



Social Studies Strategies: Making Inferences

What:

Making inferences is a strategy to help students understand ideas and meanings that are *not directly stated in the material*, rather, they are implied meanings suggested by the stated facts and ideas. After making an inference, *drawing conclusions* is the *ASo what? Why is this an important idea?* @ Drawing conclusions is an opinion, judgment, or decision that is made *after* thinking about the facts or circumstances.

Why:

Examining, discerning, and making inferences/drawing conclusions helps the reader understand the text by reading between the lines to extend the information provided and to help the reader figure out what it all means. Making inferences/drawing conclusions is a critical skill that is needed in order to make generalizations about social studies information.

How:

To make accurate inferences, the reader should follow these steps:

- Read or listen carefully for stated facts and ideas.
- Summarize the information and list the important facts.
- Review what the reader already knows about the same topic or situation (accessing prior knowledge).
- Use logic, stated information, common sense, and careful analysis to form an inference about the topic.
- If possible, find specific information that proves or disproves the inference. Then, after looking at the inferences, ask *what conclusions can I draw from the evidence presented that is logical and based on facts?* After students learn many facts about a topic, drawing conclusions is “figuring out” what it all means. To be valid, a conclusion must be supported by evidence that is logical and factual. Drawing conclusions is the last step in the process of reasoning and is important in mastering critical thinking.

When:

Use this strategy whenever the reader needs to “read between the lines” in order to extend or expand information about a person, idea, or concept. Drawing conclusions is the final step in this process.