R8  Infer and deduce

**About this objective**

**Inference**: interpretation which goes beyond the literal information given  
**Deduction**: understanding based on the evidence in the text

The ability to infer and deduce meanings is a key marker for level 4 and by Year 7 most pupils should be able to do this. As this is an area where pupils’ ability never ceases to grow, it is important that through Year 7 pupils are given the opportunity to identify where meanings are implied and extend their explanations of their understanding in speech and writing. Some connotations may be culture-specific. It is an opportunity to reinforce the difference between explicit and implicit meaning, and tasks will involve a range of active reading strategies.

**What to teach**

- Define inference: interpretation which goes beyond the literal information given  
- Define deduction: understanding based on the evidence in the text  
- How to use a range of strategies to extract, infer and explain meaning  
- How to refer to and quote from a text modelling inference and deduction  
- How to make links across a text

**Teaching approaches**

- Revise inference and deduction. Offer a statement on a card and model searching for evidence from the text that supports this statement. Annotate the text on an OHT, highlighting phrases to show any confirming evidence.  
- Use a range of statement cards with pupils. In groups, pupils search the text for evidence to support the statement. Give pupils a grid where they record things they deduce or know for sure (or literal information) and things they infer.  
- Provide pupils with a colourful advertisement that has only literal information, with all emotive words removed. In pairs or fours, pupils add their own descriptive words or words with connotations. Group feedback should reveal how the emotional impact or ambiguity of words can imply different meanings.  
- Provide pupils with the first paragraph of a story, or newspaper headline. Ask them to underline literal information and then predict what the rest of the story or article will be about. Discuss the reasons for similar results and maybe some divergent ones.  
- Use a text on an OHT and model where predictions come from, showing how good writers provide us with clues or fiction hooks. As you annotate on the OHT, give pupils in pairs regular 30-second or 1-minute ‘time outs’ to locate clues and predict.  
- Give pupils, in groups, an A3 photograph of the crowd at a football match, or a wedding photo, for example. Give groups 1 minute only to ‘read’ the text and answer questions about time, place, mood, etc. Take responses and then explain reasons (using enlarged photos) for a lot of similar predictions – text expectations connected to prior reading, genre conventions, visualisation and cultural readings (e.g. we can ‘read’ a photo of a football match or a wedding as there are clues familiar to us but they may not be familiar to readers from other cultures). Use as a starter or plenary activity.
Distribute to pairs an enlarged outline drawing of a character from a text; it could be the main character from the class novel at a key point of the text. Ask pairs to add thought bubbles to show how the character could be feeling at this stage of the text. The completed sheets could be displayed on a ‘character wall’. Lower-attaining pupils could have a range of prepared bubbles from which they select. Explain to pupils in the plenary how readers use visual and textual clues to empathise and infer from characters in texts, using pupils’ responses as a starting point.

Model ‘hot-seating’ by asking pupils in pairs to think of two questions each they could ask you (as expert), imagining you are the character pictured in one of the A3 sheets. Have a bank of prepared questions for less able pupils to choose from. Invite one or two pupils to take the hot seat in front of the class.

Work with a guided group exploring characters’ feelings, so that they become experts for the hot seat.

To assess this objective
This objective is likely to be assessed during the reading of any text, literary or non-fiction. As with other objectives it can be assessed through an oral response, a written response or as part of a discussion in a guided reading session, and this will almost certainly follow annotation of the text. The key word here is attitude, both the attitude of the writer to their subject matter, and the attitude of, for example, characters within a narrative.

Sample task
This might begin with a painting or visual image, the meaning of which is explored, and lead on to discussion of how the construction of the image has led to that meaning. Explicit and implicit meaning can easily be highlighted by looking and observing. Short pieces of text can then be read together and the same process followed. Text-marking and highlighting will be used, as well as other active reading strategies (see appendix 1 in module 8, Reading, in English department training 2001 file).

Performance indicators
Always sometimes rarely
◆ Can recognise and summarise what is explicit in the text.
◆ Can deduce meaning and show evidence.
◆ Can infer meaning and show evidence.
◆ Can comment on the author’s intentions, attitude to the subject and to readers.

Example script
Task: Read between the lines of this passage and write about what you think Jon feels about his situation. Refer to words and phrases which back up what you are saying:

I think Jon wants to go to school so he won’t get told off. But if he does go to school he will lose Ryan as a friend.

It could be that he doesn’t want to dissably his mum. Even though he knew his mum would shout at him.

I think Jon was clever enough to make up an excuse but didn’t want to because he thought his mum would know.

Jon knew if he didn’t go with Ryan he would have no friends. And that will mean he not hanging out with anyone. I think Jon knew he was going to get bullied he went to school.
Commentary
This pupil has mostly recognised what is explicit in the text though she has not shown she understands that Jon takes the risky option. She has inferred the hopelessness of Jon’s situation and that he could lose Ryan as a friend if he doesn’t go with him, though she hasn’t identified at all the implication that Ryan manipulates him. She has successfully caught the implication that Jon is an intelligent boy, and has explored his feelings – ‘It could be that…’ However, the presentation of her ideas is not entirely coherent.

Next steps
This pupil needs to revisit this objective frequently to develop her ability to show clearly what she infers and deduces from her reading. She also needs some focused target setting for her writing skills.