Inference

- What is implied meaning?
- Why would meaning be implied rather than stated directly?
- What is slanted language or connotation of words?
- What kinds of clues imply meaning?
- How do good readers draw conclusions?

Everyday Reading Skills: Reading Newspaper Editorials
What Is an Inference?

An inference is a meaning that is suggested rather than directly stated. Inferences are implied through clues that lead the reader to make assumptions and draw conclusions. For example, instead of making a direct statement, “These people are rich and influential,” an author could imply that idea by describing a palatial residence, expensive heirlooms, and prominent friends. Understanding an inference is what we mean by “reading between the lines,” because the suggestion, rather than the actual words, carries the meaning.

Inference from Cartoons

Cartoons and jokes require you to read between the lines and make a connection. They are funny because of the unstated rather than the stated. When listeners catch on to a joke, it simply means they have made the connection and recognized the unstated inference. For example, what inference makes the following joke funny?

Sam:  Do you know how to save a politician from drowning?
Joe:  No.
Sam:  Good.

Taxpayers like to dislike politicians, and this joke falls into that category. As a rule, when you have to explain the inference in a joke, the fun is lost. You want your audience to make the connection and laugh uproariously.

Look at the following cartoon. What do you know about a jury? What is being implied about this one?

“Eleven hamburgers, one frank. Eleven coffees, one tea. Eleven apple pies, one chocolate cake. . . .”

—Elements of Public Speaking, by Joseph DeVito
EXPLANATION  A jury is composed of twelve people who are trying to reach consensus on a verdict of guilty or not guilty. The implication in this cartoon is that eleven of the jurors are in agreement on everything, including what to eat, and one juror is totally opposed. Ordering food implies that the discussion may drag on for a long and difficult time. Frequently, a point that takes some figuring out and taps our imagination has a greater impact on us than one that is obviously stated.

The following cartoon contains many details that imply meaning. Use the details to figure out the meaning of the cartoon and answer the questions.

1. What are the people in line hoping to do in “Retirement Park?”

2. What is the significance of the setting sun in the background?

3. Why do the people waiting in line look so distressed?

4. What message does this cartoon have for young people?

5. What are many older people doing now to supplement their retirement income?

6. What is the main point of the cartoon?
Recognizing Suggested Meaning

In reading, as in everyday life, information may or may not be stated outright. For example, someone's death would seem to be a fact beyond question. An author could simply state, “He is dead,” but often it is more complicated than that. In literature and in poetry, such a fact might be divulged in a more dramatic manner, and the reader is left to put the clues together and figure out what happened. Read the following excerpt from a story about a shipwrecked crew's struggle to shore. What clues tell you that the oiler is dead?

In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler. His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea.

—The Open Boat, by Stephen Crane

The oiler’s head is face down in the shallow water. When the waves rush in to shore, his face is in the water; and when they wash out, his face or forehead touches the sand. He is bobbing at the water’s edge like a dead fish and cannot possibly be alive with his face constantly underwater or buried in the sand. The man must be dead, but the author doesn’t directly state that.

Two paragraphs later in the story the author writes:

The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous; but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land’s welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.

—The Open Boat, by Stephen Crane

The “still and dripping shape” and the “sinister hospitality of the grave” support your interpretation of the clues, even though the author still has not directly stated, “The oiler is dead.” Imposing the idea is perhaps more forceful than making a direct statement.

Connecting with Prior Knowledge

Authors, like cartoonists, use inferences that require linking old knowledge to what is being read at the time. Clues that imply meaning may draw on an assumed knowledge of history, current issues, or social concerns. Just as in making the connection to understand the punchline of a joke, the reader must make a connection in order to understand the inference.

EXAMPLE

A TURNING POINT

More than 3,000 people were killed, thousands more were wounded, and the loss of property was unprecedented in the worst terrorist attack in history. The events horrified people around the world who understood that two symbols of American global financial and military dominance had been singled out in a carefully planned and executed mission of destruction. The event was immediately compared to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.


1. What was the symbol of financial dominance that is not named here? Where was the attack?
2. What is the symbol of military dominance? Where was the destruction?
3. When did these terrorist attacks occur?
4. Why was the attack compared to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941?

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**Personal Feedback 1**

1. Who supplied your references for college admission or for your last job? 

2. What professor would you ask to write you a letter of reference for an award or scholarship? Why would you choose that particular professor? 

3. Describe how textbooks differ from literature books. 

4. Katharine Hepburn told Barbara Walters that she would describe herself as an oak tree. What plant would you choose to describe yourself? 

5. Describe the personal dynamics of your reading class. 

6. What have you added to the class? 

7. What preparation have you done for next term? What courses do you plan to take and why? 

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Tear out and submit to your instructor.
EXPLANATION  The symbol of financial dominance was the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The symbol of military dominance was the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The attacks occurred on September 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked passenger planes and used them to bomb buildings. The attacks precipitated a war, just as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II. The following exercise illustrates how authors expect readers to connect with prior knowledge.

Link prior knowledge to answer the questions that follow each passage.

Passage 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOOTING

After seeing the light in the North Church, Paul Revere and William Dawes rode through the countryside alerting the colonists that British troops were moving across the back bay. In Concord and Lexington, trained militiamen were waiting to respond.

Where and approximately when was this?  

Passage 2

FOOT BINDING

Foot binding was a form of violence against women. The woman’s tiny feet, which made it difficult for her to walk, were a “marker” of status, indicating that her husband was wealthy and did not need her labor. It also made her dependent on him.


Although not directly stated, foot binding was practiced in what country?

Passage 3

TELLING THE STORY

The account of that morning some weeks later belongs to history. Three planes take off during the night of 6 August from Tinian in the Mariana Islands. Paul Tibbets is the group’s commander. Eatherly opens the formation. There are no bombs in his plane; as for the others, no one suspects what a terrible device is hidden inside the Enola Gay. A bigger contrivance, they think, nothing more. Eatherly’s job is to pinpoint the target with maximum accuracy. He must establish whether weather conditions allow for the center to be Hiroshima, Kokura or Nagasaki, or whether they should continue towards secondary targets. He tells the story of that morning’s events in a voice devoid of emotion which suggests that the recitation is the thousandth one.

—“Telling the Story: The Man from Hiroshima,” by Maurizio Chierici, first published in Granta 22, Autumn 1987

1. What is the “bigger contrivance”?


Recognizing Slanted Language

Writers choose words to manipulate the reader and thus to control the reader's attitude toward a subject. Such words are referred to as having a particular connotation or slant. The dictionary definition of a word is its denotation, but the feeling or emotion surrounding a word is its connotation. For example, a real estate agent showing a rundown house to a prospective buyer might refer to the house as “neglected” rather than “deteriorated.” Both words mean rundown. Neglected sounds as if a few things have been forgotten, whereas deteriorated sounds as if the place is rotting away and falling apart.

Some words in our society seem to have an automatic positive or negative slant. Words such as socialist, cult member, and welfare state have a negative emotional effect; words such as the American worker, democracy, and everyday people have a positive effect. The overall result of using slanted language is to shift the reader's attitude toward the point of view, positive or negative, advocated by the author.

exercise 3

Label the following phrases as either P (slanted positively) or N (slanted negatively).

_____ 1. warm and winning ways
_____ 2. an engaging smile
_____ 3. appearing remote and self-involved
_____ 4. a savvy salesperson
_____ 5. candid and open
_____ 6. the picture of efficiency
_____ 7. weak and sickly
_____ 8. words like daggers
_____ 9. a loose cannon
_____10. spoken without thinking
_____11. not the sharpest knife in the drawer
_____12. a creased brow
_____13. an exasperated look
_____14. wise beyond her years
_____15. a nurturing mother
_____16. an easy mark
_____17. a hostile takeover
_____18. a dream fulfilled
_____19. the promise of tomorrow
_____20. the brotherhood of man
Indicate whether the boldface words in the following passages are \( P \) (positive) or \( N \) (negative), and explain your answer.

1. Opponents forecast that the increased labor cost from a large minimum-wage hike would jeopardize hundreds of thousands of unskilled jobs.

\[ \text{P} \]


2. One of the best Candid Camera illustrations of the subtle power of social situations to control behavior is the “elevator caper.” A person riding a rigged elevator first obeys the usual silent rule to face the front, but when a group of other passengers all face the rear, the hapless victim follows the group and faces the rear as well.

\[ \text{N} \]


3. In the United States and other highly developed countries, infectious disease accounts for about 4% to 8% of deaths, compared with death rates of 30% to 50% in developing regions.

\[ \text{N} \]

—Biology, Sixth Edition, by Eldra P. Solomon et al.

