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Drawing Inferences in Informational Texts



Introduction

THEME: >>> Making a Difference

Good readers ask themselves questions as they read: Who or what is this informational text about? What happened? Why? Where and when do the events take place? The text may answer most of those questions. In these cases, the information is **explicit**, or stated clearly in the passage. Sometimes, though, the text just offers clues. You need to figure out the answers for yourself. You can use those clues, plus what you already know, to make an educated guess. This educated guess is called an **inference**.

Read this paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Frogs and toads are both amphibians, but they have several differences. For example, frogs must live near water to keep their skin moist. Toads, with their dry, bumpy skin, can live far from water. Frogs have longer back legs that allow them to jump higher and farther than toads. That's important because frogs have many predators trying to catch them. Toads run or take small hops, which would not prevent most predators from grabbing them. However, toad skin has a bitter taste and smell, much like a skunk. Predators have learned to leave toads alone.

The paragraph answers some questions explicitly. For example, why do frogs need to live near water? _____

The paragraph does not answer other questions directly. For example, why can toads live far from water? _____

To answer the second question, use the details you read in the paragraph and what you already know. Put together details about frogs, toads, and water. The paragraph presents differences between frogs and toads. It gives details about frogs' skin and toads' skin as one of these differences. Then figure out why toads do not need to live near water.

In putting together these clues, you made an inference. You make inferences all day long. When a friend is smiling, you infer that he is happy. If you know that friend well, you might also infer what is making him happy. You can also make inferences as you read. They will help you better understand and enjoy what you read.

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

An Unlikely Winner

1 Amy Van Dyken was born in Colorado, on February 15, 1973. When Amy was young, her doctor told her that she had asthma. This meant that sometimes she could not catch her breath. Being in gym class or running outside in the cold sometimes made her short of breath. People who have asthma need to stay on medication.

2 When Amy was 6, her doctor wanted her to try swimming, too. He said the warm water would help Amy's breathing. It would help her in daily tasks and allow her to play sports. Amy did not get better right away. She trained hard. She was finally able to swim the length of an Olympic-sized pool when she was 13. Her high school team thought she was a slow swimmer. Other swimmers didn't want to swim with her. Amy tried even harder.

3 She spent her first two years of college at the University of Arizona. She won a silver medal at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championships in 1993. Amy knew she could do even better.

4 She left Arizona for Colorado State University. At the 1994 NCAA Championships, she won a gold medal. Amy was also named NCAA Swimmer of the Year. Amy decided to take time off from college to train for the 1996 Olympics.



Think About It



What are some inferences you could make about Amy? To answer the question, use details from the passage and what you already know.

Amy was _____ because she trained hard and kept trying even though other swimmers did not want to swim with her.

She was _____ because, even though she had asthma, she thought she could make the Olympic team.

A CLOSER LOOK

Explicit details can help you learn more about a subject. Amy was very successful in her swimming career. Underline details about awards she won and honors she received.

Continue reading the passage. Then answer the question.

5 At the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, Amy won four gold medals. Two were for individual events. Two were for relays. She was the first female swimmer to win four gold medals in one Olympics.

6 What is so amazing about this? Amy's lungs could only take in 65% of a normal person's capacity because of her asthma. Fans loved Amy because of her likable personality and honesty. After she won gold in the 50-meter freestyle, Amy said, "This is a victory for all the nerds." She said this because many people with asthma cannot be in sports.

7 Amy graduated from college in 1997. Then she competed at the world championships. Here she won three gold medals. In 1998, while lifting weights, she hurt her shoulder. Surgery followed. Many people thought Amy would never swim again. Amy didn't have another plan.

8 She had overcome problems with asthma. She wasn't going to let an injury keep her from swimming again. Amy started training for the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia. She won two gold medals.

9 Amy was the only American swimmer to enter into the Swimming Hall of Fame in 2007. In 2008, she also became part of the Olympic Hall of Fame.

How do the details about swimming and asthma fit together?

What inference can you make, based on this passage?

- A Being able to breathe deeply is very important when you swim in competitions.
- B Many people with asthma cannot be in sports because they cannot swim as well as Amy.
- C Amy began lifting weights because her asthma made swimming difficult.
- D Amy was elected to the Olympic Hall of Fame because she has asthma.

DISCUSS IT

Think about why Amy said, "This is a victory for all the nerds." Why would she talk about nerds? Make an inference, based on what you know about Amy and about young people. Turn to another student. Explain your inference and the reasons for it.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

excerpt from **The Author of Little Women**

by Edward Eggleston

- 1 Louisa May Alcott was a wild little girl. When she was very little, she would run away from home....
- 2 Louisa found it hard to be good and obedient. When she was 14 years old, she wrote some verses about being good.
- 3 The Alcott family was very poor. Louisa made up her mind to do something to make money when she got big. She did not like being so very poor.
- 4 One day she was sitting on the wheel of a cart thinking how poor her father was. There was a crow in the air over her head cawing. There was nobody to tell her thoughts to but the crow. She shook her fist at the big bird, and said, "I will do something by and by. Don't care what. I'll teach, sew, act, write, do anything to help the family. And I'll be rich and famous before I die. See if I don't."
- 5 The crow did not make any answer. But Louisa kept thinking about the work she was going to do. The other children got work to do that made money. But Louisa was left at home to do housework. She had to do the washing. She made a little poem about it. Here are some of the verses of this poem:

A CLOSER LOOK

Circle words in the poem that tell about Louisa's attitude toward life when she wrote the poem.

