Inferring

Stories don’t usually tell you word-for-word everything you need to know. Listing every fact, event, emotion, and detail would be too much and super boring. Nobody wants to read all that! Instead, writers give you just enough. They give you the clues and let you figure things out. It’s like a mystery!

How it works:

The author doesn’t want to say that Toby feels a newly kindled love for Agatha because that would not mean nearly so much as giving you the clues and letting you figure it out. Instead, the author says:

*Toby looked at Agatha anew. His heart pattered in a wild and uncontrollable rhythm. His breath caught in his chest. When Agatha spoke, a smile crept over Toby’s lips. He had to look down at the doodles in his notebook to hide it, but even those reminded him of her. Something was happening to him for sure, and he kind of liked the way it felt.*

The writer gives you the clues, you figure out what they mean. It is a more active way to read, and everyone does it. You even do it when you talk to people every day. *I saw that look she gave me. She can say that we are still friends, but I just know she told Becky all my secrets! What a jerk.* Reading between the lines of a conversation is a natural skill. Here’s another example: Let’s say that Bob is asking Becky if she is busy tonight. If Becky is inferring that Bob wants to take Becky on a date, her answer will be different than if she is just reporting on what she is or isn’t doing.

How you use it in reading:

- **Inferring formulas**— As you read, keep a formula that looks like this for several of the inferences you make: Evidence 1 (The clues) + Evidence 2=The Inference (What you deduce)
- **Schema Clues**— As you read, keep three column notes with the following: What you knew already, Clues you found in the story, what you infer from these things.
- **Inference Chart**— For each inference you make, give the Background knowledge/Images Reader Creates, Photos/Illustrations, and Information in the text that led you to that inference.

Just in case you need a visual:

- Information you have
- Information not stated in the text
- A smart conclusion/Inference