4. Early on in your approach to cooking—or in running a restaurant—you have to determine whether or not you are willing to commit fully and completely to the idea of the pursuit of excellence. I have always looked at it this way: if you strive for perfection—an all out assault on total perfection—at the very least you will hit a high level of excellence, and then you might be able to sleep at night.

\[ \text{P} \]


5. Finding Mozart a job was not easy. Most of his prospective employers thought that he was too young and too talented (“overqualified” is the word we would use today) for a normal position. Indeed, any music director would have been threatened by
exercise 5

Write a word or phrase with a positive connotation that could be substituted for each of the following negative words. For example, positive substitutes for the word criticism might be feedback and advice. Answers may vary.

1. strange  
2. wild  
3. shy  
4. bossy  
5. skinny  
6. nosy  
7. hyperactive  
8. slow  
9. old  
10. tree-hugger

**Drawing Conclusions**

Readers use both stated and unstated ideas to draw logical conclusions. They use the facts, the hints, and their prior knowledge to piece together meaning. The facts and clues lead to assumptions, which then lead to conclusions. Read the following passage and explain how the conclusion is suggested.

**EXAMPLE**  
**MY HOUSE**

My master still went to school every day and, coming home, he’d still bottle himself up in his study. When he had visitors he’d continue to complain about his job.

I still had nothing to eat so I did not become very fat but I was healthy enough. I didn’t become sick like Kuro and, always, I took things as they came. I still didn’t try to catch rats, and I still hated Osan, the maid. I still didn’t have a name but you can’t always have what you want. I resigned myself to continue living here at the home of this school-teacher.

—Excerpt from *I Am a Cat*, by Natsume Soseki

**Conclusion**: The narrator of the book is a cat.

What clues suggest this conclusion? ________________________________
The term *my master* may lead to an initial suspicion of a pet, and “try to catch rats” clearly suggests a cat. The option of continuing to live in the home supports the idea of a cat. The book, as you might guess, is titled *I Am a Cat*.

In passages 1 through 3, identify the clues that lead to the stated conclusions. In passages 4 and 5, state the conclusion and identify the clues.

**Passage 1**

**CULTS: THE PEOPLE’S TEMPLE**

A cult is usually united by total rejection of society and extreme devotion to the cult’s leader. The People’s Temple is a dramatic example. In the 1970s their leader, Jim Jones, preached racial harmony, helped the poor, established drug-rehabilitation programs, staged protest demonstrations against social injustices, and helped elect sympathetic politicians. He moved his cult from San Francisco to Jonestown, Guyana, because, he said, evil people in the United States would try to destroy the Temple. He told his flock that to build a just society required a living God—namely, himself. To prove his deity, he “healed parishioners by appearing to draw forth cancers” (which actually were bloody chicken gizzards). He claimed that he had extraordinary sexual gifts, required Temple members to turn over all their possessions to him, and insisted that they call him “Dad” or “Father.” Then the People’s Temple shocked the world. In November 1978 more than 900 members committed mass suicide at the order of their leader.

—*Sociology*, Third Edition, by Alex Thio

**Conclusion:** Jim Jones brainwashed cult members into total submission.

What clues suggest this conclusion? _________________________________

___________________________

___________________________

**Passage 2**

**THE TOBACCO CRAZE**

The first European smoker, Rodrigo de Jerez, was with Columbus. Jerez was jailed by the Spanish Inquisition for seven years because of his bad habit, but he was the wave of the future. Slowly, inexorably, the practice of “drinking” tobacco smoke spread throughout Europe. James I, who found smoking “loathsome” and forbade it in his presence, could not stop it. Nor could the Sultan of Turkey, who threatened to execute puffers.

The lure of the exotic—the trendy—has always been potent among the leisured classes, and some European physicians seized on tobacco as a miracle drug—“the holy, healing herb,” “a sovereign remedy to all diseases”—prescribing it liberally to their patients. Throughout the 1500s, the Spanish were pleased to meet Europe’s demand from their West Indian plantations.


**Conclusion:** Although initially rejected by political leaders, tobacco became an accepted and sought after commodity.
Passage 3

**NICHOLAS II (1894–1917)**

Last of the Romanov tsars, Nicholas II was in almost every respect an unfortunate man. Besides having been influenced by a reactionary father and a strong-willed mother, he was dull, weak, stubborn, insensitive, and totally devoid of the qualities required for successfully administering a great empire. The day following his coronation, in conformity with tradition, he scheduled a banquet celebration for the people of the capital. A huge throng, possibly half a million souls, turned out for the great event. At one point the crowd surged forward and more than a thousand people were trampled to death. But Nicholas and the tsarina attended a ball at the French embassy that night and apparently spent a most enjoyable evening.

—A History of the Western World, by Solomon Modell

**Conclusion:** Nicholas and the tsarina had a total lack of concern for the welfare of the people.

What clues suggest this conclusion? ____________________________

__________________________

Passage 4

**THE FUTURE OF M-COMMERCE**

M-commerce has everything to do with speed and location, with short requests for information and prompt, relevant replies. Consider a scenario from the near future. Customers entering a butcher shop are offered a discount for waving their cell phone through an infrared sensor that records the telephone’s number. Business at the store is brisk throughout the day. But near closing time, the butcher is anxious to get rid of some prime cuts of Argentine beef.


What conclusion does the author imply? ____________________________

__________________________

__________________________

What clues suggest this conclusion? ____________________________

__________________________
Passage 5

**LANDMINES**

Cheap and easy to deploy, many fighting forces routinely use mines to defend a frontier, deny opponents the use of a road, and many other purposes. Often these landmines remain active long after the fighting has ceased, posing a significant threat to the safety of the civilian population. The magnitude and horror of this problem sparked a grassroots effort to ban landmines.

The campaign received a major boost in 1996 when Diana, Princess of Wales, joined in the effort, going to places most affected by land mines, comforting victims, and bringing the issue to the attention of millions. When Princess Diana died in a car crash in August 1997, sorrow often turned into commitments to support her charitable interests, including the effort to ban mines. Only a few nations remain opposed to the landmine convention.


What conclusion does the author imply?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What clues suggest this conclusion?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

exercise 7

Use a combination of inference skills to read the following passages and answer the questions.

**Passage 1**

**TEXAS TOUGH**

Lyndon Baines Johnson was a complex man—shrewd, arrogant, intelligent, sensitive, vulgar, vain, and occasionally cruel. He loved power, and he knew where it was, how to get it, and how to use it. “I’m a powerful sonofabitch,” he told two Texas congressmen in 1958 when he was the most powerful legislator on Capitol Hill. Everything about Johnson seemed to emphasize or enhance his power. He was physically large, and seemed even bigger than he was, and he used his size to persuade people. The “Johnson Method” involved “pressing the flesh”—a back-slapping, hugging sort of camaraderie. He also used symbols of power adroitly, especially the telephone which had replaced the sword and pen as the symbol of power. “No gunman,” remarked one historian, “ever held a Colt. 44 so easily” as Johnson handled a telephone.

A legislative genius, Johnson had little experience in foreign affairs. Reared in the poverty of the Texas hill country, educated at a small teachers’ college, and concerned politically with domestic issues, before becoming president LBJ had expressed little interest in foreign affairs. “Foreigners are not like the folks I am used to,” he often said, and whether it was a joke or not he meant it. He was particularly uncomfortable around foreign dignitaries and ambassadors, often receiving them in groups and scarcely paying attention to them. “Why do I have to see them?” he once asked. “They’re [Secretary of State] Dean Rusk’s clients, not mine.”

—*America and Its People, Third Edition*, by James Martin et al.
1. LBJ had an enormous ego.  
2. LBJ used the telephone to influence votes.  
3. LBJ quickly learned to perform in international situations.  
4. LBJ’s background is reflected in both his genius and his flaws.  
5. LBJ was the right person to be president during the Vietnam War.  
6. The phrase replaces the sword suggests a negative connotation.

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**Passage 2**

**THE REIGN OF LOUIS XVI (1774–1793)**

A plain, fat, rather stupid young man, who loved to hunt and tinker with locks, Louis XVI succeeded his grandfather (whose one legitimate son, Louis XVI’s father, died in 1765) at the age of twenty. His modesty and inherent kindness did not serve him well. He was far too simple, possessed an almost total lack of self-confidence, and could be made to change his mind with relative ease. His wife, Marie Antoinette, an Austrian princess, was pretty, not well educated, shallow, and selfish. Totally unconcerned with the people’s welfare, she devoted herself to jewels and costly clothes, gambling and flirtation, masques and balls. Not completely satisfied with court life, she insisted on interfering in governmental affairs and sabotaged, to the extent that she could, whatever chance existed for the reformation of French life. Her liberal emperor-brother, Joseph II of Austria, reprimanded her, but his words went unheeded.

