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Supporting Inferences in Informational Text



Introduction

THEME: >>> Finding the Past

Authors of informational texts do not always directly state all the answers to questions you may be asked. When that happens, you need to make an **inference**. An inference is an educated guess based on **key information** in the text and what you already know, or **prior knowledge** about the topic. Making inferences helps you to read between the lines and understand what the writer is not stating directly.

Read this paragraph.

Great Whites

Even before they are born, baby great white sharks have strong teeth. As the eggs of great white sharks grow inside the mother, the developing babies hatch and gobble up unfertilized eggs. Then they turn on their smaller, weaker siblings, making meals of their brothers and sisters.

Complete the graphic organizer using information from the paragraph.

What I Know from the Text	What I Already Know	My Inference

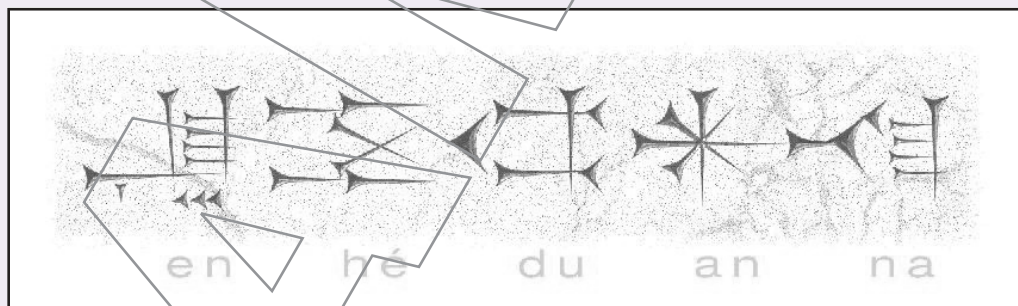
Before reading any text, scan the title, photos and captions, and any other graphics. This will help activate your prior knowledge about a subject. After reading, ask questions about the new information that was learned. Then **draw conclusions** and form opinions based on the facts.

Read the first part of the article. Then answer the questions.

En-Hedu'Anna

by Tamara McPhaden

- 1 Ancient peoples made little if any distinction among magic, science, and religion. "Medicine men" channeled spiritual powers to heal the sick. Various cultures held the sun, moon, planets, and even numbers to be gods and goddesses. Physicians, astronomers, and mathematicians were, therefore, also priests and priestesses.
- 2 The earliest astronomer-priestess whose name we know was En-Hedu'Anna of Ur. That wasn't her real name; it was a title meaning "High priestess-ornament of heaven." Her real name has been lost to history. What is known was that she lived from about 2285 to 2250 B.C., and was appointed to her high post by her father, the mighty King Sargon of Akkad.
- 3 This was in Mesopotamia, the land known today as Iraq. Sargon was an emperor who ruled the city-states of Sumer from his capital at Babylon. His daughter was the first known holder of the title En-Hedu'Anna. It was an important political post. As high priestess of Inanna, the moon goddess, it was her job to observe and record the movements of the planets and stars. Those movements could mean life or death to the people of Mesopotamia, as they regulated the agricultural cycle of planting, growing, and harvesting. The high priestess could make or bring down kings, if she declared that they had lost the goddess's favor. Perhaps this was why Sargon began the tradition of appointing royal daughters to the position.



Think About It 

What effect does En-Hedu'Anna have on the people of Mesopotamia? The question asks you to make an inference about the earliest astronomer-priestess and her position.

What was En-Hedu'Anna's job? _____

It was an important job because _____

What did the movements of the sun and moon regulate? _____

How did this affect the people of Mesopotamia? _____

Based on the clues and my own experience, I can infer that En-Hedu'Anna

Continue reading the article. Then answer the question.

4 The Temple of Inanna was En-Hedu'Anna's observatory. It was also a learning center where people studied math, science, and the arts. The calendar they created from their observations is still used today to mark religious holidays by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

5 None of En-Hedu'Anna's scientific writings have survived. Besides being the first known astronomer, she was also the first known poet. Many copies of her poems still exist, written on clay tablets. One of them refers to her sacred work as astronomer-priestess:

The true woman who has surpassing wisdom,
She uses a tablet of lapis-lazuli,
She gives advice to all lands...
She measures the heavens,
She places measuring cords on the earth.

A CLOSER LOOK

You can make logical inferences based on text details. Circle words in the poem that show the job duties of En-Hedu'Anna as astronomer-priestess.

What skills did En-Hedu'Anna possess?

Based on the information in the passage, it could be inferred that the author believes that En-Hedu'Anna was _____.

- A a strong warrior who frightened everyone in Mesopotamia
- B multitalented in science, technology, and poetry
- C more interested in attending concerts than learning astronomy
- D plotting to overthrow her father so she could rule the city-states

DISCUSS IT

Think about the poem that En-Hedu'Anna wrote. What clues do her word choices reveal about her responsibility as astronomer-priestess? Form a small group and discuss more about En-Hedu'Anna's personality from what you learned in the passage.

Read the article. Then answer the questions.

