

## Citing Evidence to Support Inferences

## CCLS

**RL.7.1:** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Theme: *The Element of Surprise*

Have you ever looked at something that interested you, such as a hot air balloon or a telescope, and tried to figure out how it works? An **analysis** is an examination of how the different parts of something work together. When you read a story, you analyze how its parts—its characters, settings, and events—work together to create meaning.

Some story details are **explicit**, or clearly stated. “Jesse was excited about going to the museum” is an example of an explicit detail: You know that Jesse is excited and why. But story information can also be less direct. You might have to make an **inference**, or an educated guess based on details in the story and your own knowledge, to figure out what’s going on.

After his dad had gone upstairs, Pete clenched his fists and stomped out of the room to go get a bucket and fill it with soapy water. His dad had just told him they were having company that evening and that Pete had to help out by doing some extra chores. Pete had finished all of his homework in study hall that day and had planned on spending the afternoon reading his new comic book, not mopping floors and dusting shelves.

Using details from the text and your own knowledge, fill in the blanks in the chart below.

Evidence	+	Background Knowledge	=	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pete “clenched his fists and _____.”</li> <li>Pete had “planned on spending the afternoon _____, not _____.”</li> </ul>		When people clench their fists and stomp out of a room, these are signs that they _____.		Pete is angry about _____.

When you’re analyzing a story to make an inference, pay close attention to details in the text. Read closely to find evidence that you can cite, or give as proof, that the inference is reasonable. By making and supporting inferences, you’ll be like an engineer looking at a machine you’ve never seen before, piecing together clues to figure out how it works.



Read this part of a short story about two criminals who kidnap a child and hold him for ransom.

Genre: Short Story

## from “The Ransom of Red Chief” by O. Henry

We selected for our victim the only child of a prominent citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. . . . The kid was a boy of ten, with bas-relief freckles, and hair the colour of the cover of the magazine you buy at the news-stand when you want to catch a train. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you. . . .

The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

“Hey, little boy!” says Bill, “would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?”

The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.

“That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars,” says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

That boy put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear; but, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him up to the cave and I hitched the horse in the cedar brake. After dark I drove the buggy to the little village, three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the mountain. . . .

(continued)

**Explore how to answer this prompt:** “Use details from the passage to predict whether Sam and Bill’s plot will succeed.”

A prediction is a type of inference. It is a reasonable guess that you need to support with evidence.

**The chart below lists some details about the boy. Complete the chart with details from the text.**

Evidence	+	Background Knowledge	=	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“But wait till I tell you. . . .”</li><li>“The kid was in the street, _____ _____.”</li><li>“The boy catches Bill neatly _____ _____.”</li></ul>		Throwing rocks at cats and people is mean. It suggests the boy is hard to deal with.		I predict that Sam and Bill’s plot _____ _____ _____.



## Close Reading

**Underline** at least two details that help you understand Bill's feelings about the boy.

## Hint

Look for text evidence suggesting that Bill thinks a two thousand dollar ransom is too much.

**After guarding the boy, Bill speaks with Sam before they write the ransom note. Continue reading, then answer the question that follows.**

*(continued from page 46)*

"You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood—in poker games, dynamite outrages, police raids, train robberies and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two-legged skyrocket of a kid. . . ."

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter. . . . Bill begged me tearfully to make the ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand.

"I ain't attempting," says he, "to decry the celebrated moral aspect of parental affection, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that forty-pound chunk of freckled wildcat. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can charge the difference up to me."

### Circle the correct answer.

Why does Bill want to make the boy's ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand?

- A** He knows the boy's father won't be able to afford a two-thousand-dollar ransom.
- B** He believes it's morally wrong to ask for any ransom at all.
- C** He thinks the boy is so difficult that his parents might not want to spend much money to get him back.
- D** He worries that Sam will get nervous and back out of the plan if they ask for too much money.



## Show Your Thinking

Bill calls the boy a "forty-pound chunk of freckled wildcat." What does he mean? With a partner, apply background knowledge to make an inference about the meaning of Bill's comment.