—*A History of the Western World*, by Solomon Modell

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Answer with T (true) or F (false).

______ 1. Louis XVI and his wife were probably loved and respected by his people.  
______ 2. Despite his wife’s influence, Louis XVI had many of the qualities of a great leader.  
______ 3. Louis XVI was firm in his decisions.  
______ 4. Marie Antoinette’s extravagance was probably resented by the people.  
______ 5. Joseph II understood the possible repercussions of Marie Antoinette’s actions.  
______ 6. The reformation of French life would probably have been a benefit to the people.  
______ 7. The phrase tinker with locks suggests hard work.

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**Passage 3**

**“LIZZIE BORDEN TOOK AN AX”**

Andrew [Borden] was rich, but he didn’t live like a wealthy man. Instead of living alongside the other prosperous Fall River citizens in the elite neighborhood known as The Hill, Andrew resided in an area near the business district called the flats. He liked to save time...
as well as money, and from the flats he could conveniently walk to work. For his daughters Lizzie and Emma, whose eyes and dreams focused on The Hill, life in the flats was an intolerable embarrassment. Their house was a grim, boxlike structure that lacked comfort and privacy. Since Andrew believed that running water on each floor was a wasteful luxury, the only washing facilities were a cold-water faucet in the kitchen and a laundry room water tap in the cellar. Also in the cellar was the toilet in the house. To make matters worse, the house was not connected to the Fall River gas main. Andrew preferred to use kerosene to light his house. Although it did not provide as good light or burn as cleanly as gas, it was less expensive. To save even more money, he and his family frequently sat in the dark.

The Borden home was far from happy. Lizzie and Emma, ages thirty-two and forty-two in 1892, strongly disliked their stepmother Abby and resented Andrew’s penny-pinching ways. Lizzie especially felt alienated from the world around her. Although Fall River was the largest cotton-manufacturing town in America, it offered few opportunities for the unmarried daughter of a prosperous man. Society expected a woman of Lizzie’s social position to marry, and while she waited for a proper suitor, her only respectable social outlets were church and community service. So Lizzie taught a Sunday School class and was active in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the Ladies’ Fruit and Flower Mission, and other organizations. She kept herself busy, but she wasn’t happy.

In August 1892, strange things started to happen in the Borden home. They began after Lizzie and Emma learned that Andrew had secretly changed his will. Abby became violently ill. Abby told a neighborhood doctor that she had been poisoned, but Andrew refused to listen to her wild ideas. Shortly thereafter, Lizzie went shopping for prussic acid, a deadly poison she said she needed to clean her sealskin cape. When a Fall River druggist refused her request, she left the store in an agitated state. Later in the day, she told a friend that she feared an unknown enemy of her father’s was after him. “I’m afraid somebody will do something,” she said.

On August 4, 1892, the maid Bridget awoke early and ill, but she still managed to prepare a large breakfast of johnnycakes, fresh-baked bread, ginger and oatmeal cookies with raisins, and some three-day-old mutton and hot mutton soup. After eating a hearty meal, Andrew left for work. Bridget also left to do some work outside. This left Abby and Lizzie in the house alone. Then somebody did something very specific and very grisly. As Abby was bent over making the bed in the guest room, someone moved into the room unobserved and killed her with an ax.

Andrew came home for lunch earlier than usual. He asked Lizzie where Abby was, and she said she didn’t know. Unconcerned, Andrew, who was not feeling well, lay down on the parlor sofa for a nap. He never awoke. Like Abby, he was slaughtered by someone with an ax. Lizzie “discovered” his body, still lying on the sofa. She called Bridget, who had taken the back stairs to her attic room: “Come down quick; father’s dead; somebody came in and killed him.”

Experts have examined and reexamined the crime, and most have reached the same conclusion: Lizzie killed her father and stepmother. In fact, Lizzie was tried for the gruesome murders. However, despite a preponderance of evidence, an all male jury found her not guilty. Their verdict was unanimous and was arrived at without debate or disagreement. A woman of Lizzie’s social position, they affirmed, simply could not have committed such a terrible crime.

Even before the trial started, newspaper and magazine writers had judged Lizzie innocent for much the same reasons. As one expert on the case noted, “Americans were certain that well-brought-up daughters could not commit murder with a hatchet on sunny summer mornings.”

Jurors and editorialists alike judged Lizzie according to their preconceived notions of Victorian womanhood. They believed that such a woman was gentle, docile, and physically frail, short on analytical ability but long on nurturing instincts.
Too uncoordinated and weak to accurately swing an ax and too gentle and unintelligent to coldly plan a double murder, women of Lizzie's background simply had to be innocent because of their basic innocence.


Answer with T (true) or F (false).

1. Andrew Borden's family suffered from his efforts to save money.  
2. Abby was probably correct in telling the doctor that her illness was due to poison.  
3. Andrew was killed when he discovered his wife dead.  
4. The jury did not carefully consider the evidence against Lizzie.  
5. The Victorian stereotyping of women worked in Lizzie's favor.  
6. The author believes that Lizzie was not guilty.  
7. The quotation marks around the word discovered change the connotation of the word.

Personal Feedback

1. What characteristics do you have that are important for leadership? ____________
2. During this term, what have your leadership roles been? ______________
3. As the term has progressed, how has your thinking about college changed? ______
4. How are your friends and loved ones affecting your academic success? ______
5. What is most irritating about your roommates or people you live with? _______
6. What will you remember most from this class? ________________________

Tear out and submit to your instructor.
What is an inference?
An inference is an implied meaning that is not directly stated but can be deduced from clues. Inferences require linking old knowledge to what is being read at the time.

Why are jokes funny?
Jokes and cartoons are funny because of the implied meaning understood by the teller and the audience.

What is the effect of slanted language?
Slanted language manipulates the reader’s attitude in a positive or negative manner toward a subject.

What are conclusions?
Conclusions are generalized meaning based on clues that incorporate what you already know with what you have just discovered.

Form a five-member group and select one of the following activities. Brainstorm and then outline your major points on a transparency. Choose a member to present the group findings to the class.

- Use details, dialogue, and characters to create a cartoon about poorly performing public high schools that blames teachers for the problems.
- Use details, dialogue, and characters to create a cartoon about poorly performing public high schools that blames students for the problems.
- Use details, dialogue, and characters to create a cartoon about poorly performing public high schools that blames parents for the problems.
- Use details, dialogue, and characters to create a cartoon about poorly performing public high schools that blames a lack of money for the problems.

MyReadingLab (MRL) www.myreadinglab.com

To practice the ideas and skills introduced in this chapter, go to the “Inferences” module in the Skills section of MRL. To practice general reading comprehension, use the Levels section.

“The only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet got ourselves.”

—E.M. Forster
Have you been “stretched” by the books you are reading for pleasure? If not, consider selecting something just a bit more challenging next time. This might mean venturing into a subject, genre, or length that you have hesitated to try but that intrigues you. Beware: Growth may occur!

**Think about it, talk about it, write about it:**
What inferences did the author of your book expect you to make to understand the action or point? For example, in a suspense novel there are usually clues that allow the reader to speculate about the outcome. Sometimes the author plants false clues or “red herrings” to lead the reader to incorrect conclusions. Also consider the significance of the book’s title. Does it directly label the content of the book, or does it reflect a significant theme or meaning within the book?

Your professor may ask you to discuss these questions in a Reading Workshop journal.
“Deception is a cruel act . . . It often has many players on different stages that corrode the soul.”

—Donna A. Favors

The training to be a physician is long, rigorous, and expensive. Most young doctors finally emerge in their 30s, ready for a job and burdened with debt. However, their financial opportunities appear rosy. Based on almost 3,000 replies to Physicians Search, doctors with three years of experience in practice are making money. On the high end of the salary range, the survey indicates the following yearly base salaries without benefits or bonuses for these specialties: psychiatrist at $189,000; family practice physician at $197,000; pediatrician at $201,000; emergency medicine at $250,000; dermatologist at $407,000; plastic surgeon at $411,000; radiologist at $429,000; cardiologist at $450,000; oncologist at $473,000; neurosurgeon at $713,000. Thus, for someone who is oriented toward science and gifted in medicine, the choices of a specialty are compelling. How does a young doctor decide, even with the special training needed, which is the best career path to pursue?

THINKING BEFORE READING

Preview the selection for content and organizational clues. Activate your schema and anticipate the story.

How much medical attention do prisoners receive?
What types of crime do FBI agents investigate?
After reading this, I will probably know ________________________________.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Are you familiar with these words?

deceptively acknowledged extradition financier limp
manipulations distracting stashed extracted trance

Have you ever had a tooth extracted?
Do you think driving while talking on a cell phone is distracting?
Do you sometimes feel as though you are in a trance?

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review before or after reading.

