

# THE ROLE OF INFERENCING IN READING COMPREHENSION

The Importance of Inferencing at a Young Age and Effective Methods for Teaching it

## WHAT IS IT?

Inferencing is, in short, the ability to draw conclusions given a certain set of evidence. From a reading standpoint, this means that the reader must be able to go beyond what they're told in the text and fill in the information required for comprehension.

## WHEN SHOULD IT BE TAUGHT?

The current model has educators teaching inferencing as an intervention for third and fourth graders who are struggling with comprehension. This is much too late-- inferencing is a skill that should be targeted in preschool, to provide the foundation for later literary development.

## HOW SHOULD IT BE TAUGHT?

Storybook sharing has proven to be one of the most effective ways to teach inferencing. The simple act of reading to children fosters critical oral language skills. When educators embed inference prompts into storybooks, however, the opportunities for language development grow immensely.

## EMBEDDING INFERENCE PROMPTS

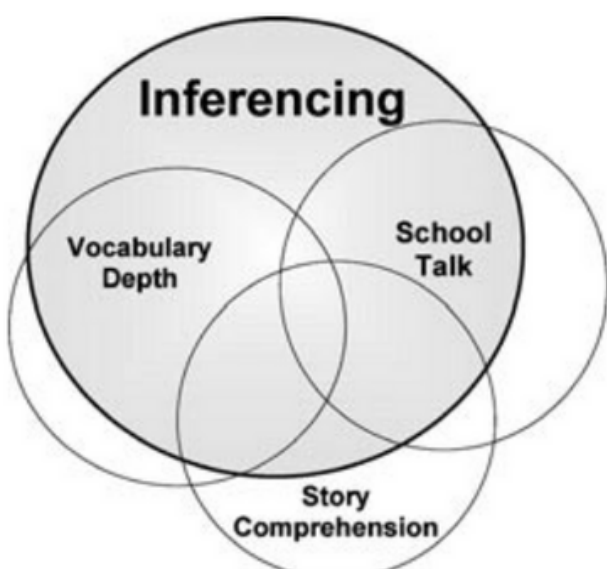
Because the text in a storybook remains constant, educators can (and should) plan ahead of time. Teachers should formulate questions about the story that require students to actively think about the storybook information they're being given. These questions should be scripted and ready to share.

## 3 TYPES OF INFERENCE

The most critical type of inference is the causal inference. This requires students to identify causal relationships between events in the story, which is essential to comprehension. The second type is the informational inference, which asks students to use context clues to identify setting or define words. The final type is the evaluative inference, where students apply their own values to the text to make judgments.

## ASKING QUESTIONS

The questions asked should encourage children to verbally participate as much as possible. Questions about each of the three kinds of inferences should be combined with literal questions. When it comes to preschoolers, there is no need to explicitly teach them strategies for inferencing-- this is for older children. The natural incorporation of questions into storybook reading is sufficient.



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Van Kleeck, Anne. (2008). Providing preschool foundations for later reading comprehension: The importance of and ideas for targeting inferencing in storybook-sharing interventions. *Psychology In the Schools*, 45(7).