

INTRODUCTION

What is the **FOCUS** series?

FOCUS is a reading-strategy practice series. Each student book in the series provides brief instruction and concentrated practice for students in one targeted Reading Strategy. *FOCUS* also allows students the opportunity for self-assessment of their performance. It allows teachers the opportunity to identify and assess a student's level of mastery.

6 Reading Strategies featured in the *FOCUS* series:

- Understanding Main Idea and Details
- Understanding Sequence
- Recognising Cause and Effect
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Making Predictions
- Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences

The *FOCUS* series spans 8 reading levels (1.0–8.9). The reading passages in each book are designed so that the book can be used by all students performing at that reading level. The reading passages in each book progress from low to high along that reading level range.

Book	Reading Level
Book A	1.0–1.9
Book B	2.0–2.9
Book C	3.0–3.9
Book D	4.0–4.9
Book E	5.0–5.9
Book F	6.0–6.9
Book G	7.0–7.9
Book H	8.0–8.9

What is Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, the Reading Strategy featured in this *FOCUS* book?

Drawing a conclusion or making an inference is figuring out information that is suggested or hinted at but that is not directly or fully stated or explained in a passage. To figure out information that is not directly stated, use information that *is* directly stated, along with what you already know from your own experience. Conclusions and inferences can relate to people, places, objects, situations, events and so on.

What is in each student book?

There are 48 student books in the *FOCUS* series. There is one student book for each of the 6 Reading Strategies, at each of the 8 reading levels. Each student book contains:

- *To the Student*
This introduces the program and should be read and discussed with students to make sure they understand what they are to do in the book.
- *Table of Contents*
- *Learn About (Modelled Practice)*
These two pages provide basic instruction and modelling in the understanding and application of the Reading Strategy. The Learn About should be read and discussed with students to make sure they understand the Reading Strategy. Additional tips for helping students understand and use the Reading Strategy are included in the Reading Strategy Tips for the Teacher on pages 12–13 of this teacher guide.
- *Lesson Preview (Guided Practice)*
These two pages include a sample reading passage and two selected-response questions with explanations of why each of the eight answer choices is correct or not correct. The Lesson Preview should be read, worked through, and discussed with students to make sure they understand how to answer strategy-based questions.
- *20 Lessons (Independent Practice)*
Each two-page lesson contains one reading passage, four strategy-based selected-response questions and one strategy-based constructed-response writing question.

Reading Passages: The reading passages progress across the reading level. The passage genres include:

—**Fiction:** personal narrative, realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy fiction, mystery, folktale, fable, legend

—**Nonfiction:** report, article, interview, letter, postcard, book report, movie review, diary entry, journal entry, biography, textbook lesson, directions, instructions, recipe, invitation, announcement, experiment

Selected-response questions: In each lesson, students apply the Reading Strategy to a reading passage and then choose the correct answers for four selected-response (multiple-choice) strategy-based questions. You should model how to answer these kinds of questions using information on the Lesson Preview pages.

Constructed-response writing questions: In each lesson, students apply the Reading Strategy to a reading passage and then write a short response to a strategy-based question. You should model how to answer these kinds of questions by using one of the sample answers provided on pages 28–29 of this teacher guide.

- *Tracking Chart*
Students use this chart for noting their completion of and performance in each lesson.
- *Self-Assessments*
These five forms allow students the opportunity for self-assessment of their performance.
- *Answer Form*
Students may use this form to record their answers to the eighty selected-response questions and to indicate that they have answered each of the twenty constructed-response writing questions.

READING STRATEGY TIPS FOR THE TEACHER

When you draw conclusions or make inferences, you come to a decision or form an opinion by “adding up” information that is given along with what you already know about the information from your own experience. You aren’t looking for information that is hidden, as in a mystery, you are merely uncovering that which is not directly stated. It is “in the background”. Drawing conclusions and making inferences means “reading between the lines” to fill in missing information.

Conclusions and inferences can be made about people, times, locations, situations, events, feelings, attitudes, traits and so on. Conclusions and inferences are made about things that already exist but aren’t directly stated or fully explained in a passage. For example, the Learn About paragraph says that Andrea tastes salt on her lips and that there is sand and sun, a breeze smelling like seaweed and the sound of pounding waves. Andrea says that this is her favourite place to be. What does the paragraph *not* tell you? It doesn’t tell you exactly where Andrea is. As you think about the salt, sand, sun, breeze and waves, you can reason or figure out that Andrea is at the beach because you would associate those things with a beach.