THINKING DURING READING

As you read, use the six thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, correct, and annotate.
Dr. Jason Whitney saw the two federal agents enter the crowded restaurant. Their rumpled suits and stubble-covered cheeks betrayed the fact that they had been too busy to think of appearances for some time. They moved wearily toward him along the line of booths against the wall, looking for an empty one. When they reached the booth where the young doctor was sitting alone, he spoke to the agent he recognized, a deceptively soft-looking man in his forties.

“Hello, Tom. Have a seat.” He indicated the place opposite him with a sweep of his hand. “There probably aren’t any empty booths at this hour. A lot of people stop here for breakfast on their way to work.”

Tom Campbell slid heavily into the booth and was followed by his look-alike companion. “I’d like you to meet my partner, Joe Moffet, Dr. . . . Dr. . . .” Campbell snapped his fingers, trying to dislodge the name from his memory.

“Whitney. Jason Whitney,” the doctor offered with a smile, not the least offended at not being remembered.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Campbell acknowledged with a nod as Joe Moffet and the young doctor clasped hands briefly.

“You men look like you’ve had a hard night,” the doctor said.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Campbell answered. “We haven’t been out of our clothes in two days. Just brought a man back from Spain.”

“Extradition?”

Campbell gave a wry smile. “You could call it that. Our man was staying in Andorra, that little postage-stamp country on the border between Spain and France. They’d have let him stay there until his money ran out, which would’ve taken a couple of thousand years or so. We have no treaty with them.”

“So what happened?”

“The usual. We pretended we’d lost interest in him and waited for him to get careless. When he made the mistake of taking a walk too close to the Spanish border, we were ready. Next thing he knew, Joe and I each had one of his arms and were marching him past the Spanish customhouse. We tossed him into a car and rushed him to a plane we had waiting at one of our bases. The Spanish authorities pretended they didn’t see a thing.”

“Seems like a lot of trouble and expense over just one man,” Dr. Whitney said.

“It was Henry Hammond.” Campbell had a touch of pride in his tone.

A waitress came to take their breakfast orders. As soon as she was gone, the doctor repeated the name. “Henry Hammond . . . It does sound a bit familiar. Should I know the name?”

“He’s the big-shot financier who jumped bail and skipped the country a couple of years ago. He’d built himself an empire, using phony balance sheets and illegal manipulations. He got away with just about every nickel from his companies’ treasuries.”

“Oh, yes, now I remember. It made quite a splash in the papers at the time. What did you do with him?”

“Dropped him off at your place ten minutes ago,” Campbell said.

The second agent, Joe Moffet, had been sitting quietly, but now he twisted his face into a puzzled expression and said, “Huh?”

Campbell turned to him. “The doctor is in charge of the infirmary at the Federal House of Detention on West Street,” he explained. “He’ll probably be giving our friend a physical examination today.”

“I check all new prisoners,” Dr. Whitney agreed.

The waitress returned with their orders. They didn’t say much until they had settled back to enjoy their coffee. Then the conversation returned to Henry Hammond.

“Do you think he’ll return the money he stole?” the doctor asked.

“That’s something you’ll have to ask Hammond. We couldn’t get a word out of him all the way across the Atlantic. He probably has it safely stashed away in a couple of dozen Swiss banks. One thing’s sure—no one will ever see it again unless he wants them to.”
“I wonder what makes a man decide to be a criminal?” the doctor mused.
Campbell shrugged. “Who knows? People don’t always do the things you’d expect, or fit into patterns the way you think they should. Take yourself, for instance. What’s a bright young guy like you doing in the Public Health Service? There’s no military draft anymore, so you didn’t choose it as an alternative service the way doctors and dentists have in the past. I’ll bet you could have had your pick of the private hospitals.”

“Yes, I probably could have, but I’m happy where I am. I think it’s the best place for me. If I didn’t, I’d go somewhere else or do something else. That’s the way you feel about your job, isn’t it, Tom? That active police work is the best occupation for you?”

“You certainly have Tom figured out,” Joe Moffet said. “And you put it into words better than he does, too. He’s turned down two promotions in the last year. He could have a comfortable desk job in D.C., but he prefers to transport fugitives. Everyone thinks he’s crazy, but he says he’s happy where he is.”

They exchanged small talk for a few more minutes, then left the restaurant together. They paused to say good-bye on the sidewalk outside, and Tom Campbell’s face clouded with confusion and embarrassment. “I’m terribly sorry, Doctor, but I—uh—I’ve forgotten your name again.”

Jason Whitney smiled. “That’s all right. You’d be surprised how many people have trouble remembering me. The next time you’re at the House of Detention stop by my office to say hello. I always have a pot of coffee on the hot plate.” He turned to the other agent. “That goes for you, too, Mr. Moffet. Stop in any time. It’s been nice meeting you.”

Jason Whitney waited until ten that morning before having Henry Hammond called to the infirmary. He chose that time because the morning sick call had been taken care of by then, and his assistants were enjoying a coffee break.

“Good morning, Mr. Hammond. I’m Dr. Whitney, the Chief Medical Officer here. I’m in charge of the health and physical well-being of you and the other prisoners. It’s my job to examine each new arrival and determine whether or not he’ll require treatment of any kind.”

Hammond nodded his understanding. He had dark circles under his eyes and stood nervously in the doorway of the infirmary. He clenched and unclenched his right fist in an uneven rhythm, and his eyes swept back and forth, taking in all the cabinets and equipment. It was obvious his sudden arrest and transportation to the United States had been a severe shock.

“Step this way, please,” Whitney said, leading the way to a side room. Here there were bare white walls and the only furniture was an examination table for the patient. There was nothing that might prove distracting.

“Lie down, please. I’m going to take your blood pressure. I’m sure you’ve had it done before.”

The doctor wrapped the instrument around Hammond’s arm, and squeezed the bulb to pump air into it.

“Be as quiet as you can. I want the lowest reading possible. Relax as much as you can and try not to think of anything in particular.”

Whitney busied himself with the instrument.

“Your reading is a bit high, Mr. Hammond. I think you’re a little too tense. If you don’t mind, I’ll show you how to relax. Just close your eyes. That’s right, close your eyes and relax the eyelids. I think you can get the feeling of complete relaxation if you’ll follow my suggestions. Relax your eyelids completely. Now turn your attention to your arms. Let them become completely limp. Think of them as a pair of limp rags and when I lift them let them fall back to the table just as a couple of limp rags would. That’s very good. Now we’ll do the same with your legs. See, you’re much more relaxed and at ease now.

“I’ll just take your blood pressure again and see how well you’ve done. Oh, that’s very good. That’s very, very good. You’re far more relaxed than before. Let’s try it again, Mr. Hammond, and this time keep your eyes closed all the while. That will aid the relaxation process.
“Okay, now, relax your eyes. Now your arms. Let them become as limp as rags. Now
your legs. Relax them. Just relax your whole body. Let your whole body go limp. Let your
whole body become heavy. Get completely comfortable. Now, if you are truly relaxed,
you will find that your eyelids won’t open. Relax your eyelids and body completely. When
you feel you’re completely relaxed you may try to open your eyes. If you are completely
relaxed, they won’t open. If you cannot open your eyes, you will be completely relaxed.
That’s fine. Now try to open your eyes. See—you cannot open them. You are completely,
deeply relaxed and you cannot open your eyes. Your arms and legs are heavy and limp
and you cannot lift or move them.”

As quickly and easily as that, without once using the words sleep or hypnosis, Dr.
Jason Whitney placed Henry Hammond into a deep trance.

In the next half hour he deepened the trance still further, then extracted from Hammond
the code numbers and balances of ten secret bank accounts. Immediately before allowing the
man to wake up, he directed Hammond to forget forever that the secret accounts had ever
existed. “And you will never be able to remember my name,” he told him.

That reminded Whitney of Agent Tom Campbell. When he had hypnotized Campbell
a year before and instructed the man to keep him informed about criminals with hidden
money; he had neglected to order him always to come to the restaurant alone. He would
have to rectify that oversight at the first opportunity.

As Hammond left the infirmary to return to his cell, Dr. Whitney watched him walk
away and felt a wave of satisfaction. This was the best place for him. He didn’t have to
work the long hours a hospital might have demanded, and he was collecting far, far more
money in a single year than his professional hypnotist parents had earned in their lifetimes.

(1,714 words)

—by A. F. Oreshnik

THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

RECALL  Self-test your understanding.
Your instructor may choose to give you a true-false comprehension review.

REACT  At what point in the story did you guess what was going to happen?
Why is the blood pressure deception an excellent choice for Dr. Whitney?

What factors must combine to make Dr. Whitney's scheme a perfect and profitable crime?

Define irony, and describe how it applies to three of the characters.