The House at Star Carr

by Elizabeth White

A CLOSER LOOK

What can you learn about the lives of early Mesolithic people by studying evidence unearthed at an archaeological site? Underline two details that show this.

1 The house was round, about 11 feet in diameter. It was constructed of wooden posts, about 18 of them. The walls and roof may have been made of thatch or animal hides. Burned flints found on the floor suggest that there was probably a hearth. The house was discovered in 2008 at Star Carr, in northern England. Carbon dating reveals that the house was built about 10,500 years ago, making it the oldest known dwelling in that part of the world.

2 Star Carr is a well-known archaeological site of the Mesolithic period. Excavations carried out there since 1949 have turned up evidence of Middle Stone Age life and culture. Artifacts found there include headdresses made of antlers, a boat paddle, and a large wooden platform that is the earliest known example of carpentry in Europe. The site was assumed to have been a camping spot used by nomadic hunters who roamed prehistoric Britain following animal herds. The discovery of the ancient house is leading archaeologists to reassess that view. The house seems to have been occupied for between 200 and 500 years. It was repaired several times during that period. No other houses have yet been found at Star Carr, but it's not likely that this one was built in isolation. Perhaps, Mesolithic people were more sedentary than previously believed.



What is something that could be used to get close to animals?

- 1 Which sentence from the passage helps you to infer that hunters probably disguised themselves to get close to their prey?
 - A "Artifacts found there include headdresses made of antlers, a boat paddle, and a large wooden platform that is the earliest known example of carpentry in Europe."
 - B "The walls and roof may have been made of thatch or animal hides."
 - C "The house seems to have been occupied for between 200 and 500 years."
 - D "It was constructed of wooden posts, about 18 of them."

Why would multiple houses be built near each other?

- 2 The belief that other houses might exist in the Star Carr region suggests that _____

What does the word *sedentary* mean?

- 3 Explain how a new discovery changed a long-held belief that archeologists had about Star Carr. Use at least two details from the article to support your answer.



Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Preserved by Disaster



- 1 By the first century A.D., the ancient Roman city of Pompeii was a thriving port city with a gymnasium, a forum for assemblies, baths, an amphitheatre, and numerous temples. Elegant houses and lavish villas, built for the comfort of its wealthier citizens, surrounded the city. Life was comfortable until A.D. 79.
- 2 Sixteen years earlier, a severe earthquake had destroyed many buildings. However, people didn't heed the telltale quake's warning rumble. Sometime in late summer or early fall of A.D. 79, nearby Mount Vesuvius violently erupted. This relatively young volcano had been dormant for centuries. When it finally erupted, the volcano buried Pompeii and the neighboring city of Herculaneum under nearly 20 feet of ash and molten rock.
- 3 Dust and volcanic ash clogged the air. Most of the 20,000 inhabitants fled the region. Those who elected to stay had a difficult time breathing. Buildings collapsed like dominoes—everything from the stylish mansions to cafes, taverns, and factories. Suddenly, a mixture of rock fragments and poison gases flowed down the flank of the volcano, moving like a hot and deadly avalanche at 100 miles per hour. This devastating eruption destroyed everything in its path, including the remaining 2,000 inhabitants.
- 4 Millions of tons of volcanic ash blanketed Pompeii and Herculaneum until the mid-1700s. Then people searching for ancient artifacts started to excavate the area. Because of the massive amount of ash that covered the cities, buildings were completely preserved. Everything appeared exactly as it had been 2,000 years ago.

5 Archaeologists were especially interested in the frescoes or paintings that remained intact. These provided visual glimpses of daily life at the time. Numerous vases, common household objects, and other artifacts also were preserved beneath the dust.

6 Excavators found that, by filling the void left in the ash by food, they could discover what was being sold at market; they even uncovered intact loaves of bread and jars filled with preserved fruit. Once the excavators filled in the outlines left by human remains, they could clearly examine the type of clothing that people wore.

7 Today, the excavations continue. Both Pompeii and Herculaneum are among the most popular tourist attractions in the world. These ruins continue to fascinate people and connect them to history.

1 Part A

Which statement would *best* help you to infer that there was a warning prior to the A.D. 79 disaster?

- A An oracle predicted that Mount Vesuvius would erupt.
- B Every 16 years, the volcano in Pompeii erupted.
- C Scientists abandoned the city when they discovered poison gases.
- D An earthquake indicated that another catastrophe would soon follow.

Part B

What sentence from the story *best* supports the answer to Part A?

2 Read the chart.

The Text Says...	I Know...	So I Infer That...
Most of the inhabitants fled Pompeii after the volcano, but 2,000 remained.	People who fled left behind friends and relatives.	

Which statement should go in the blank space in the chart?

- A The inhabitants relocated to different continents.
- B The 2,000 people who stayed behind reunited with their family members.
- C Many citizens must have returned to Pompeii to search for lost people.
- D The people who fled built monuments to honor the dead.

3 Why were archaeologists interested in everyday items?

4 Why have Pompeii and Herculaneum remained popular attractions for modern-day tourists? Use two details from the story to support your answer.
