Jan Richardson: How to teach Making Inferences

"When you **infer**, you go beyond the surface details to see other meanings the details suggest or **imply** but are not stated in the text. The clues are in the text, but the connections and final inferences are in the reader's mind. Readers must access a variety of clues authors give us…Authors leave clues in four ways – Dialogue, Action, Physical Traits, and Inner Thoughts." Jan Richardson, pg. 231, *The Next Step in Guided Reading.* (Use the cards to help students make inferences, pg. 235 & online Resources)

Dialogue	Action	Physical Traits	Inner Thoughts
Consider the dialogue between two characters. What do you think the character is thinking when s/he says those words? Also consider the speaker tags in your inference. (How did the character say those words?)	Review some action a character takes and decide what you can infer from that action.	Find the words the author uses to describe a character's facial expression, body (height, weight), clothing, hair, etc.	Find the words that tell what the character is thinking – the words not spoken – and reflect on what these show about mood, feelings, reactions, and personality.
When the character says. . .	I think the character does this because . . .	What can you infer about the character?	The text says the character thinks. . .
I think . . .	Predict what the character might do next. Support your prediction with evidence from the text.	The text says the character is. . . . So I think . . .	So I think this means. . .

Make Inferences from Dialogue (including speaker tags)

Readers consider the dialogue between two characters in a story and ask, "What is the character thinking?" or "How did the character say those words?" or "How did the character feel when she said that?"

Step 1: Understand Speaker Tags. Prompt: *How did the character say that?*

- Explain and model that speaker tags tell the reader how a character says something. Model," I'm not going to the mall," she *giggled*. "I'm n-n-not going to the mall?" she *wailed*. "I'm not going to the mall!" she *exclaimed*.
- Have students whisper read the dialogue the way the character would have said it. Look for clues in adverbs, (she said crisply, curiously…) and have students find tags and model for each other.

Step 2: Visualize Facial Expressions. Prompt: *How did the character feel when he said that? How did the character's face look when he said that?*

- Use a flag or sticky note to mark dialogue where the author expects the reader to draw an inference.
- Students use dialogue, inferring the character's feelings by drawing the character's face on the sticky note next to the dialogue. Students share in discussion.

Step 3: Create Speech Bubbles/Thought Bubbles. Prompt: *What was the character thinking when she said that?*

- Flag important dialogue. Students write something the character says in the speech bubble and something the character might be thinking in a thought bubble.

Step 4: Speech Bubbles/Thought Bubbles. Prompt: *What was the character thinking when she said?*

- <u>Students</u> flag significant dialogue, and find dialogic clues for making inferences.
- Students write what the character says and might be thinking in the speech and thought bubbles.
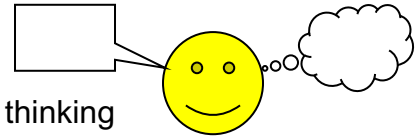
Step 5: Two-Column Notes. Prompt: *In the book (the character said…)/ In my head (I think…)*

- Students flag a line of dialogue in the text where they made an inference, recording the page number, and writing the inference as shown below.
- If students can do this independently, they understand making inferences in dialogue. <u>Now</u>, they are ready to move on to use other text clues to infer.

In the Book	In My Head
p.7	I think the character is afraid the other kids will make fun of him.

<u>Make Inferences from a Character's Actions</u>

Authors have characters do something in the story to help the reader make an inference. The readers use text clues (actions in this case) and personal experience (background knowledge) to make inferences. Readers consider specific adjectives, adverbs, or phrases that describe the character's behavior.

Step 1: Visualize facial expressions from a character's actions. Prompt: *How is the character feeling when he does that? Describe the character's facial expressions.*

- The **teacher flags** some action in text where readers should draw an inference.
- Students draw character's face on sticky note/paper, showing feelings inferred.

Step 2: Create thought bubbles: Prompt: What is the <u>character thinking</u> when she does that?

- Now **students flag** some action in the text where readers should draw an inference, and write the character's thoughts in a thought bubble, on sticky note.

Step 3: Make two-column notes (In the Book/In My Head). Prompt: What am I thinking about the character now?

- Students flag an action, make an inference from the character's actions, and complete the chart independently. Share during discussion.

Jan Richardson: How to teach Making Inferences (2)

"When you **infer**, you go beyond the surface details to see other meanings the details suggest or **imply** but are not stated in the text. The clues are in the text, but the connections and final inferences are in the reader's mind. Readers must access a variety of clues authors give us…Authors leave clues in four ways – Dialogue, Action, Physical Traits, and Inner Thoughts. " Jan Richardson, pg. 231, *The Next Step in Guided Reading.*

Make Inferences from Physical Descriptions

Some authors help the reader make inferences by describing what the character looks like. Words that describe facial expression, body size, clothing, hair, etc., help readers make an inference about the character. (ref. see Washington Irving's description of Ichabod Crane from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. p. 234, The Next Step….*as a model for students or select another text that accomplishes the same example)

Step 1: Create Two Column Notes (In the Book/In My Head). Prompt: *What do I infer about a character as a result of the character's physical description?*
- Flag a character's physical description where reader is expected to draw an inference.
- Have students use the Two Column Note format below to record their thinking/evidence.

In the Book	In My Head
p.7	I think the character is afraid the other kids will make fun of him

Step 2: Two Column Notes (In the Book/In My Head). Prompt: *What do I infer about a character as a result of the author's physical description of him or her?*

- Now **students flag** a place in the text, and complete the chart independently. Share notes in group discussion.

Make Inferences from a Character's Inner Thoughts
Authors leave clues about a character's thoughts that help readers infer. These words are not spoken in dialogue, but they let the reader know what the character is thinking.

Students should study these thoughts, reflecting on what they show about the character's mood, feelings, and personality.

Step 1: Make Two-Column notes (In the Book/In My Head). Prompt: *What do I infer about a character as a result of the character's inner thoughts?*

- Flag a character's inner thoughts where the reader is expected to draw an inference. Use the Two-Column notes format to record.

Step 2: Make Two-Column notes (In the Book/In My Head). Prompt: *What do I infer about a character as a result of the character's inner thoughts?*

- Identify a passage that reflects a character's thoughts. Now **students** flag a place in the text where the author describes a character's inner thoughts. Use Two-Column Notes format to record, then share during discussion time.

<u>Evaluative Level: Classifying Inferences.</u>
Now students should be able to make the inference, classify it, and explain what led them to that inference (dialogue, action, physical traits, and inner thoughts)

Step 1: Make Modified Two-Column Notes for Inference Classifications (see chart below) Prompt: Where do I make an inference? What text clues did the author give to help me make that inference? Flag a place in the text where reader needs to infer. Students classify the inference by Dialogue, Action, Physical Description and/or Inner Thoughts.

Step 2: Now students flag a place in the text where the reader is expected to make an inference. Students use the chart format below to identify the source, and classify their inference.

Inferences from **Dialogue (including speaker tags)**	
In the Book (page#)	In My Head (I think…)
Inferences from **Action**	
In the Book (page#)	In My Head (I think…)
Inferences from **Physical Descriptions**	
In the Book (page#)	In My Head (I think…)
Inferences from a Character's **Inner Thoughts**	
In the Book (page#)	In My Head (I think…)