1. What does the author mean by the phrase “a deceptively soft-looking man”?

2. What is the irony in Jason Whitney’s statement to the agents, “I wonder what makes a man decide to be a criminal?”

3. Why does Dr. Whitney never mention the words sleep and hypnosis?

4. What can be inferred from Dr. Whitney’s remark to Tom Campbell, “You’d be surprised how many people have trouble remembering me”?

5. Why did Dr. Whitney wait until his assistants were on their coffee break before meeting with Henry Hammond?

Now that you have finished reading the selection, “The Best Place,” go back to the beginning of the selection and read the opening quote again. On a separate sheet of paper, explain the acts of deception that are most apparent in the story. Who were the players in this deception?
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d, or fill in the blank. In order to help you analyze your strengths and weaknesses, the question types are indicated.

Main Idea 1. The cliché that best reflects the main idea of this selection is:
   a. Crime does not pay.
   b. Honesty is the best policy.
   c. You can’t judge a book by its cover.
   d. A penny saved is a penny earned.

Detail 2. Dr. Whitney is not offended when Agent Campbell fails to recall his name because
   a. Dr. Whitney is a modest man.
   b. Dr. Whitney does not want to embarrass the agent.
   c. Dr. Whitney has hypnotized Agent Campbell and told him to forget the name.
   d. Dr. Whitney knows Agent Campbell usually has trouble remembering names.

Inference 3. Dr. Whitney needs to maintain a relationship with Agent Campbell because
   a. Campbell is his source for criminals with money.
   b. he considers Campbell a friend.
   c. Dr. Whitney and Agent Campbell are partners in crime.
   d. both men are employed by the same federal agency.

Inference 4. The irony of the story is that
   a. Hammond is guilty.
   b. Hammond was captured by the FBI.
   c. Dr. Whitney is a criminal.
   d. Joe Moffet believes his partner.

Inference 5. The reader can most likely conclude that Tom Campbell turned down two promotions because
   a. he was hypnotized to do so.
   b. he enjoys the travel in transporting fugitives.
   c. he did not want to move to D.C.
   d. he makes more money in his present job of transporting fugitives.

Inference 6. The reader can conclude that Henry Hammond was most likely arrested
   a. inside Spain.
   b. by Spanish customs officials.
   c. during the night when officials were not watching.
   d. while still in Andorra.

Inference 7. The author uses the story’s title, The Best Place, to apply ironically to the situations in the lives of:
a. Dr. Whitney and Tom Campbell.
b. Tom Campbell and Joe Moffet.
c. Dr. Whitney, Tom Campbell, and Joe Moffet.
d. Dr. Whitney, Tom Campbell, Joe Moffet, and Henry Hammond.

Answer the following with T (true) or F (false).

Inference 8. The reader can conclude that Dr. Whitney most likely got his job in the Federal House of Detention by accident.

Inference 9. The reader can conclude that the FBI agents question Dr. Whitney about his job choice because they are suspicious of him.

Inference 10. The reader can conclude that Henry Hammond’s blood pressure was high.

VOCABULARY

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d for the word or phrase that best defines the boldface word used in the selection. The number in parentheses indicates the line of the passage in which the word appears.

1. “deceptively soft-looking” (5)
   a. honestly
   b. misleadingly
   c. plainly
   d. happily

2. “acknowledged with” (15)
   a. smiled
   b. remembered
   c. recognized
   d. choked

3. “Extradition?” (20)
   a. exile
   b. forced removal
   c. relation
   d. stay

4. “big-shot financier” (36)
   a. drug lord
   b. criminal
   c. waiter
   d. money manager

5. “illegal manipulations” (37–38)
   a. schemes
   b. money
   c. adjustments
   d. companies

6. “safely stashed” (52)
   a. sent
   b. found
   c. buried
   d. hidden

7. “prove distracting” (90)
   a. examining
   b. comforting
   c. drawing attention elsewhere
   d. truthful

8. “completely limp” (102)
   a. lifeless
   b. rigid
   c. clean
   d. tense

9. “a deep trance” (120)
   a. sleeplike state
   b. alertness
   c. awareness
   d. panic

10. “extracted from” (121)
    a. followed
    b. removed
    c. made up
    d. helped

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review.
VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

Idiom

An idiom is a phrase used mainly in conversation that has meaning other than the literal meaning of the words themselves. For example, the phrase “My eyes were bigger than my stomach” is an idiom. The exact, literal meaning of the words is anatomically impossible. In our culture, however, the phrase is a creative way of saying, “I took more food on my plate than I can possibly eat.” Other languages may not have this exact same expression, but they may have different idioms to express the same idea. Students who learn English as a second language find our idioms confusing when they look for an exact translation.

Idioms are slang phrases, clichés, and regional expressions. Their popularity changes with the times. Grandparents may use idioms that would make a college student shudder. Professional writers try to avoid idioms because they are considered informal.

Write the meaning of the boldface idioms in the following sentences.

1. Thomas’s first-born son is a chip off the old block. ____________________________

2. It was getting late, and the mother decided to hit the road with her children. ____________________________

3. With that inappropriate comment to his students, the professor really crossed the line. ____________________________

4. Many inventors and entrepreneurs are experts at thinking outside the box. ____________________________

5. Her father can be demanding and outspoken, but Suzanne knows that his bark is worse than his bite. ____________________________

6. Cynthia’s dog has taken obedience class three times yet remains untrained; he is definitely not the sharpest knife in the drawer. ____________________________

7. When she learned that her son had made online purchases using her debit card, the mother raked him over the coals. ____________________________

8. After seeing the negative effects of his dishonesty, the student vowed to turn over a new leaf and turn in only his own work. ____________________________
9. The new coach is in favor of discipline and hard work; he makes his players **toe the line**.

10. Students who have jobs and attend college full-time often find themselves **burning the candle at both ends**.

**ASSESS YOUR LEARNING**

Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your text to help you remember the new information and vocabulary.
“... I have been married for forty-seven years and not once have we had an argument serious enough to consider divorce; murder, yes, but divorce, never.”

—Jack Benny

The term alchemist conjures up visions of medieval wizards who mixed chemistry with the supernatural. The occult art or pseudoscience of alchemy was veiled in magic and superstition. The exceedingly optimistic goals of alchemists were to transmute or turn base metals into gold, to create a potion to cure all ills, and to discover an elixir to extend life. Alchemists were both sought after and persecuted for their secrets. Today these first practitioners of chemistry might be seen as New Age spiritualists exploring homeopathy, aromatherapy, or astrology.

THINKING BEFORE READING
Preview the selection for content and organizational clues. Activate your schema and anticipate the story.

What is an alchemist?
Were alchemists viewed positively or negatively? Why?
After reading this, I will probably know ________________________________.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW
Are you familiar with these words?

alchemist  baser metals  autopsy  insomnia  hot grog

Can chemists turn baser metals into gold?
What ingredients are in hot grog?
Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review before or after reading.

THINKING DURING READING
As you read, use the six thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, correct, and annotate.

THE ALCHEMIST’S SECRET

Sitting quietly in his little herb shop on a crooked street in the shadow of Notre Dame, Doctor Maximus did not look like a very remarkable man. But he was. Five hundred years before, he might have busied himself changing the baser metals into gold. But in Paris of the nineties, it is said, he worked at a more subtle alchemy. He changed dreams into realities—provided, of course, you could pay.
The man who came into the gaslit shop this early October evening in 1891 was prepared to pay. He stood just inside the door, blotting his forehead with a silk handkerchief although actually the weather was rather cool. He was holding a heart-shaped package tightly under one arm. “You are Monsieur le Doctor Maximus?”

“I have a problem,” said the visitor nervously. “I am told you might help me with it.”

“Indeed?” said the Doctor mildly. “Who told you that?”

The newcomer glanced around uneasily at the dim shelves, the leathery tortoise dangling from a string, the small stuffed crocodile with its dust-filmed eyes. “Last night we had a dinner guest. A foreign diplomat. First secretary of the—”

“Ah, yes, Pechkoff. It is true I did him a small service.”

“He was not very specific, you understand. But after a few glasses of cognac he talked rather freely. I got the impression . . .”

“Yes?”

“That if it weren’t for your—er—assistance he would still be married, most unhappily, to his first wife.”

Doctor Maximus took off his glasses and polished the spotless lenses. “She died, I believe, poor woman. Quite suddenly.”

“Yes,” said the visitor, “she did. So suddenly that there was an autopsy. But they discovered nothing wrong.”

“Of course not,” said Doctor Maximus, smiling gently.

“My wife,” said the visitor with a certain agitation, “is a very beautiful woman. Naturally, she has many admirers. She has always ignored them until recently, but now there is one—I don’t know which one—a younger man, no doubt. She demands that I make some settlement. I will not—”

Doctor Maximus raised his hand. “The details,” he murmured, “do not concern me.”

