Reading Between the Lines: Feelings and Motives

Teacher		**Class**	Year 6
Subject	English	**Topic**	Reading comprehension: inference
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Pupils learn to infer feelings, thoughts and motives from actions. They match impressions to evidence and justify ideas with quotations.

Curriculum links

- making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done [1]
- understand what he/she reads by identifying key details that support the main ideas and using quotations for illustration [2]

Learning objectives

- Students will infer feelings, thoughts and motives from what is said and done.
- Students will justify inferences with precise text evidence and clear reasoning.

Success criteria

- I can name a feeling, thought or motive from actions and dialogue.
- I can prove my idea with evidence using because and suggests.

What students already know

Show thumbs up if you know what a clue is. Ask: a pupil sighs and drops their bag, what might that show and why?

Key words

inference	reading between the lines to work out hidden information using clues [4][5]
evidence	exact words or actions from the text that prove an idea [2]
motive	the reason why someone does something
impression	a one-word idea about how a character feels, for example sad or nervous [9]
suggests	shows that something is true without saying it directly [9]

Materials

- Slides 1–8 and 10–12, Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00)
- Printed Worksheet Passage 'The Empty Seat' and Passage 'Help in the Rain'
- Cut-up impression cards, evidence strips, sorting mats
- Mini-whiteboards and pens, highlighters, glue sticks

Before the lesson

- Print sorting mats labelled Impression and Evidence from the text, one per pair
- Print and cut impression cards (sad, left out, embarrassed, kind, worried) and evidence strips taken word-for-word from the passages
- Print copies of Passage 'The Empty Seat' and Passage 'Help in the Rain' for highlighting
- Test Slide 6 Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00) with sound and clear space for voting

Lesson outline

0–8 min **Starter** 8 min · Whole class

To excite pupils about detective reading and recall what inference means.

YOU DO

1. Show Slides 1–2 and share objectives: infer feelings, thoughts and motives and justify with evidence.
2. Say the hook: One side says how they feel. The other side proves it. Can you pair them up?
3. Act out two quick clues: walking with red eyes, wet cheeks and head down, then pacing up and down while looking at a watch.
4. Ask pairs to write one feeling word on mini-whiteboards plus the action that proves it.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the two frozen actions and discuss with a partner what feeling fits.
2. Write one impression word and one action clue on mini-whiteboards.
3. Hold up boards and compare sad or upset with nervous or anxious.

Say: Inference is when you read between the lines and look for clues in a story. Inferring is like being a detective finding clues to work out hidden information. Today we do not guess, we prove it.

Worked example: Clue: pacing up and down and keeps looking at her watch. Step 1: What was done? Pacing and watch-checking. Step 2: What I know: people do this when waiting and worried about time. Step 3: Inference: nervous or anxious. Step 4: Prove it: because the text says pacing and looking at watch [5].

Ask: What is inference? (Reading between the lines and looking for clues in a story [4].) · How is inferring like being a detective? (You find clues to work out hidden information that is not directly stated [5].)

Check understanding: Scan whiteboards for a one-word impression plus an action. If many only give feelings with no clue, model one more example and repeat.

Support: Offer a feelings word bank: sad, nervous, anxious, angry, excited to choose from. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to suggest two feelings for the same pacing clue and pick which clue fits best.

Use: Slides 1–2

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

8–20 min **Teaching** 12 min · Whole class

To model how to combine action clues with background knowledge to infer.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3: Detectives don't guess - they use clues + what they know, and Slide 4 chain: does or says, add what you know, infer, prove.
2. Show Slide 5 question: A pupil trudged in, dropped the bag, sighed and stared out of the window. Model thinking aloud.
3. Show Slide 10 Three things we infer: feelings, thoughts and motives, where motive means the reason they act.
4. Explain that good readers use previous knowledge plus information from the text to draw conclusions and make judgements [8].

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen, follow the four-step chain on fingers and join in with key words.
2. Turn to a partner and combine clues with own experiences to imagine how the pupil might feel, act or think [9].
3. Practise sentence: I infer ___ because the text says ___.

Say: First spot what the character does or says. Next add what you already know from life. Then say the feeling, thought or motive in your own words. Last, point to the exact words that prove it.

Worked example: Text: trudged in, dropped the bag, sighed and stared out of the window. Step 1 clues: trudged, dropped, sighed, stared. Step 2 what I know: trudging and sighing often means tired or upset. Step 3 inference: I infer the pupil feels fed up and tired and wants to be left alone. Step 4 proof: because the text says trudged, sighed and stared out of the window. This suggests low energy and worry.

