

Citing Evidence to Support Inferences

CCLS

RL.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Theme: *Home and Family*

Detectives solve mysteries by looking for clues, or evidence. Like a detective, you often have to use evidence to help you figure something out about characters or events in a story.

Text evidence is a piece of information from a text. This information can be used to support an inference that the reader makes. An **inference** is a logical guess based on details in the text and on what the reader already knows from his or her own experiences.

Look at the picture below of a family moving into their new home. What inference can you make about how the family members feel? What evidence helps you figure this out?



Draw arrows to details showing how the family feels about the move. Then complete the chart to see how to use the evidence to make an inference. Which evidence is the strongest?

Text/Visual Evidence	+	Background Knowledge	=	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The family members are helping each other carry boxes into the house. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving requires a lot of work. People are often excited when they move somewhere new. 		<p>The entire family is happy to be moving into their new home.</p>

By combining text evidence with their own knowledge, readers can figure out ideas that are not stated directly. Remember, making an inference is like solving a mystery: You not only need to find clues, but you also need to piece them together in a way that makes sense.



Read the start of a poem about a girl and her mother dusting.

Genre: Lyric Poem

Dusting *by Julia Alvarez*

Each morning I wrote my name
on the dusty cabinet, then crossed
the dining table in script, scrawled
in capitals on the backs of chairs,
practicing signatures like scales
while Mother followed, squirting
linseed from a burping can
into a crumpled up flannel.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: “What inference can you make about how the speaker feels about the everyday task of dusting?”

Though the speaker does not directly state her feelings about dusting, you can use the clues, or evidence, in the poem to infer what she thinks of this chore and how that motivates her actions.

Look for text evidence that tells how the speaker feels. One piece of evidence is shown in the chart below. Write two more pieces of evidence and use this information to make an inference.

Text Evidence	+	Background Knowledge	=	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The speaker writes her name in the dust on the furniture._________________________		<ul style="list-style-type: none">People usually use rags or feather dusters when dusting.When people do something every day, they either enjoy it or are bored.		

With a partner, discuss which piece of evidence most strongly supports your inference and why.



Close Reading

What can you infer about the speaker based on what she does each morning? Find and **underline** at least two pieces of evidence to support this inference.

Hint

Which choice best shows that the speaker wants to be important in the world?

Continue reading the poem about dusting. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 54)

She erased my fingerprints
from the bookshelf and the rocker
polished mirrors on the desk
scribbled with my alphabets.
My name was swallowed in the towel
with which she jeweled the tabletops.
The grain surfaced in the oak
and the pine grew luminous.
But I refused with every mark
to be like her, anonymous.

Circle the correct answer.

Which sentence is the strongest piece of evidence that the speaker wants to make her mark on the world?

- A The speaker helps her mother dust every morning.
- B The speaker scribbles her name in the dust every day.
- C The speaker's name and fingerprints are erased each day.
- D The speaker states that she refuses to be "anonymous."



Show Your Thinking

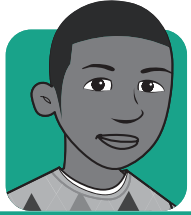
Explain why the statement you chose is the strongest piece of evidence.



With a partner, discuss what you can infer about the speaker's relationship with her mother. What do their actions suggest about how well they understand each other? Use evidence for support.



Read this excerpt from a novel. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.



As I read the first paragraph, I can infer that the mother has regrets about her life. I'll look for facts that support this inference as I read and will circle the strongest piece of evidence.

Close Reading

Is the mother still able to do all the things she loves? **Underline** at least two pieces of evidence to support your inference.