The visitor’s face was tight and dangerous. “I am not a man to be made a fool of!”

“No,” said the Doctor, “I can see that.”

“Madame,” said the visitor abruptly, “is very fond of candy.” He unwrapped the heart-shaped package and placed it on the counter. It was a box of chocolates. “I thought perhaps you might—ah—improve the candies at your convenience and then post them to
her. She would be very pleased. I have even prepared a card to enclose.” He took out a small rectangle of cardboard. On it was printed in neat capitals: FROM AN ADMIRER.

Doctor Maximus took the card and sighed. “My fees are not inconsiderable.”

“I did not expect them to be,” the visitor said stiffly. He did not flinch when the price was named. He paid it, in gold coins. He blotted his forehead once more with the silk handkerchief. “Will you be able to send the candy tonight?”

“Perhaps,” said the Doctor noncommittally. “We shall see. And where should it be sent?”

“Ah, yes,” said the visitor. “Of course.” And he gave Madame’s name and address. Doctor Maximus wrote the information on a slip of paper. Then he scribbled three digits on another slip and handed it over. “You sir, are customer 322. If there are any difficulties, kindly refer to that number. Not,” he added, “that there will be any.”

With one hand on the doorknob, the visitor hesitated. “It won’t be—” he wet his lips—“it won’t be painful, will it?”

“Not at all,” said Dr. Maximus. He peered over his spectacles in a benign and sympathetic fashion. “You seem rather upset. Do you want me to give you something to make you sleep?”

“No, thank you,” said his visitor nervously. “I have my own prescription for insomnia: a hot grog before going to bed.”

“Ah, yes,” said Dr. Maximus. “An excellent habit.”

“Good night,” said the visitor, opening the door into the narrow, ill-lit street.

“Good-bye,” murmured Dr. Maximus.

Taking the box of chocolates in one hand and the slip of paper in the other, he went into the little room at the rear of the shop. From the shelf above his test tubes and retorts he took a big black book, opened it, and looked at the record of the previous transaction. There it was, entered only that afternoon in his spidery handwriting: Customer 321. Complaint: the usual. Remedy: six drops of the elixir, to be administered in husband’s hot grog at bedtime...

Dr. Maximus sighed. Then, being a man who honored his commitments, he opened the box of chocolates and went to work. There was no great rush. He would post the parcel in the morning.

In the herb shop, as in life, you got just about what you paid for. But his motto was, First come, first served.

(867 words)

—by Arthur Gordon

THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

Inference Questions

1. Where did the couple learn of Dr. Maximus? ____________________

2. How was Dr. Maximus connected to Pechkoff’s wife? ____________________

3. Why was the husband who drank grog unhappy with his wife? ____________

4. How did Dr. Maximus realize that the husband was his next victim? ________

5. What can be concluded about Customer 321? ____________________
6. Why is the motto “First come, first served” ironic in this story? __________

7. Why is the phrase “being a man who honored his commitments” sarcastic? __________

8. What is the theme of this story? ________________________________

THINK AND WRITE
Considering the three goals of alchemists, why do you think they were both sought after and persecuted for their secrets? ________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Interpret the Quote
Now that you have finished reading the selection, “The Alchemist’s Secret,” go back to the beginning of the selection and read the opening quote again. What can you infer from Jack Benny’s quote about his marriage? On a separate sheet of paper, explain how this quote relates to the relationship between the husband and wife depicted in the story.

VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT
Literary Devices

A. Personification. In personification, an inanimate object is given human characteristics. Personification can embellish an image and create a mood. In the sentence “The wind sang through the trees,” the word sang gives the wind a human characteristic that adds a soft, gentle mood to the message.

Write the meaning, mood, or feeling the boldface personification adds to the message in the following sentences.

1. As the alchemist scraped the bar of gold, her skin crawled. __________

2. The glowing fireplace was the heart of the tiny shop selling health remedies. __________

3. The sun kissed the window and brightened the dark laboratory. __________
4. The shelves stretched to make room for more new youth potions.

5. As he reached for the poison potion, the stars flirted with the drifting sand.

B. **Irony.** Irony is saying one thing but meaning another. It may be used to show humor or to be sarcastic and ridicule others. The trick in irony is to be able to recognize that the speaker does not really mean what he or she says. The context in which the statement is made gives clues to the speaker's true attitude. Gullible people have trouble picking up irony and are subsequently sometimes fooled and embarrassed. For example, after a basketball game, someone may say to a player who scored only once in seventeen tries, “You're a great shot.” Here irony is used to ridicule the poor shooting.

Complete the story in each of the following sentences by choosing the response that best shows irony.

6. Each time the professor called on Larry to answer a question, he gave the wrong response. After class Frances said to Larry,
   a. “We need to study hard.”
   b. “Here’s the guy with the brains.”
   c. “I hope you weren’t embarrassed.”

7. Sue missed only one item on a chemistry exam that almost everyone else failed. When congratulated, Sue retorted,
   a. “Maybe next time I’ll study.”
   b. “I'm glad I studied.”
   c. “My major is chemistry.”

8. As newlyweds, Betsy and Fred moved to a tiny New York apartment. When their parents came to visit, a sign on the door said,
   a. “Welcome to our new place.”
   b. “Welcome to the Caribbean Hilton.”
   c. “Welcome to our friends and family.”

9. Because George’s apartment was so dirty, his friends called him
   a. the Slob.
   b. George the Unclean.
   c. Mother’s Helper.

10. Chris was known to be cheap, so friends started calling him
    a. Mr. Rockefeller.
    b. Mr. Scrooge.
    c. Mr. Chips.

**ASSESS YOUR LEARNING**

Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your text to help you remember the new information and vocabulary.
“Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs.”
—Malcolm Forbes

Diamonds have value because they sparkle and are cherished in the marketplace. That value, or price, is determined by the four Cs of diamonds: cut, clarity, color, and carat weight. If you are searching for specific prices, the range varies. For example, one company lists its one-carat round cut diamonds from $5,000 to $17,000 according to clarity and color. Another company offers one-carat stones with the same round cut for $3,000 to $16,000. For three-carat diamonds with round cuts, the range is $14,000 to $112,000 or $7,000 to $41,000. High prices make diamonds particularly attractive to thieves. Stones are also difficult to trace and easy to sell on the black market. Robbing a jewelry store may be easier than robbing a bank, and some people may think that both produce sure money.

THINKING BEFORE READING
Preview for content and organizational clues. Activate your schema and anticipate the author’s opinion.

What factors contribute to the appeal and the price of diamonds?
Why are stolen diamonds easy to resell without being traced?
After reading this, I will probably want to ____________________________.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW
Are you familiar with these words?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strolled</th>
<th>fashion-plate</th>
<th>reluctantly</th>
<th>commotion</th>
<th>cooler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>previous</td>
<td>mingled</td>
<td>dapper</td>
<td>confirmed</td>
<td>wading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is Beyoncé a fashion-plate?
Do you reluctantly go to the doctor?
When was the last time you mingled with people you didn’t know?

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review before or after reading.

THINKING DURING READING
As you read, use the six thinking strategies of a good reader: predict, picture, relate, monitor, correct, and annotate.
A DEAL IN DIAMONDS

It was seeing a girl toss a penny into the plaza fountain that gave Pete Hopkins the idea.
He was always on the lookout for money-making ideas, and they were getting tougher to
find all the time. But as he looked up from the fountain to the open window of the
Downtown Diamond Exchange, he thought he had found a good one at last.

He strolled over to the phone booth at the other side of the plaza and called Johnny
Stoop. Johnny was the classiest dude Pete knew—a real fashion-plate who could walk
into a store and have the clerks falling over themselves to wait on him. Better yet, he had
no record here in the east. And it was doubtful if the cops could link him to the long list
of felonies he had committed ten years ago in California.

“Johnny? This is Pete. Glad I caught you in.”

“I’m always in during the daytime, Pete boy. In fact, I was just getting up.”

“I got a job for us, Johnny, if you’re interested.”

“What sort?”

“Meet me at the Birchbark Bar and we’ll talk about it.”

“How soon?”

“An hour?”

Johnny Stoop groaned. “Make it two. I gotta shower and eat breakfast.”

“Okay, two. See you.”

The Birchbark Bar was a quiet place in the afternoons—perfect for the sort of meet-
ing Pete wanted. He took a booth near the back and ordered a beer. Johnny was only ten
minutes late and he walked into the place as if he were casing it for a robbery or a girl he
might pick up. Finally he settled, almost reluctantly, for Pete’s booth.

“So what’s the story?”