Read about the unexpected note Sam and Bill receive in response to their ransom request. Use the Study Buddy and Close Reading to guide your reading.



Will the boy's father agree to the terms of the ransom note? I'll underline sentences that tell what he thinks of the kidnappers' demands.

## Close Reading

Find and **star** (\*) the sentence in the letter that suggests how the boy's neighbors will feel about his return home.

Which phrases in paragraphs 4 and 5 are clues that tell you how the two kidnappers feel about Ebenezer Dorset's offer? **Circle** these words and phrases.

Genre: Short Story

## from "The Ransom of Red Chief"

by O. Henry

- 1 *Gentlemen:* I received your letter to-day by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and I hereby make you a counter-proposition, which I am inclined to believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night, for the neighbours believe he is lost, and I couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back. Very respectfully, EBENEZER DORSET.
- 2 "Great pirates of Penzance!" says I; "of all the impudent—"
- 3 But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.
- 4 "Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in Bedlam. Besides being a thorough gentleman, I think Mr. Dorset is a spendthrift for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"
- 5 "Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this little ewe lamb has somewhat got on my nerves too. We'll take him home, pay the ransom and make our get-away."
- 6 We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought a silver-mounted rifle and a pair of moccasins for him, and we were going to hunt bears the next day.
- 7 It was just twelve o'clock when we knocked at Ebenezer's front door. Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand.



## Hints

Think about Sam's immediate reaction to the counter-proposition. Then think about the conversation between Sam and Bill that follows.

Which sentence describes the offer Ebenezer Dorset makes to the kidnappers?

Does Ebenezer Dorset sound concerned about the safety of his son? What is the tone of his letter?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which statement best explains the reaction of the narrator, Sam, to Ebenezer Dorset's counter-proposition?
  - A Sam thinks the counter-proposition is a joke and refuses to take it seriously.
  - B Sam thinks the amount of money Ebenezer asks for is unfair and he convinces Bill that they should pay a lesser amount.
  - C At first, Sam is happy about the counter-proposition, but then he gets angry again and asks for even more ransom money.
  - D Sam is angry about the counter-proposition, but then Bill convinces him that it's a great offer since the boy is so horrible.
- 2 By the end of the story, the terms of the ransom have changed dramatically. Which sentence from the story best shows who sets the final terms of the ransom?
  - A "I received your letter to-day by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son."
  - B "You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands."
  - C "Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all?"
  - D "Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this little ewe lamb has somewhat got on my nerves too."
- 3 Sam and Bill initially wanted a two-thousand-dollar ransom for the boy. Explain why Ebenezer Dorset was able to convince the kidnappers to pay him two hundred and fifty dollars to take back his own son. Cite at least one direct quote from the story to support your explanation.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

## from *Dusk*

by Saki

1 On the bench by Gortsby's side sat an elderly gentleman with a drooping air of defiance that was probably the remaining vestige of self-respect in an individual who had ceased to defy successfully anybody or anything. . . . As he rose to go Gortsby imagined him returning to a home circle where he was snubbed and of no account, or to some bleak lodging. . . . His retreating figure vanished slowly into the shadows, and his place on the bench was taken almost immediately by a young man, fairly well dressed but scarcely more cheerful of mien than his predecessor.

2 "You don't seem in a very good temper," said Gortsby.

3 "You wouldn't be in a good temper if you were in the fix I'm in," he said; "I've done the silliest thing I've ever done in my life."

4 "Yes?" said Gortsby dispassionately.

5 "Came up this afternoon, meaning to stay at the Patagonian Hotel in Berkshire Square," continued the young man; "when I got there I found it had been pulled down some weeks ago and a cinema theatre run up on the site. The taxi driver recommended me to another hotel some way off and I went there. I just sent a letter to my people, giving them the address, and then I went out to buy some soap—I'd forgotten to pack any and I hate using hotel soap. Then I strolled about a bit and looked at the shops, and when I came to turn my steps back to the hotel I suddenly realized that I didn't remember its name or even what street it was in. . . . I suppose you think I've spun you rather an impossible yarn," said the young man presently, with a suggestion of resentment in his voice.

