



# connect

Chapter Nine:

# Making Inferences



# The Process of Making Inferences

Making an inference is the process of drawing conclusions, or making meaning, from observable details.

1. First you notice the specifics of what you're reading
2. Then you apply your knowledge of the world – your memory – to those details.
3. You'll arrive at an inference: a conclusion about what the details mean.

## Making an Inference

```
graph TD; A[Making an Inference] --- B[1. Closely observe the details.]; A --- C[2. Apply your prior knowledge.]; A --- D[3. Conclude what the details mean.];
```

1. Closely observe the details.

2. Apply your prior knowledge.

3. Conclude what the details mean.



# Everyday Inferences

- Making inferences sounds complicated, but in fact you make inferences all the time. Your brain is designed to make inferences!
- You use what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch to draw conclusions about your surroundings.



# Inferences From Images

Images often have clues to the photographer's point of view. To decode the meaning, consider

- Specific details that answer questions: Who? What? Where? When?
- What meaning can you attach to those details? (What inferences can you draw?)
- What did the photographer want to suggest by taking the photo this way? (What is the POV?)

# Active Learning ➤ Inferences in Images

- Quickly form groups of three.
- Examine the images on the next few slides, asking
  - Who? What? Where? When?
  - What meaning can you attach to those details? (What inferences can you draw?)
  - What did the photographer want to suggest by taking the photo this way? (What is the POV?)
- Remember that photos often capture a small slice of a larger story, so your inferences may be incomplete.



**Billy and Graham Green from the Salvation Army Camp practise a little deceit, Collaroy Beach, ca. 1940 / photographer unknown**  
From the collection of the State Library of New South Wales [www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)





Gene Bullard, 1963. Used with permission.





Sharon Huston, 2002. Used with permission.



# Observing Details

- Observing details is a key part of making inferences.
- The words in a book are the details to pay close attention to when you are reading.
  - What words has the author selected?
  - Why?
- As you read, pay attention to each word or group of words and take the time to mentally picture what the author is implying.



# Prior Knowledge

- Your prior knowledge determines much of what you will be able to infer from an author's words.
- If you know a lot about a topic you will be able to make more connections with existing knowledge than someone who is not familiar with the topic.
- The more information you have, the richer and more accurate are the inferences that you can draw.



# Tentative Inferences

- Your mind is always generating tentative, or possible, inferences as you read.
- You read a few words and your mind immediately starts trying to put the pieces together to figure out what the author is really saying.
- When you read the next few words, your mind will auto-correct if you encounter new contradictory information.

# Drawing Tentative Inferences

1. Closely observe the details the author provides.

2. Apply your prior knowledge.

3. Tentatively conclude what the details may mean.

4. Read more text, testing your tentative conclusions to see if they hold up to the new details.

5. Tentatively conclude what the details may mean.

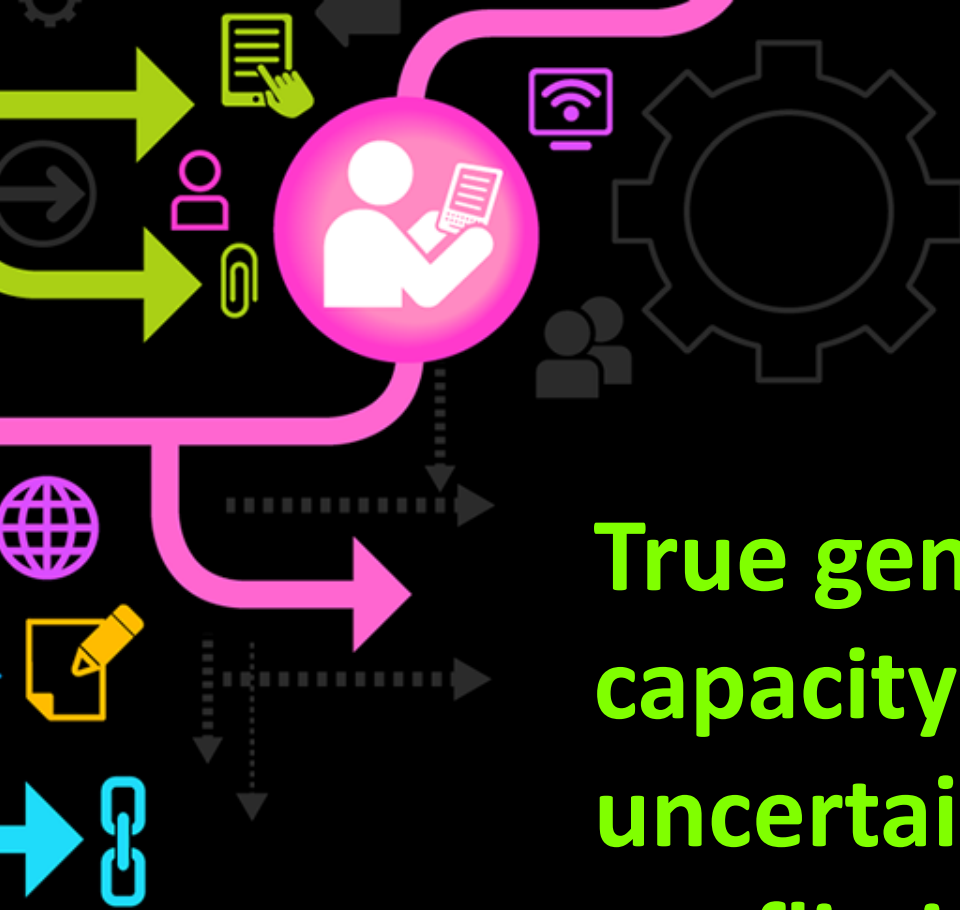
6. Read more text, testing your tentative conclusions to see if they hold up to the new details.





# Controlling the Inference Process

- While the ongoing process of inference usually happens unconsciously, it is possible to control the process.
- Controlling the process helps your inferences become more accurate.
- As your inferences improve, so will your reading comprehension.



**True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information.**

**-- Winston Churchill**