The bartender was on the phone yelling at somebody about a delivery, and the rest
of the place was empty. Pete started talking. “The Downtown Diamond Exchange. I think
we can rip it off for a quick handful of stones. Might be good for fifty grand.”

Johnny Stoop grunted, obviously interested. “How do we do it?”

“You do it. I wait outside.”

“Great! And I’m the one the cops grab!”

“The cops don’t grab anyone. You stroll in, just like Dapper Dan, and ask to see a tray
of diamonds. You know where the place is, on the fourth floor. Go at noon, when there’s
always a few customers around. I’ll create a commotion in the hall, and you snatch up a
handful of stones.”

“What do I do—swallow them like the gypsy kids used to do?”

“Nothing so crude. The cops are wise to that, anyway. You throw them out the
window.”

“Like hell I do!”

“I’m serious, Johnny.”

“They don’t even keep their windows open. They got air conditioning, haven’t they?”

“I saw the window open today. You know all this energy-conservation stuff—turn off
the air conditioner and open the windows. Well, they’re doing it. They probably figure four
flights up nobody’s goin’ to get in that way. But something can get out—the diamonds.”

“It sounds crazy, Pete.”

“Listen, you toss the diamonds through the window from the counter. That’s maybe
ten feet away.” He was making a quick pencil sketch of the office as he talked. “See, the
window’s behind the counter, and you’re in front of it. They never suspect that you threw
‘em out the window because you’re never near the window. They search you, they ques-
tion you, but then they gotta let you go. There are other people in the store, other sus-
pects. And nobody saw you take them.”

“So the diamonds go out the window. But you’re not outside to catch them. You’re
in the hall creating a diversion. So what happens to the stones?”

“This is the clever part. Directly beneath the window, four stories down, is the foun-
tain in the plaza. It’s big enough so the diamonds can’t miss it. They fall into the fountain
and they're as safe as in a bank vault till we decide to get them. Nobody noticed them hit the water because the fountain is splashing. And nobody sees them in the water because they’re clear. They’re like glass.”

“Yeah,” Johnny agreed. “Unless the sun—”

“The sun don’t reach the bottom of the pool. You could look right at ‘em and not notice ‘em—unless you knew they were there. We’ll know, and we’ll come back for them tomorrow night, or the next.”

Johnny was nodding. “I’m in. When do we pull it off?”

Pete smiled and raised his glass of beer. “Tomorrow.”

On the following day, Johnny Stoop entered the fourth floor offices of the Downtown Diamond Exchange at exactly 12:15. The uniformed guard who was always at the door gave him no more than a passing glance. Pete watched it all from the busy hallway outside, getting a clear view through the thick glass doors that ran from floor to ceiling.

As soon as he saw the clerk produce a tray of diamonds for Johnny, he glanced across the office at the window. It was open about halfway, as it had been the previous day. Pete started walking toward the door, touched the thick glass handle, and fell over in an apparent faint. The guard inside the door heard him fall and came out to offer assistance.

“What’s the matter, mister? You okay?”

“I—I can’t—breathe . . .”

He raised his head and asked for a glass of water. Already one of the clerks had come around the counter to see what the trouble was.

Pete sat up and drank the water, putting on a good act. “I just fainted, I guess.”

“Let me get you a chair,” one clerk said.

“No, I think I’d better just go home.” He brushed off his suit and thanked them. “I’ll be back when I’m feeling better.” He hadn’t dared to look at Johnny, and he hoped the diamonds had gone out the window as planned.

He took the elevator downstairs and strolled across the plaza to the fountain. There was always a crowd around it at noon—secretaries eating their lunches out of brown-paper bags, young men casually chatting with them. He mingled unnoticed and worked his way to the edge of the pool. But it was a big area, and through the rippling water he couldn’t be certain he saw anything except the scattering of pennies and nickels at the bottom.

Well, he hadn’t expected to see the diamonds anyway, so he wasn’t disappointed.

He waited an hour, then decided the police must still be questioning Johnny. The best thing to do was to head for his apartment and wait for a call.

It came two hours later.

“That was a close one,” Johnny said. “They finally let me go, but they still might be following me.”

“Did you do it?”
“Sure I did it! What do you think they held me for? They were goin’ crazy in there. But I can’t talk now. Let’s meet at the Birchbark in an hour. I’ll make sure I’m not followed.”

Pete took the same booth at the rear of the Birchbark and ordered his usual beer. When Johnny arrived the dapper man was smiling. “I think we pulled it off, Pete. Damn if we didn’t pull it off!”

“What’d you tell them?”

“That I didn’t see a thing. Sure, I’d asked for the tray of stones, but then when there was the commotion in the hall I went to see what it was along with everyone else. There were four customers in the place and they couldn’t really pin it on any one of us. But they searched us all, and even took us downtown to be X-rayed, to be certain we hadn’t swallowed the stones.”

“I was wondering what took you so long.”

“I was lucky to be out as soon as I was. A couple of the others acted more suspicious than me, and that was a break. One of them even had an arrest record for a stolen car.”

He said it in a superior manner. “The dumb cops figure anyone who stole a car would steal diamonds.”

“I hope they didn’t get too good a look at me. I’m the one who caused the commotion, and they just gotta figure I’m involved.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll pick up the diamonds tonight and get out of town for a while.”

“How many stones were there?” Pete asked expectantly.

“Five. And all beauties.”

The evening papers confirmed it. They placed the value of the five missing diamonds at $65,000. And the police had no clue.

They went back to the plaza around midnight, but Pete didn’t like the feel of it. “They might be wise,” he told Johnny. “Let’s wait a night, in case the cops are still snoopin’ around up there. Hell, the stones are safe where they are.”

The following night, when the story had already disappeared from the papers, replaced by a bank robbery, they returned to the plaza once more. This time they waited till three A.M., when even the late crowd from the bars had scattered for home. Johnny carried a flashlight and Pete wore wading boots. He’d already considered the possibility that one or two of the diamonds might not be found, but even so they’d be far ahead of the game.

The fountain was turned off at night, and the calmness of the water made the search easier. Wading in the shallow water, Pete found two of the gems almost at once. It took another ten minutes to find the third one, and he was ready to quit then. “Let’s take what we got, Johnny.”

The flashlight bobbed. “No, no. Keep looking. Find us at least one more.”

Suddenly they were pinned in the glare of a spotlight, and a voice shouted, “Hold it right there! We’re police officers!”

“Damn!” Johnny dropped the flashlight and started to run, but already the two cops were out of their squad car. One of them pulled his gun and Johnny stopped in his tracks. Pete climbed from the pool and stood with his hands up.

“You got us, officer,” he said.

“Damn right we got you,” the cop with the gun growled.

“The coins in that fountain go to charity every month. Anybody that would steal them has to be pretty low. I hope the judge gives you both ninety days in the cooler. Now up against the car while we search you!”

(1,000 words)

—by Edward D. Hoch, from Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine

THINKING AND WRITING AFTER READING

RECALL | Self-test your understanding.

Your instructor may choose to give you a true-false comprehension review.
Greed prompted the robbery, but how did excessive greed figure into the arrest?  

What could Pete and Johnny have done when the police caught them to escape charges for the diamond robbery?

This story was first published in 1975. What modern changes in building construction and security might make such a heist far less probable today? Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

What better or “safer” plan might have been devised for getting diamonds out of the fountain? Explain your ideas.

1. Why does Pete want Johnny rather than himself to steal the diamonds?

2. Why does Pete’s plan call for retrieving the diamonds a night or two after they are stolen?

3. What is the meaning of the phrase “Dapper Dan”?

4. Why was Johnny not arrested as a suspect in the crime?

5. What is suggested by the phrase “Pete didn’t like the feel of it”?

Now that you have finished reading the selection, “A Deal in Diamonds,” go back to the beginning of the selection and read the opening quote again. In the story, Pete and Johnny go to great lengths to steal the diamonds, yet what does Malcolm Forbes’ quote say about the value of diamonds? On a separate sheet of paper, list three things (other than diamonds) that become valuable over time, and explain why.
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following T (true) or F (false).

Inference 1. The diamond heist could have taken place in New York but not in Las Vegas.

Inference 2. Johnny Stoop would have been detained longer by the police if the robbery had been in California.

Inference 3. Pete gambled correctly that office workers having lunch around the fountain would not see the falling diamonds.

Inference 4. The irony of the story is that the police arrested the right men for the wrong reasons.

Inference 5. The reader can conclude that Johnny and Pete will be charged with the diamond robbery.

Inference 6. The security guard was suspicious of Pete’s fainting spell.

Inference 7. The reader can conclude that one of the suspected Diamond Exchange customers confessed to a previous arrest.

Inference 8. The two men were worried that the police might find the diamonds in the fountain if they waited longer than a night or two to collect them.