In spite of her bad choices, in what ways is the mother intelligent? **Draw a box** around any words and phrases that support this idea.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

A Smart Cookie

by Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

- 1 I could've been somebody, you know? my mother says and sighs. She has lived in this city her whole life. She can speak two languages. She can sing an opera. She knows how to fix a TV. But she doesn't know which subway train to take to get downtown. I hold her hand very tight while we wait for the right train to arrive.
- 2 She used to draw when she had time. Now she draws with a needle and thread, little knotted rosebuds, tulips made of silk thread. Someday she would like to go to the ballet. Someday she would like to see a play. She borrows opera records from the public library and sings with velvety lungs powerful as morning glories.
- 3 Today while cooking oatmeal she is Madame Butterfly until she sighs and points the wooden spoon at me. I could've been somebody, you know? Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard. That Madame Butterfly was a fool. She stirs the oatmeal. Look at my *comadres*. She means Izaura whose husband left and Yolanda whose husband is dead. Got to take care all your own, she says shaking her head.
- 4 Then out of nowhere:
- 5 Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains.
- 6 Yup, she says disgusted, stirring again. I was a smart cookie then.



Hints

Which choice explains what the mother wants for her daughter?

What is something the daughter can do, but the mother can't?

Explain why you think the mother refers to herself as a "smart cookie."

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

- 1 Read the following inference about the mother in "Smart Cookie."

The mother doesn't want her daughter to turn out like she did.

Which piece of evidence best supports this inference?

- A The mother used to draw, but now draws with a needle and thread.
- B The mother tells her daughter to go to school and study hard.
- C The mother sings along to music from borrowed opera records.
- D The mother admits that she used to be ashamed of her clothes.

- 2 Which of the following sentences best supports the inference that the mother is trapped in her situation?

- A She dreams of going to the ballet and a play someday.
- B She sings while she cooks oatmeal for her daughter.
- C She doesn't know which train to take to get downtown.
- D She can speak two languages and knows how to fix a TV.

- 3 Explain why it's reasonable to think that the mother may really have been a "smart cookie." Support your inference with at least two pieces of evidence from the text.



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

from *Maud Martha*

by Gwendolyn Brooks

Maud Martha is both the title and the heroine of Pulitzer-prize winning poet Gwendolyn Brooks' memorable work of fiction. The book is actually a novella composed of vignettes, or sketches, of Maud Martha, her family and friends, and the marriage she enters into as a young woman. Maud grows up in the Chicago of the 1940s. In the story you are about to read, Maud's family awaits the return of the family patriarch, who has gone to town to apply for a loan so that the family will not have to give up their home.

1 What had been wanted was this always, this always to last, the talking softly on this porch, with the snake plant in the jardiniere in the southwest corner, and the obstinate slip from Aunt Eppie's magnificent fern at the left of the friendly door. Mama, Maud Martha, and Helen rocked slowly in their rocking chairs, and looked at the late afternoon light on the lawn and at the emphatic iron of the fence and at the poplar tree. These things might soon be theirs no longer. Those shafts and pools of light, the tree, the graceful iron, might soon be viewed possessively by different eyes.

2 Papa was to have gone that noon, during his lunch hour, to the office of the Home Owners' Loan. If he had not succeeded in getting another extension, they would be leaving this house in which they had lived for more than fourteen years. There was little hope. The Home Owner's Loan was hard. They sat, making their plans.

3 "We'll be moving into a nice flat somewhere," said Mama. "Somewhere on South Park, or Michigan, or in Washington Park Court." Those flats, as the girls and Mama knew well, were burdens on wages twice the size of Papa's. This was not mentioned now.

4 "They're much prettier than this old house," said Helen. "I have friends I'd just as soon not bring here. And I have other friends that wouldn't come down this far for anything, unless they were in a taxi."

5 Yesterday, Maud Martha would have attacked her. Tomorrow she might. Today she said nothing. She merely gazed at a little hopping robin in the tree, her tree, and tried to keep the fronts of her eyes dry.

6 "Well, I do know," said Mama, turning her hands over and over, "that I've been getting tireder and tireder of doing that firing. From October to April, there's firing to be done."

