

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**

**making inferences:** the process of making logical guesses based on evidence and one's own personal knowledge and experience

**making inferences from a text:** the process of making logical guesses based on clues in a text and one's own personal knowledge and experience

**HERE'S HOW**

**Step 1: Identify details in the text.** Ask, "What is the evidence?"

**Step 2: Identify similar past experiences.** Ask: "What has happened in other instances like this one? When have I come across this before?"

**Step 3: Connect past experience to what is known.** Think about how aspects of past experiences apply to the current situation. Ask: "How are these situations linked?"

**Step 4: Evaluate similarities.** Ask yourself: "Are these situations close enough to justify an inference?"

**Step 5: Make an inference.** If the answer is yes, make an inference, using both the current situation and your past experiences.

**Step 6: Evaluate the inference.** Ask yourself: "Is this inference reasonable? Is it justified by what I know and supported by all the evidence in the text?"

**EXAMPLE INFERENCE**

What Is Known	Past Experience/ Knowledge	My Inference
Lifelike paintings of deer and horses appear on cave walls in Lascaux, France. The paintings are 15,000 years old.	People don't usually create lifelike paintings of creatures they haven't seen.	Deer and horses lived in France in prehistoric times.

**from Night**  
**by Elie Wiesel**

I was thinking of this when I heard the sound of a violin. The sound of a violin in this dark shed where the dead were heaped on the living. What madman could be playing the violin here, at the brink of his own grave? Or was it really an hallucination?

It must have been Juliek.

He played a fragment from Beethoven's concerto. I had never heard sounds so pure. In such a silence . . .

It was pitch-dark. I could hear only the violin, and it was as though Juliek's soul were the bow. He was playing his life. The whole of his life was gliding on the strings—his lost hopes, his charred past, his extinguished future. He played as he would never play again.

I shall never forget Juliek. How could I forget that concert, given to an audience of dying and dead men! To this day, whenever I hear Beethoven played my eyes close and out of the dark rises the sad, pale face of my Polish friend, as he said farewell on his violin to an audience of dying men.

I do not know for how long he played. I was overcome by sleep. When I awoke, in the daylight, I could see Juliek, opposite me, slumped over, dead. Near him lay his violin, smashed, trampled, a strange overwhelming little corpse.

**Making Inferences**

**Directions:** Read the following stanzas from “Sympathy” by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Combine details from the passage with your own knowledge to make inferences about the central symbol of the caged bird.

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
 When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
 When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass  
 And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
 5 When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
 and the faint perfume from its chalice steals—  
 I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
 When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,  
 10 When he beats his bars and would be free;  
 It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
 But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—  
 I know why the caged bird sings!

**1. Make an Inference about a Symbol**

<b>Text Details</b> <u>The bird is caged.</u> <u>He sings; not joyful.</u> <u>He beats his bars.</u>	+	<b>Past Experience/Knowledge</b> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	=	<b>My Inference</b> <i>The caged bird is a  symbol for . . .</i> <hr/> <hr/>
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**2. Evaluate the Inference:** Does all the evidence in the poem excerpt support your inference? Why or Why not?

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**Directions:** Read the following passage from *Darkness at Noon*. Combine details from the text with your own knowledge and experience to make inferences about the author's tone, or attitude toward the people he is discussing.

Blind from birth, I have never had the opportunity to see myself and have been completely dependent on the image I create in the eye of the observer. To date, it has not been narcissistic.

There are those who assume that since I can't see, I obviously also cannot hear. Very often people will converse with me at the top of their lungs, enunciating every word very carefully.

Conversely, people will also often whisper, assuming that since my eyes don't work, my ears don't either.

For example, when I go to the airport and ask the ticket agent for assistance to the plane, he or she will invariably pick up the phone, call a ground hostess and whisper: "Hi, Jane, we've got a 76 here." I have concluded that the word *blind* is not used, for one of two reasons: Either they fear that if the dread word is spoken, the ticket agent's retina will immediately detach, or they are reluctant to inform me of my condition, of which I may not have been previously aware.

On the other hand, others know that of course I can hear, but believe that I can't talk. Often, therefore, when my wife and I go out to dinner, a waiter or waitress will ask Kit if "he would like a drink" to which I respond that "indeed he would."

—Harold Krents

**1. Make an Inference about the Author's Tone:**

**Text Details + Past Experience/Knowledge = My Inference**

_____	_____	<i>The tone of this paragraph is . . .</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**2. Evaluate the Inference:** Does all the evidence in the excerpt support your inference? Why or why not? Explain.

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