A SONG FROM THE SUDS

Queen of my tub, I merrily sing,
While the white foam rises high,
And sturdily wash and rinse and wring,
And fasten the clothes to dry;
Then out in the free fresh air they swing,
Under the sunny sky.

I am glad a task to me is given
To labor at day by day;
For it brings me health, and strength, and hope,
And I cheerfully learn to say—
"Head, you may think; Heart, you may feel;
But Hand, you shall work always!"

6 Louisa grew to be a woman at last. She went to nurse soldiers in the Civil War. She wrote books. When she wrote the book called *Little Women*, all the young people were delighted. What she had said to the crow came true at last. She became famous. She had money enough to make the family comfortable.

What information is stated explicitly in the passage?

- 1 Why did Louisa want to be rich and famous?
 - A She found it hard to follow rules, so she wanted to break them.
 - B She wanted to do anything to help the family.
 - C She was frustrated that she didn't earn money from doing housework.
 - D She wanted to publish her poetry.

Which answer choice hints that Louisa knew she would stay busy her whole life?

- 2 Which line from her poem "A Song from the Suds" supports the inference that Louisa accepted her life as it was?
 - A "And sturdily wash and rinse and wring,"
 - B "Then out in the free fresh air they swing,"
 - C "To labor at day by day;"
 - D "But Hand, you shall work always!"

What did Louisa do as a child that helped her become successful later in life?

- 3 Think about what this author says about Louisa Alcott. Then make an inference about how her childhood experiences helped her become a famous author. Use examples from the text to explain the reasons for your inference.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Beekeeping

- 1 Many people keep bees in their backyard as a hobby. Beekeeping does not require much money, time, or space. It does require blooming flowers. Still, how does honey get from a beehive to your toast?
- 2 First, let's review how bees make honey. Bees live in a colony. One queen lays all of the eggs. Thousands of worker bees gather food, keep the hive clean, and protect it from predators. They also use beeswax to create a honeycomb to store their food.
- 3 Some of the workers fly many miles to gather food for the queen, the workers, and the larvae that hatch from the queen's eggs. Other workers stay in the hive. To gather food, the flying workers use a tiny tube to suck nectar from flowers. Plants produce the nectar to attract bees and other insects. As bees suck up the nectar, pollen from the flower sticks to their legs and bodies. As the bees move from flower to flower, they spread this pollen. That allows the flowers to make seeds that will produce new plants.
- 4 We depend on pollination by bees for much of the fruits and vegetables we eat. In fact, some beekeepers rent their bees to farmers to pollinate crops. At least 90 of our crops depend, at least in part, on bees for pollination.
- 5 As the bees suck up the nectar, they store it in a special sac in their bodies. To fill this sac, a bee may visit more than a thousand flowers. When the workers return to the hive, they transfer the nectar to the bees that stay there. These bees "chew" the nectar for about 30 minutes. This chewing makes the nectar easier for the bees and larvae to digest. Next, the bees transfer the nectar to the cells of the honeycomb.
- 6 Then the workers fan the nectar with their wings. This helps the water evaporate from the nectar. At last, it is honey! The bees close each filled cell in the honeycomb with more beeswax. The honey is stored until the bees need it for food (or the beekeeper harvests it). A colony can produce 45 to 200 pounds of honey a year.
- 7 How do beekeepers help? They get the hives ready for spring and "put them to bed" in the fall. Beekeepers make sure the queen is alive and laying



eggs. They check to see whether the hive needs more storage space. The bees might need more food or medicine to keep them healthy. They also need to be protected from bears, raccoons, and other honey-lovers.

8 When all of the sacs in the honeycomb are closed, beekeepers know it is ready for harvest. They might sell the whole honeycomb. Or, they might take the honey out and bottle it. To collect the honey, beekeepers cut open the honeycomb with a knife. Then they use a special machine to spin the honey out. They also filter bits of wax out of the honey. Beekeepers are careful to leave enough honey to feed the colony.

9 The bees can use the honeycomb again. The honeycomb can also be used to make candles.

10 What equipment do beekeepers need? It includes a starter box with frames and a wax foundation for the hive. Beekeepers also need a bee veil and gloves to protect against stings. They need a hive tool, bee brush, smoker, and medication. They can rent the machine to spin honey out of the honeycomb. The total cost is \$120 to \$400. The bees can be ordered through the mail. One package holds about 11,000 bees and costs \$50 to \$70.

11 Learning more about bees makes honey taste even sweeter!

1 Part A

Which choice is an inference about bees?

- A** Different bees have specific jobs.
- B** If the queen dies, the hive will not survive.
- C** Bees can get diseases.
- D** Nectar contains water.

Part B

Which text evidence *best* supports your answer to Part A?

- 2 Based on this passage, you might infer that bees depend on their pollination of flowers as much as humans do. Which statement supports this inference?
- A The pollen sticks to their bodies as they move from flower to flower.
 - B About 90 of our crops depend on bees for pollination.
 - C Bees make their food from flowers' nectar.
 - D Plants produce nectar to attract bees.
- 3 What is one thing that bees do in the process of producing honey?
- A They get the hives ready for spring.
 - B Worker bees keep the hive clean and protect it from predators.
 - C They filter bits of wax out of the honey.
 - D Worker bees fan the nectar with their wings.
- 4 Do bees depend on beekeepers to survive? Make an inference based on this passage and what you already know about bees. Support your inference with details from the text.
