

Lesson on Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences

Pat Holliday, National Board Certified Teacher, Third Grade
North Topsail Elementary School, Hampstead, North Carolina

Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences is probably the hardest of the foundational skills. These skills are the process of creating a personal meaning to the written text. This involves a mental process of combining what is read with relevant prior knowledge. When readers draw conclusions or infer, they create a meaning that is not necessarily stated in the text. The process implies that the reader actively search for the implied meaning.

There is a very fine line between the two skills. Drawing conclusions refers to information that is implied or inferred. This means that the information is never clearly stated. When readers *draw conclusions* they go beyond the surface details. When the meanings of words are not stated clearly in the context of the text, they may be *implied* - that is, suggested or hinted at. Making *inferences* is just a big word that means to make a judgment. Making *inferences* also means to choose the most likely explanation from the facts at hand

Since this reading skill is new to third graders I would not necessary informally pre-assess it. However after teaching the lesson if I began to notice that several of my students were able to grasp it, then at that point I would begin to differentiate the lessons.

Introduce the lesson using Curriculum Associates' *STARS (Strategies to Achieve Reading Success)* Lesson 8 - Learn about Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, pages 68-75, questions 1-16. this normally takes two days of instruction. I whole class teach the first 8 questions, allowing time for students to take notes about the skill. For example it is important that they understand that these two skills are extremely close in relation to one another and that these skills are based on the premise that what the author is telling you is not going to be found in the text, students are going to have to 1. identify the details that the author has given about the character, the setting or the events, 2. think about what they (the students) already knows from experience and 3. put together story clues and try to figure out what the author is trying to say. This is hard at first because for most third graders this is a new skill. I also want the students to be able to recognize skill related words and phrases such as *you can tell, what conclusion can you come to, how you determine and you can conclude that.*

1. after introducing the lesson and teaching whole class, I always give homework allowing the students to practice the skill.
2. on the second day, I review the skill and allow for independent practice using questions 9-16 of the *STARS* book.

3. I apply the skill through literature. For example my students read *Bunnicula* by Deborah and James Howe and I can take the opportunity to apply the skill through the story. Questions will be ask that address the skill such as

How can you tell it was raining outside?

How can you tell from the story that Toby is a smart boy?

At the end of the story what conclusion does Chester come to about *Bunnicula*?

At the end of the story what conclusions can you come to about Chester, Harold and *Bunnicula*?

These types of questions let me know if my students are able to understand the skill of drawing conclusions and making inferences. Formal assessments can be given later after the skill is reviewed several times over. If there are several students that have a more thorough understanding of the skill, then a good activity for them would be for them to write down drawing conclusion type questions based on something they have read in other stories or novels and/or their Science or Social Studies text and present it to the teacher.

After reading the story I review the skill allowing for guided practice and independent practice. I use several skill related worksheets from story (novels) and other teacher resource to reinforce the skill. For specific assessment for Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences I use the new *FOCUS Series: Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences*. I also found this series to be helpful for re-teaching the skill and for guided practice for those students that have mastered the skill. Finally I assess this skill and the other basic skills I have previously taught by using the Curriculum Associates' *Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies*.