts or feelings of the characters that are not directly revealed. Student pairs should then write a two voice poem - one writing the dialogue from the story and one writing the below-the-surface dialogue. The combined voice will consist of what the two would say together, or have in common.

Teacher's Note

There is a Two Voice Poem template located under "Attachments." Students can use this template as they compose their poem. There are stem starters for each line (I am, I fear, I hope, etc.), but students should feel free to edit these as necessary.

Evaluate

If time allows, students could present their letters or two voice poems.

To wrap up this lesson, ask students to complete a reflective Exit Ticket. Students should revisit their initial quickwrite from the beginning of the lesson. Once students have reflected on their response, pose the following question (Slide 26):

- What do you think made Mrs. Jones so good? How about the main character in The OceanMaker?

Ask students to complete another quickwrite over this prompt. Encourage students to consider the work with inferencing they completed during this lesson. They could even reference their graphic organizers as they complete this quickwrite.

Students should follow the same procedures from the beginning of the lesson, including the elbow partner and whole-class share out, as time allows.

Resources

- Bell Ringers and Exit Tickets Instructional Strategy: K20 Center. Copyright 2015 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505d6f2
- Hughes, Langston. (2013, June 18) "Mother to Son". YouTube Video Audio Version. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX9tHuI7zVo
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- Two Voice Poems Instructional Strategy: K20 Center. Copyright 2015 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f50611a8
- Why-lighting Instructional Strategy: K20 Center. Copyright 2015 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505e7d5