6 "Not at all impossible," said Gortsby judicially; "I remember doing exactly the same thing once in a foreign capital."

7 The youth brightened at the reminiscence. "In a foreign city I wouldn't mind so much," he said; "one could go to one's Consul and get the requisite help from him. Unless I can find some decent chap to swallow my story and lend me some money I seem likely to spend the night on the Embankment."

8 "Of course," said Gortsby slowly, "the weak point of your story is that you can't produce the soap."

9 The young man sat forward hurriedly, felt rapidly in the pockets of his overcoat, and then jumped to his feet.

10 "I must have lost it," he muttered angrily.

11 "To lose a hotel and a cake of soap on one afternoon suggests willful carelessness," said Gortsby, but the young man scarcely waited to hear the end of the remark. He flitted away down the path, his head held high, with an air of somewhat jaded jauntiness.



12 “It was a pity,” mused Gortsby; “the going out to get one’s own soap was the one convincing touch in the whole story, and yet it was just that little detail that brought him to grief. If he had had the brilliant forethought to provide himself with a cake of soap.”

13 With that reflection Gortsby rose to go; as he did so an exclamation of concern escaped him. Lying on the ground by the side of the bench was a small oval packet . . . It could be nothing else but a cake of soap, and it had evidently fallen out of the youth’s overcoat pocket when he flung himself down on the seat. In another moment Gortsby was scudding along the dusk-shrouded path in anxious quest for a youthful figure in a light overcoat. He had nearly given up the search when he caught sight of the object of his pursuit standing irresolutely on the border of the carriage drive, evidently uncertain whether to strike across the Park or make for the bustling pavements of Knightsbridge. He turned round sharply with an air of defensive hostility when he found Gortsby hailing him.

14 “The important witness to the genuineness of your story has turned up,” said Gortsby, holding out the cake of soap . . . “If the loan of a sovereign is any good to you—”

15 The young man hastily removed all doubt on the subject by pocketing the coin.

16 “Poor boy, he as nearly as possible broke down,” said Gortsby to himself. “It’s a lesson to me not to be too clever in judging by circumstances.”

17 As Gortsby retraced his steps past the seat where the little drama had taken place he saw an elderly gentleman poking and peering beneath it and on all sides of it, and recognized his earlier fellow occupant.

18 “Have you lost anything, sir?” he asked.

19 “Yes, sir, a cake of soap.”

**1**

Read these sentences from the story.

“‘It was a pity,” mused Gortsby; “the going out to get one’s own soap was the one convincing touch in the whole story, and yet it was just that little detail that brought him to grief. If he had had the brilliant forethought to provide himself with a cake of soap.’”

Based on these sentences, with which statement would Gortsby **most likely** agree?

- A** Fibbers will always make mistakes.
- B** Travelers should always be aware of their surroundings.
- C** People should carefully evaluate anything they are told.
- D** Strangers should generously listen to each other’s stories.

**Answer Form**

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number  
Correct****3**





- 2 Which sentence from the story **best** supports the idea that Gortsby likes to judge others?
- A "On the bench by Gortsby's side sat an elderly gentleman with a drooping air of defiance . . . "
  - B "'I remember doing exactly the same thing once in a foreign capital.'"
  - C "'To lose a hotel and a cake of soap on one afternoon suggests willful carelessness.'"
  - D "'It's a lesson to me not to be too clever in judging by circumstances.'"
- 3 Which sentence from the story shows that Gortsby doubts the young man's honesty?
- A "'...I suddenly realized that I didn't remember its name or even what street it was in.'"
  - B "'Of course,'" said Gortsby slowly, "'the weak point of your story is that you can't produce the soap.'"
  - C Lying on the ground by the side of the bench was a small oval packet.
  - D "You don't seem in a very good temper," said Gortsby. . . .
- 4 Paragraph 13 of the story states that Gortsby uttered "an exclamation of concern." Explain why Gortsby was concerned. Quote at least **one** sentence from paragraph 14 to support your explanation.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Self Check**

***Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 43.***