Ask: What two things do you combine to make an inference? (Clues from the text plus what you already know from life and background knowledge [3][8].) · What is the difference between a feeling and a motive? (Feeling is how they feel inside; motive is the reason they act.) · If the text says the pupil was sad, did you infer it? (No, that was stated, not inferred; inference is for hidden information [7].)

Check understanding: Cold-call with mini-whiteboards: show feeling or motive for trudged example. If answers lack evidence, re-model step 4 and have all repeat the because sentence.

Support: Give sentence starters: I think the character feels ___ because the text says ___. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to consider an alternative motive for staring out of the window and explain why evidence weakens it.

Use: Slides 3–5, 10

20–32 min **Guided practice** 12 min · Whole class

To see how detectives spot actions and link clues to evidence.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 6 Watch: Be a reading detective and play Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00) without interruption.
2. Pause and list on board: Spot what the character does, listen for feeling or motive, hear how evidence proves it.
3. Show Slide 7 fact and explain that of the 50 marks in the Year 6 reading paper, 30–35 per cent involve inference [9].
4. Model linking one video clue to experience and saying it in your own words as a one-word impression plus proof [9].

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the clip and whisper one action clue to a partner when you spot it.
2. Discuss: what feeling or motive did you hear and what exact words proved it?
3. Practise turning this suggests into this shows that or this means [9].

Say: Watch like a detective. Spot exactly what the character does. Link that clue to something you have seen in real life. Then say your idea in your own words and prove it with the exact action.

Ask: What counts as good evidence? (Exact words as clues, for example skipping into a room smiling and waving to friends shows happy [5].) · Why does spotting feelings and motives from clues matter in Year 6? (About a third of Year 6 reading marks are for inference [9].)

Check understanding: Hinge question on boards: Which is stronger proof, happy because she smiled or happy because she skipped in smiling and waved? Correct and reteach if needed.

Support: Replay 30 seconds of the clip and freeze on one action so pupils focus on a single clue. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to explain why a second possible motive is less well supported by the same clue.

Use: Slides 6–7, Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00)

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

32–50 min **Main activity** 18 min · Pairs

To match impressions of feelings and motives to exact text evidence.

YOU DO

1. Hand out sorting mats labelled Impression and Evidence from the text, impression cards and evidence strips from the passages.
2. Direct pairs to read Paragraphs 1–3 of Passage 'The Empty Seat' and Paragraphs 1–3 of Passage 'Help in the Rain', highlighting action clues.
3. Remind them that this suggests simply means this shows that or this means [9] and to be active readers who want to make sense of the text [3].
4. Circulate, asking pairs to read one matched pair aloud using: I infer... because... This suggests...

STUDENTS DO

1. Sort cards: match impressions such as left out, embarrassed, kind to strips such as looked down and pretended to tie a shoelace that was already tied and took one bag with both hands.
2. Stick two matched pairs and write the I infer... because... This suggests... sentence for each.
3. Swap with another pair to check that the action really proves the impression.

Say: Read each strip carefully. It never names the feeling. Match the impression to the proof. Stick two strong pairs on your mat. Then write your sentence to show how the clue proves the feeling or motive.

Worked example: Impression: left out and sad. Evidence strip from Paragraph 1: sat alone on the bench by the fence and kept glancing towards the field. Reasoning: Step 1 clue is sitting alone and glancing at the match. Step 2 I know being alone while others play can feel lonely. Step 3 I infer the pupil feels left out and sad. Proof sentence: I infer the pupil feels left out because the text says sat alone on the bench. This suggests they wanted to join in but could not.

Ask: What evidence proves the pupil in Paragraph 2 wanted to avoid the friends? (Looked down and pretended to tie a shoelace that was already tied, did not look up or smile; suggests embarrassment or wanting to hide feelings.) · What motive can you infer for taking the bag in Passage 'Help in the Rain' Paragraph 2? (Kindness or wanting to help; without being asked, took one bag with both hands and walked slowly beside the neighbour even though socks were getting soaked.)

Check understanding: Collect mats and check each has impression plus exact quotation. If pairs mismatch, point to key action words and ask them to re-sort one pair.

Support: Limit to three pairs and highlight the key action words in each evidence strip, for example white knuckles, looked down, with both hands. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to write a new evidence strip for an unmatched impression without naming the feeling, for example for worried.

