

Learning Project 3 Reading Stories

Inquiry Activity 3-3: Making Inferences

(Note: Italicized portions should be directed to students.)

1. Identifying the Problem (Test Items #s 7, 10, and 11 PA)

Scan the test questions to find out what you are being asked to do.

Questions refer to the excerpt from a story in Inquiry Activity 3-1.

7. When Antonia says, “I guess everybody thinks about old times, even the happiest people” (at the end of the first paragraph) what is she suggesting about Jim?

Jim is

- (1) happy in his new life but also happy to remember his childhood with her.
- (2) so unhappy in his new life that he often thinks of her.
- (3) happy enough in his new life that he no longer needs her.
- (4) so unhappy in his new life that he can't bear his happy memories of her.
- (5) happiest when he is daydreaming about his past with her.

10. The boy and girl who run along beside Jim as he leaves are which of the following?

- (1) Antonia's children
- (2) Jim and Antonia's children
- (3) Jim's memories of himself and Antonia as children
- (4) Children who now live on the farm
- (5) Jim's spirit as he walks away

11. When Antonia tells Jim that he is here, like her father, she is implying which of the following?

- (1) Although her father is dead, he still runs her life.
- (2) Because she lives with her father, she does not need Jim's company.
- (3) Since her father abandoned her, she has gotten used to loneliness.
- (4) Because of her children, Antonia needs neither the memory of Jim or her father.
- (5) Because she has memories of her father and Jim, she does not feel alone.

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Pre-reading strategies: Becoming familiar with the passage. Four pre-reading strategies are introduced and used consistently to help the learner develop the pre-reading skills for use with any reading they might do. The pre-reading strategies are:

- Preview the Passage
- Activate Prior Knowledge
- Consider/Build Interest
- Set a Purpose



Resist over-explaining the strategies. Encourage learners to answer the questions for each passage and allow them to come to their own insights about pre-reading.

Remember, in this step, we are focusing on becoming familiar with the question through pre-reading strategies, not answering it from the passage.

Preview the Question: *What do you see?*

You may determine that some of the students are not clear about the meaning of **inference**. You may want to elicit some definitions, and clarify that the answers are not directly stated, and that readers will need to gather information from the text and combine that with their own experience and prior knowledge.

Is there anything in the questions you don't understand?

The wording of question 11 paraphrases the text, and it may not be clear to some of your learners that Antonia is carrying memories of Jim and her father.

Activate/Build from Prior Knowledge: *Have you felt like this before? Is happiness something you can relate to? Do you have children? Do you read stories or watch TV about families from the 1800s? Is your father still alive? When you remember people you loved who are gone, how does it make you feel?*

Consider/Build Interest: *Are you interested in the answers to questions about Jim and Antonia? When you see questions about relationships, how do you react?*

Set a Purpose: *Look at the title of Inquiry Activity 3-3. What does the question ask you to do? Where might you need to go in the passage to find an answer?*

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

The task that you will complete is to read the question, reread the passage, and then answer the question. The following strategies can be helpful.

Doing the Work: *As you read the questions and reread the passage, here are some strategies to consider:*

During reading strategies that help with answering questions include **clarifying**, **analyzing**, and **questioning**. Each Inquiry Activity will use **clarify** and one other strategy. This IA uses **analyze** as a reading comprehension strategy.

Clarify:

*Scan the question and answer choices. Find and mark any words you might not know. See if the question or answer choices give you enough information to **clarify** the meaning of those words. If not, find the meaning by asking somebody or looking it up.*

Analyze:

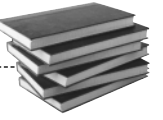
Remind yourself what the question is asking you to do.

Look in the passage and mark where there is information related to the question.

Now read each answer choice and decide if the information in the answer is:

- *not in the passage,*
- *the opposite of the information in the passage, or*
- *not accurate.*

Determine which answer choices answer the questions. You may use the graphic organizer if you prefer.



4. Sharing with Others

Telling other people what you know helps you to understand the material better. So take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge, but also to learn it more completely.

Small Groups: *Compare the answers you found with others in the group. Discuss the methods you used to find the answer, the support for your answers in the passage, and the reasons why each learner thinks his/her answers and the support are correct.*

*Agree on the correct answers and which reading strategy: **monitoring, predicting, or questioning**, you would use to answer questions that ask you to **infer**.*

With these questions, the possibility for some interesting discussion is strong. The nostalgic tone of the passage will persuade some of your learners of the characters' unhappiness, although they both seem content enough in their present roles. Question 7, about Jim's happiness, is correctly answered by the first choice. While he may feel a little pull for the farm, and may hold Antonia as a model for other women in his life, there is no sense that he has made a bad choice in moving away. Antonia, in question 11, will not be lonesome because of the memories she cites in the first paragraph (choice 5). Jim's memories, as he walks back over the familiar road, are personified in the imaginary children at play (choice 3).

One of the themes pervading Willa Cather's work is the differing roles for their lives that the second generation of pioneers follow. The parents were farmers and settlers; their children often become the lawyers, bankers and other professional folk in the no longer frontier community

Whole Class: *Report your group's answers to the questions, and indicate the methods used to find the answers, the support for the answers chosen, and your group's strategy for answering questions that ask you to **infer** supporting details from the passage.*

*Take notes on any different approaches to answering questions that ask you to make an **inference** from the passage.*

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Reflecting: *Think about how well you understood what you have done.*

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don't get much time to think about what you learned.

*How were the three questions alike? What did they ask you to **infer**?*

How did reading the passage for one question influence your thinking about other questions?

The correct answers to the questions about a given passage will be consistent. If your learners notice this, they will have another test-taking strategy that can help them.

Were you thinking about all of the questions together or one at a time? Explain.

How does supporting your answer from the passage help you in getting the answer?

How were the questions the same? How were they different?

How were the strategies to answer the questions the same? How were they different?

Extending: *Extend what you learned to new situations.*

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information presented in the Practice Test question to other information or situations.

*Describe **inference** in your own words.*

*Where else in your life has someone made an **inference**?*



In your opinion, when is **inference** useful?

When is it harmful?

If the discussion about the choices varied widely, this might be a place to discuss the importance of being sure about the facts when readers make **inferences**.

What other Inquiry Activities involved questions that asked you to make an **inference**?

You may find it useful to discuss that writers will sometimes try to mislead their readers by hinting at things that did not or will not take place.

Has this slowing down of the question answering process helped you in any way in reading at home or on the job?

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods presented in this IA.

What did you learn from this activity?

What parts of the activity worked best for you? Explain.

What parts did not work well for you? Explain.

What parts of this Inquiry Activity will you use when taking the GED test? Why?

How did reading this way make you feel?