Detail 9. Pete and Johnny found four of the diamonds before they were arrested.

Inference 10. The police officers suspected that they had apprehended the men responsible for the diamond theft.

VOCABULARY

Answer the following with a, b, c, or d for the word or phrase that best defines the boldface word used in the selection. The number in parentheses indicates the line of the passage in which the word appears.

_____ 1. “strolled over” (5)
   a. walked slowly
   b. called
   c. walked quickly
   d. looked

_____ 2. “a real fashion-plate” (6)
   a. set of dinner dishes
   b. well-dressed person
   c. jerk
   d. criminal

_____ 3. “almost reluctantly” (22)
   a. happily
   b. willingly
   c. quietly
   d. unenthusiastically

_____ 4. “create a commotion” (32)
   a. play
   b. job
   c. interest
   d. disturbance
5. “previous day” (68) 
   a. subsequent 
   b. prior 
   c. following 
   d. later

6. “He mingled” (82) 
   a. blended 
   b. walked 
   c. talked 
   d. shopped

7. “dapper man” (95) 
   a. grubby 
   b. smelly 
   c. elegant 
   d. happy

8. “confirmed it” (113) 
   a. reported 
   b. proved 
   c. valued 
   d. ignored

9. “Wading in” (124) 
   a. walking 
   b. looking 
   c. finding 
   d. hiding

10. “in the cooler” (136) 
    a. refrigerator 
    b. freezer 
    c. drink 
    d. jail

Your instructor may choose to give a true-false vocabulary review.

**VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT**

**Figurative Language**

Writers and speakers use figurative language to spark the imagination and make the message more sensual and visual. The words create images in the mind and activate associations stored in memory. Figurative language is challenging, because figuring out the meaning demands logical and creative thinking.

**A. Simile.** A simile uses the words *like* or *as* to compare two unlike things. The purpose of a simile is to strengthen the message by adding a visual image. Similes usually dramatize the characteristics of nouns. As a reader, you must figure out the unique characteristic the simile is describing. In the sentence, “The new teacher stood like a statue in front of the class,” what does the simile add to the meaning? “Like a statue” describes the teacher as “stiff and unmoving.” The simile adds humor and visual interest to the sentence.

Write the meaning of the boldface similes in the following sentences.

1. The boys were **like two peas in a pod** working on their handheld electronic devices.

2. My grandmother claims to be **as old as the hills**.

3. Her face was **as fresh as the morning dew**.

4. When he walked into the arcade, the little boy smiled **like a fox in a henhouse**.

5. Looking for the missing check was **like trying to find a needle in a haystack**.
B. **Metaphor.** Whereas a simile uses the words *like* or *as* to compare two unlike things, a metaphor does not use those words but instead states the comparison directly. For example, “The soccer player was a tiger” is a metaphor that dramatizes the player’s aggressive spirit. If the statement had been, “The girl plays soccer like a tiger,” the figure of speech would be a simile, but the meaning would remain the same.

Write the meaning of the boldface metaphors in the following sentences.

6. Superman is **made of steel.** ________________________________

7. Her words were **daggers** directed toward his heart. ________________

8. She was a **willow** in the winds of time. ____________________________

9. The woman had **built a wall** between herself and others. __________

10. He was her **world.** _____________________________

**ASSESS YOUR LEARNING**

Review confusing questions, seek clarification, and make notes in your textbook to help you remember the new information and vocabulary.
Come Together, Hold Together, and Shut

Study the roots, words, and sentences.

### Roots
- **greg**: come together, group
- **clud, clus**: shut
- **ten, tent, tain, tinu**: hold together, hold

### Words with **greg** = *come together, group*
- Does a **congregation** sing hymns? Have men's clubs **desegregated**?
  - Congregate: to flock together
    Students usually *congregate* in the gym prior to the first class period.
  - Gregarious: outgoing; enjoying groups
    *Gregarious* people enjoy parties.
  - Aggregation: a collection or union
    The steering committee was an *aggregation* of members of six sororities.
  - Egregious: conspicuous; the worst of the group
    The *egregious* error was easy to detect but costly to fix.
  - Segregate: to separate from the group
    Before eating M&Ms, do you *segregate* the red ones?

### Words with **ten, tent, tain, tinu** = *hold together, hold*
- Will a lock secure the contents? Is daily maintenance needed?
  - Tenant: one who holds a lease on a house or apartment
    The present *tenant* pays his rent early.
  - Tenacity: quality of holding together for a purpose
    Do you have the drive and *tenacity* to run for public office?
  - Contented: easy in mind or satisfied
    A *contented* dog is usually one that is well fed.
  - Contentment: satisfaction with one's lot
    Money is not essential for *contentment*, but it does help.
  - Intent: purpose, concentration, holding one's mind on a single matter
    What is the *intent* of this lengthy proposal?
  - Retain: to hold secure
    With a majority in the Senate, the Republicans can *retain* power.
  - Continuously: without stopping
    In summer, the Niagara River flows *continuously* over Horseshoe Falls.
• Tenable: able to be held or defended
  Paying for the damage is a tenable resolution to the accident.
• Untenable: cannot be held
  Continuing a relationship after being abused is untenable.
• Discontented: not content
  I am discontented with my grades, because I know I can do better.

Words with clud or clus = shut
Should conclusive evidence result in a conviction? Is your conclusion final?
• Recluse: one who shuts himself or herself away from others, a hermit
  The recluse left the island only to get provisions.
• Exclude: to shut out
  Do not exclude your friends from your joys or sorrows.
• Inclusive: counting everything
  The quoted price is inclusive of tax and shipping.
• Seclude: to remove, shut off
  In order to recuperate, he wanted to seclude himself from visitors.
• Preclude: to close beforehand or hinder
  Having a mobile phone does not preclude the need for an answering machine on your home telephone.

Review
Part I
Answer the following with true (T) or false (F).

_____ 1. Gregarious students are usually shy.
_____ 2. If you segregate your socks by color, you mix them in one group.
_____ 3. When students congregate in the doorway, entrance can be difficult.
_____ 4. An egregious boor is usually a desirable companion.
_____ 5. Desegregated schools bring together students of different backgrounds.
_____ 6. Contented babies cry excessively.
_____ 7. If you retain your job, you keep your position.
_____ 8. A winning lawyer has a tenable case.
_____ 9. To seclude yourself is to join the group for the celebration.
_____10. An inclusive organization welcomes entry to many.
### Part II

Choose the best word from the list as a synonym for the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>intent</th>
<th>tenacity</th>
<th>contents</th>
<th>recluse</th>
<th>conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maintenance</td>
<td>aggregation</td>
<td>tenant</td>
<td>congregation</td>
<td>contentment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. hermit

12. renter

13. happiness

14. collection

15. purpose

16. final statement

17. flock

18. determination

19. upkeep

20. belongings
Reading Newspaper Editorials

Editorials. Unlike news stories, editorials are one of the few types of articles in newspapers that are subjective—that is, they express the opinion of a person or organization. A newspaper’s editorial pages feature the views of its management and editors. Issues discussed in these pieces are usually related to particular local, national, or international news stories.

Although the style of editorials varies as widely as people’s opinions, the basic format is usually the same: Two or three brief paragraphs describe a scene or provide historical background leading up to the main theme the writer intends to discuss. After stating a position, the writer follows up with examples, data, and analysis to support the position. Once the case has been made, alternative ideas and solutions may be provided and may also include the writer’s prediction of what will happen if the current situation is not changed. The final paragraphs summarize and restate the main idea of the editorial.

Remember that editorials always express opinions, and regardless of how persuasive the writer’s argument might be, you are free to reject it. Newspapers encourage readers to express their own opinions—either for or against editorials—in Letters to the Editor. Selected letters are published in the newspaper, usually in the same section with the editorials, and they often feature the views of readers who disagree with recent editorials or with the way in which a news story has been reported.

**Reader’s Tip Reading Editorials**

While reading editorials, ask yourself the following questions:

- What event prompted the editorial?
- What is the thesis or opinion being promoted by the author?
- Do the details prove the thesis?
- Is the author liberal or conservative?
- What is left out?
- Are the sources, facts, and other support credible?

exercise 1

Read the following editorial to answer the questions.

1. What event does the writer describe to introduce the main idea? 

2. What is the writer’s main idea?
3. What one example does the writer give that would help the mayor better understand this position? ________________________________

4. Is the author liberal or conservative? ____________________

5. Is the main idea supported primarily by facts or opinions? _________________

exercise 2

Locate an editorial that interests you in a local, city, or national newspaper. Cut out the editorial and answer the following questions:

1. What event prompted the editorial? ________________________

2. What is the author’s opinion on the issue? _____________________

3. Do the details prove the thesis? Are they credible? ________________

4. What has been left out? ________________________________