Some passage clues relate to concrete things. For example, if you are reading a story about a character who is bouncing up and down in the saddle and dodging stray tree branches, you can figure out that the character is riding a horse, perhaps on a narrow path. You can figure this out whether the story says so or not. If the character is squinting his eyes in the sun, you can figure out that the story is taking place outside, during the day.

Learn About

Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences

Not all information is directly stated in a reading passage. Some is merely suggested or hinted at. But you can figure out information that is not directly stated. To do this, think about *information that is directly stated*. Also think about *what you already know*. Then you can figure out information that is not directly stated.

Figuring out information that is not directly stated is called **drawing conclusions and making inferences**.

Read this paragraph about Andrea. As you read, think about the information that is directly stated. Also think about what you already know.

Andrea sat up slowly, licking the salt taste from her lips. Her toes wiggled in the moist sand, and her back, arms and legs lay still in the warmth of the sun. The breeze carried an odour of seaweed and a pounding sound of waves. With her eyes still closed, she sighed, “This is my favourite place to be!”



The paragraph tells about Andrea. Two things the paragraph does *not* tell you though are where Andrea is and what she is doing. How can you figure out these things? What are the hints?

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Some passage clues relate to abstract concepts, such as character traits, feelings, attitudes, motivations and so on. A story might say that Krista waited for her younger brother, even though she wanted to run ahead. The story might not say specifically that Krista is kind. But you can figure this out by thinking about Krista’s actions and what you already know or think about those kinds of actions. Or, you might decide that Krista is silly, depending on your own attitude about those kinds of actions.

You can’t draw conclusions or make inferences about things for which no clues are given. For example, you can’t figure out the colour of Andrea’s hair because there are no clues given about this. It’s fine to form a picture or image in your mind, but there are no specific details in the passage to back it up.

To figure out information that is not directly stated or explained, think about the information that *is* directly stated. The paragraph tells you that Andrea sat up slowly. It says that she tastes salt on her lips and feels sand and sun on her skin. It also says that she smells seaweed and hears waves pounding.

Then think about what you already know. If Andrea sat up, that means that she probably had been lying down, or sitting back. People often relax in sitting or lying positions. Andrea tastes salt and feels sun and sand. She smells seaweed and hears waves pounding. You probably know that these things are often found at the beach. So you can figure out that Andrea is probably relaxing on a beach.

Details in Passage	What You Already Know	Conclusion or Inference
Andrea sits up. She tastes salt, feels sand and sun, hears waves and smells seaweed.	+	People relax by sitting or lying down. Salt, sand, sun, waves and seaweed are all found at the beach.
		=
		Andrea is probably relaxing at the beach.

From what the paragraph tells you and from what you already know, you can figure out where Andrea is and what she is doing.

Remember!

Figuring out information that is not directly stated is called drawing conclusions and making inferences.

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Here is a way to think about conclusions and inferences: A conclusion is a big idea figured out by thinking about some related smaller ideas.

Inferences are small ideas figured out by thinking about a related bigger idea.

Definitions: “The explicitness with which teachers teach comprehension strategies makes a difference in learner outcomes, especially for low-achieving students (modeling and careful scaffolding is key).” (Abadiano & Turner, 2003, p. 76).

Abadiano, H. R., & Turner, J. (2003). The RAND report: Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 39(2), 74–79.

A conclusion or inference is drawn about something that already exists but isn’t directly stated. For example: *What is Paul doing? What is the weather like?*

A prediction, on the other hand, is about something that might happen in the future. For example: *What will Paul probably do next? Will the weather probably stay the same, or will it change?*

Here are some examples of conclusions and inferences.

Oscar hung his head down and sighed.
(He is unhappy, perhaps discouraged.)

Sheila pulled The Scarlet Letter off the shelf and thumbed through the worn pages. Just then, the librarian called “closing time,” and Sheila reluctantly packed up to go. (Sheila is in a library. *The Scarlet Letter* is a book, which has been read many times. Sheila likes being in the library. She probably has a book bag with her.)