7 "But lately we've been helping, Harry and I," said Maud Martha. "And sometimes in March and April, and in October, and even in November, we could build a little fire in the fireplace. Sometimes, the weather was just right for that."

8 She knew from the way they looked at her, that this had been a mistake. They did not want to cry.

9 But she felt that the little line of white, sometimes ridged with smoked purple, and all that cream-shot saffron would never drift across any western sky except that in back of this house. The rain would drum with as sweet a dullness nowhere but here. The birds on South Park were mechanical birds, no better than the poor caught canaries in those "rich" women's sun parlors.

10 "It's just going to kill Papa!" burst out Maud Martha. "He loves this house! He lives for this house!"



- 11 “He lives for us,” said Helen. “It’s us he loves. He wouldn’t want the house, except for us.”
- 12 “And he’ll have us,” added Mama, “wherever.”
- 13 “You know,” Helen said, “If you want to know the truth, this is a relief. If this hadn’t come up, we would have gone on, just dragged on, hanging out here forever.
- 14 “It might,” allowed Mama, “be an act of God. God may just have reached down and picked up the reins.”
- 15 “Yes,” Maud Martha cracked in, “that’s what you always say—that God knows best.”
- 16 Her mother looked at her quickly, decided the statement was not suspect, looked away.
- 17 Helen saw Papa coming. “There’s Papa,” said Helen.
- 18 They could not tell a thing from the way Papa was walking. It was that same dear, little staccato walk, one shoulder down, then the other, then repeat, and repeat. They watched his progress. He passed the Kennedys’; he passed the vacant lot; he passed Mrs. Blakemore’s. They wanted to hurl themselves over the fence, into the street, and shake the truth out of his collar. He opened the gate and still his stride told them nothing.
- 19 “Hello,” he said.
- 20 Mama got up and followed him through the front door. The girls knew better than to go in too.
- 21 Presently, Mama’s head emerged. Her eyes were lamps turned on.
- 22 “It’s all right,” she exclaimed. “He got it. It’s all over. Everything is all right.”
- 23 The door slammed shut. Mama’s footsteps hurried away.
- 24 “I think,” said Helen, “I think I’ll give a party. I haven’t given a party since I was eleven. I’d like some of my friends to just casually see that we’re homeowners.”

1 Read these sentences from the story.

These things might be theirs no longer. Those shafts and pools of light, the tree, the graceful iron, might soon be viewed possessively by different eyes.

How do these details support the idea that the family wants to keep their home?

- A** They show that the family regrets that others will enjoy these things instead of them.
- B** They create a gloomy atmosphere that expresses the family’s sadness.
- C** They give the impression that the garden is too lovely for anyone to own.
- D** They warn that other people have tried unsuccessfully to purchase the home.

Answer Form

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

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

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

Number
Correct

3



- 2** When Mama talks about moving into a nice apartment somewhere, she is really just trying to make Helen and Maud Martha feel better about moving. Which sentence from the passage **best** supports this assertion?
- A** "These things might soon be theirs no longer."
 - B** "'Somewhere on South Park, or Michigan, or in Washington Park Court.'"
 - C** "Those flats, as the girls and Mama knew well, were burdens on wages twice the size of Papa's."
 - D** "'And I have other friends that wouldn't come down this far for anything, unless they were in a taxi.'"

- 3** Maud Martha does not believe at all that moving might be a good thing, as Helen and Mama suggest. Which sentence from the passage **best** supports this inference?
- A** "'We'll be moving into a nice flat somewhere,' said Mama."
 - B** "'I have friends I'd just as soon not bring here.'"
 - C** "She merely gazed at a little hopping robin in the tree, her tree, and tried to keep the fronts of her eyes dry."
 - D** "She knew from the way they looked at her, that this had been a mistake."

- 4** Explain what you can infer about what the house represents to the characters in this story. Use at least **two** pieces of direct evidence from the story to support your answer.



Self Check

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 51.