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Introduction

Effective instruction in adolescent literacy does not rely on one strategy alone. Vocabulary acquisition, metacognition, writing and reading comprehension are just a few. Reading comprehension strategies are, however, the cornerstone for student learning. Most struggling readers can, and do, read. Their difficulty is not in articulating the printed text. The challenge to these readers is an inability to understand and process the ideas expressed by the words.

The nature of this problem in adolescent literacy reaches deeper than a student's reading of literature. Not only does a student's ability to comprehend text impact their English skills, but also their capacity to read, understand and learn concepts in other subject areas. This is our call to action. This is the rationale for providing teachers like you with the resources you need to not only provide students with direct, explicit comprehension instruction, but to provide you with the materials for students to transfer strategies to the content areas.

This title focuses on helping students to develop their ability to make inferences. Inferences are evidence-based guesses. For proficient readers, this skill is automatic and often subconscious. Making inferences, in fact, involves some fairly simple tasks when broken down into components. On the most basic level, the skill involves an ability to recall relevant details or "clues" provided by a text or non-print medium. The skill may also involve the ability to connect ideas to the information provided in order to draw conclusions.

The 20 lessons in this book will provide students with models for instruction and application of making inferences in a variety of contexts organised around core content areas. Used to extend and enhance your existing curriculum, each lesson is intended to target instruction of making inferences. Therefore, activities and instruction range from 20 to 50 minutes to complete.

This book can be used to address the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2007, specifically Levels 4 and 5 English, but is useful in any secondary school curriculum concerned with making inferences for meaning and understanding. Additionally, lessons in the Social Studies and Mathematics sections touch on elements of these subjects common to all curricula at the adolescent year levels.

Appearances Can Be Deceiving

Instructional Guide/Procedure

- Write or project this list for students to read:
 - physician
 - salesperson
 - engineer
 - trainer
 - chief executive officer (CEO)
- Say that each of these occupations has at least one job skill in common. Invite students to brainstorm ideas for what these might be. If a student doesn't mention it, point out that data collection and analysis are important in each of these jobs. In fact, with increased access to data and computer applications that make it easy for anyone to create graphs and charts, it is increasingly important to be able to read graphs and charts critically, inferring accurate information.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet and review the directions at the top of the sheet.
- Give students 20 minutes to complete the activity.
- Have students form trios to discuss their answers with one another, then reach a consensus about the best answers to the worksheet questions.
- Each trio selects a spokesperson to share the group's ideas with the class as a wrap-up activity.

Supporting All Learners

- Students who are struggling with this activity would benefit from using a highlighter to mark key information on the graph and supporting information in the article as they make their inferences and write their justifications.
- Support English language learners by walking them through the activity once as a group before asking these students to complete the activity on their own.
- Challenge students who are ready for more by asking them to think about ways the graph could be changed to cause the reader to make different inferences about the data. Ask these students to redraw the graph. If you have access to the Internet, students can use Create a Graph (<http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/>), a free online tool offered by the US National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Appearances Can Be Deceiving

Assessment

There are various ways to assess student understanding beyond their completion of the activity sheet. Choose one or more of the following methods to evaluate their learning.

- Record your observations during the activity.
- Ask students to compare and contrast two different graphs about the same topic and infer which is most accurate.
- Ask students to write a reflection about how mastery of this particular skill relates to them individually.

Answer Key

Responses will depend on the graph and article you choose to have students analyse. Accept any reasonable answers that they can support with examples.

Name _____ Date _____

Good Advice, in Small Doses

Activity Sheet

Adults sometimes complain that today's kids have very short attention spans and that they want to hear everything in short sound bites. But did you know that Aesop was dispensing good advice in small doses more than 2000 years ago?

According to legend, Aesop was born a slave, but was freed because of his wit and intelligence. Aesop's fables are a collection of very short stories that illustrate a moral lesson. You've probably heard his fables the *Ant and the Grasshopper* or the *Tortoise and the Hare*. Here are three fables you may not know. Read them and make inferences to guess the moral of each fable. Explain your answers.

The Four Oxen and the Lion

A lion used to prowl about a field in which four oxen used to dwell. Many a time he tried to attack them; but whenever he came near they turned their tails to one another, so that whichever way he approached them he was met by the horns of one of them. At last, however, they fell a-quarrelling among themselves, and each went off to pasture alone in a separate corner of the field. Then the Lion attacked them one by one and soon made an end of all four.

The moral of this story is:

I know this because:

(continued)

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