Use: Worksheet Passage 'The Empty Seat', Worksheet Passage 'Help in the Rain'

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

To check understanding of motives and clear up inference mistakes.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 vote: A student hid a broken cup behind the bin and told no one. Vote for feared getting in trouble, planned a funny joke, did not notice breaking it.
2. Ask voters to point to the action that suggests their motive and challenge views courteously with clear reasoning.
3. Show Slide 12 True or false: inferring means reading between the lines; you use clues plus what you know; if the text says sad you inferred it.
4. Link back to objectives and praise precise because and suggests sentences.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote, then justify choice with one action clue in full sentence.
2. Answer true or false with thumbs and correct the false one: stated is not inferred.
3. Self-assess against success criteria with fingers 1–3.

Say: Motives are reasons. Hiding and telling no one suggests fear of getting in trouble. Remember to check whether the question is about the whole text or just part of it. Always prove it with the exact action.

Worked example: Vote example: I infer the motive was feared getting in trouble because the student hid the cup behind the bin and told no one. This suggests they knew it was wrong and wanted to avoid blame, not a joke or an accident.

Ask: Why is feared getting in trouble stronger than did not notice? (Hiding behind the bin and telling no one shows awareness; noticing nothing would not need hiding.) · If the text says cheeks red and arms folded, what can you infer and what proves it? (Embarrassed or angry; jumped up, shouted, then sat quickly, cheeks red, folded arms and tapping foot fast.)

Check understanding: Use Slide 12 as exit hinge: all must get 2 true, 1 false. If many miss the stated versus inferred point, reteach with sad example tomorrow.

Support: Display that this suggests means this shows that on the board for reference during voting [9].
Stretch: Make pupils explain why another team's impression is less well supported by the same hiding clue.

Use: Slides 11–12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Saying a stated feeling is an inference, for example the text says sad so I inferred sad.	Answer repeats the exact feeling word from the text with no extra clue.	Teach that inference is reading between the lines for hidden information [4]; if stated it is retrieval, inference needs an action clue plus proof.
Giving an impression with no evidence or vague evidence like because they were upset.	Because sentence has no quotation or action from the text.	Insist on point plus proof using quotations for illustration [2]; model I infer... because the text says... This suggests...
Mixing up thought and motive, for example saying the motive is sad.	Motive answer names a feeling not a reason for acting.	Recall motive means the reason they act; ask Why did they do it and link to what was said and done [1].

Support

- Feelings word bank with happy, anxious, excited, angry, sad and sentence starters throughout.
- Pre-highlighted key action words and limited three-pair sort for pupils who find it hard.

Stretch

- Add second possible motive and argue which evidence fits best.
- Write new show-not-tell evidence without naming the feeling for partners to infer.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target pairs in main activity. Prompt highlighting of verbs like glanced, mumbled, tapped. Scribe the because sentence if needed, but let pupils choose the impression.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
A pupil folded their arms and stared at the ground, tapping one foot fast. What do you infer and what proves it?	Angry, embarrassed or upset; because folded arms, staring down and fast foot tapping suggests tension.
The student took the heavy bag with both hands without being asked. What was the motive and evidence?	Kind motive to help; without being asked took one bag with both hands and walked slowly beside the neighbour.
What does the question phrase this suggests mean?	This shows that or this means; give impression plus text proof [9].

Homework

Find two actions at home that show a feeling without naming it and write the I infer... because... sentence.

Sources

1. National curriculum in England: English programmes of study · assets.publishing.service.gov.uk · https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7de93840f0b62305b7f8ee/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_English_220714.pdf
2. Year 6 English Curriculum · lenham.kent.sch.uk · https://lenham.kent.sch.uk/media/3554/year-6-english-curriculum.pdf
3. Effective Teaching of Inference Skills for Reading · nfer.ac.uk · https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/1aafth05/edr01.pdf
4. Comprehension - KS2 English - BBC Bitesize · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zs44jxs
5. What is inference? - BBC Bitesize · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zqmyw6f
6. Comprehension Primary Resources | National Geographic Kids · natgeokids.com · https://www.natgeokids.com/ie/teacher-category/comprehension/
7. What is Inference? Helping Young Readers Become Critical Thinkers · phonics.org · https://www.phonics.org/what-is-inference-helping-young-readers-become-critical-thinkers/
8. Inference in reading comprehension - Bedrock Learning · bedrocklearning.org · https://bedrocklearning.org/literacy-blogs/inference-in-reading-comprehension/
9. Reading comprehension Year 6 – Inference practice questions - Teachwire · teachwire.net · https://www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources/reading-comprehension-year-6/

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources