

## Making Inferences

### 1. What are Inferences?

Inferences are evidence-based guesses. They are the conclusions a reader draws about the unsaid based on what is actually said. Inferences drawn while reading are much like inferences drawn in everyday life. Making an inference is the same thing as drawing a conclusion or making a generalization.

An **inference** is a conclusion you come to based on reasoning and evidence within a text. Making an inference requires using both information from the text and your background knowledge.

Making inferences while reading is a strategy that will help you learn, remember, and apply what you have read. When you make inferences, you are "reading between the lines".

When the information needed to make an inference occurs within one sentence or in adjacent sentences, it is somewhat easier to bridge the gaps than when the information is further apart. Consider these two examples:

**A.** Marty went to a friend's birthday party. He played games, watched his friend open presents, and helped to clean up the mess. Before he went to the party, Marty had eaten a big lunch. He asked to take his piece of cake home from the party to eat later.

**B.** Marty ate a big lunch. Later, he went to a friend's birthday party. He played games at the party, watched his friend open presents, and helped to clean up the mess. Marty asked to take his piece of cake home from the party to eat later.

In which example is it easier to infer that Marty took his cake home because he was too full from his lunch to eat the cake at the party?

### 2. Tips for Drawing Inferences

In order to make reasonable inferences that help you better comprehend what you read, remember to do the following:

**Understand the stated information.** You don't necessarily have to identify the main ideas to make a reasonable inference. However, you do need to understand the important vocabulary and facts in the text. So ask yourself, "What do these details seem to show?", "Is there enough evidence to support my inference?", "Are there any other possible ways to interpret this?"

**Use your prior knowledge** of the situation and your common sense. However, do not ignore the facts in favour of your own personal opinions.

**Consider the alternatives** so you don't "jump to conclusions." Inferences tend to be "reasonable" when they are the result of "reasoned" thinking, not emotional reactions. When you go to a doctor for advice, he or she will think of different possible diagnoses before settling on the one that is most likely, given your symptoms. If the doctor jumped too quickly to one conclusion, he might give you the wrong treatment. If, as a reader, you jump too quickly to one interpretation of the text, you may not understand what the writer intended to convey.

**Practice:** Read the following passages, and then determine what you can infer from the passages.

#### Passage D

Hybrid cars are good for the environment, but they may not perform as well as cars that run only on gasoline. The Toyota Prius gets great gas mileage and has low emissions, making it a good "green" option. However, many people think that it is unattractive. The Prius also cannot accelerate as quickly as other models and cannot hold as many passengers as larger gasfueled SUVs. Although they save money on fuel, hybrid cars cost more up front than gas-fueled cars. A new hybrid car can cost almost \$3,500 more than the same car configured to run just on gasoline.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

1. Hybrid cars are more dangerous than other options.
2. Toyota is making a lot of money from the Prius.
3. Cars that use gasoline are going to destroy the environment.
4. Hybrid cars may not be the best choice for everyone.

### **Passage E**

Redwood trees are rare. They are found only on the coastal slopes of Northern California and Oregon, and in China. Redwoods were thought to be extinct in China, but they were rediscovered by a Chinese forester in 1948. These trees can grow hundreds of feet high and live to be thousands of years old. They are endangered due to logging, pollution, and global warming, which is reducing the amount of fog on the coast. Redwoods get their water from the fog.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. The Chinese logged the Redwoods almost into extinction.
2. Redwood trees will continue to grow taller throughout their whole lives.
3. Using non-recyclable products will kill Redwood trees.
4. Redwoods can only grow in places that get a lot of fog.

### **Passage F:**

Shannelle is a very good baker. Whenever there is a bake sale to raise money for a cause, Shannelle is always asked to make cupcakes or a pie. People say that they only come to the bake sales if they know that Shannelle is making something. She always agreed to bake things because she hated to say no to anyone. One week, her oven broke and she could not bake, so she decided to go for a hike instead. Shannelle enjoyed it so much that she realized she needed to learn to make time for herself, and not just donate all of her free time to charity.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. Shannelle is a generous person.
2. Shannelle's mother did a good job teaching her how to bake.
3. The people in the community were taking advantage of Shannelle.
4. Shannelle's brother broke her oven so she would get a day off.

### **Passage G:**

“I can’t believe Emily’s going to be here!” Maria squealed with glee as she jumped up and down in her room. Her favorite singer was performing at a local theater this weekend. The show will cost \$15, and I really want to go with all my friends, she thought. But I don’t get paid until the Monday after the concert. Suddenly, Emily coming to town didn’t seem so exciting after all.

Maria had been working as a cashier at the local supermarket on weekends and sometimes after school. The past few months she had been saving her paychecks to buy her father a good birthday present. Dad always complains that he never gets gifts as good as Mom’s on his birthday, Maria thought.

She had asked him what he wanted and had saved up enough money to buy the cordless drill set. Maria couldn’t wait to see his face when he opened the gift on his birthday, which was also Monday.

Maria decided to ask her mom for advice. “I could borrow money to pay for the concert from my savings, but then I won’t be able to buy Dad’s gift this weekend,” she said. “I could get him something else, but what if he doesn’t like it?”

“Well, honey, what do you think you should do?” her mom responded after Maria told her the problem.

“I’m not sure, Mom. Who knows when Emily will come back to town again?” she replied.

“This could be my only opportunity to see her in person.” Maria’s mom said, “Looks like you have a tough decision to make, but think about what your father would do if the tables were turned.” She patted Maria on the shoulder before she walked out the room.

A couple of months before her birthday every year, Maria’s father would always start asking questions to get an idea about what to get her. He always gets me exactly what I ask for on my birthday, she thought. Dad deserves the same special treatment. Maria grabbed her purse and headed to the shopping center.

**Which of these can be inferred from the last sentence in the passage?**

- A. Maria is going to the concert and will tell her dad she forgot his birthday.
- B. Maria is on her way to buy her and her friends concert tickets.
- C. Maria is going to ask her mom to buy her dad the drill.
- D. Maria is on her way to buy her dad's birthday present.

**Passage H :**

Sylvie looked at herself in the mirror and smiled at her beautiful reflection. She was wearing a lovely peach-colored gown with layers of lace and delicate frills on the hem and the neckline. She had borrowed her mom's jewelry, and she felt confident that she would be crowned "The Princess of the Year" today. The winner would get an all-expense paid trip to Hawaii. Winning this title would pave the way for her to participate in the national beauty pageant, which would be conducted later in the year. And if she won the national-level pageant too, her life would change overnight. She could roam the world, see places, stay at luxurious hotels, become rich, own penthouses in expensive cities, and enjoy and live the life of her dreams.

Thinking about her wonderful future, she waited for her turn to go on stage. She was so engrossed in her fantasy world of exotic holidays and luxurious penthouses, that when one of the participants nudged her, she realized that this was the last call for her to go on stage. In her haste, she tripped and fell. She sat up with a start and found herself alone in a dark room.

**Which sentence best supports the inference that Sylvie was daydreaming?**

- A. Thinking about her wonderful future, she waited for her turn to go on stage.
- B. Winning this title would pave the way for her to participate in the national beauty pageant, which would be conducted later in the year.
- C. She was so engrossed in her fantasy world of exotic holidays and luxurious penthouses, that when one of the participants nudged her, she realized that this was the last call for her to go on stage.
- D. She could roam the world, see places, stay at luxurious hotels, become rich, own penthouses in expensive cities, and enjoy and live the life of her dreams.

**Passage I .**

After a morning filled with interruptions like the construction crew jack hammering outside their window, the writers were consumed by story deadlines. Everyone was typing like mad at his or her computer, trying to finish everything before the end of the day. Suddenly, a loud burst of laughter broke their concentration. One of the sales managers was hosting a meeting with his team nearby, and their noisiness was driving the writers nuts. Along with shattering the silence, the sales team had also derailed many trains of thought.

John was so upset he just put his head down on his desk next to his keyboard. “I’ll never finish with this story in time. My deadline is 5 p.m.,” he said.

When the noise from the conference room quieted down, a huge sigh of relief echoed across the floor. “Finally!” John said.

Lisa shook her head in agreement, “I couldn’t even hear my own thoughts.”

The returned silence helped people wind down and clear their minds. The click-clack of computer keys once again filled the room as the writers resumed their work. At this rate, I may be able to make it home in time to catch my favorite shows, Lisa thought to herself. Just as creativity began flowing freely, the sales people got loud again. Finally, one writer had enough of all the noise! She jumped up from her computer and headed toward the meeting room to have a little talk with the sales manager.

**Why is John concerned about meeting his deadline?**

- A. He was having a meeting with the sales manager.
- B. He was distracted by noise all morning long.
- C. He was watching television shows all day.
- D. He was making too much noise to concentrate.

**Passage J .**

In 1215, King John of England was forced to give up some of his royal power with the adoption of the Magna Carta, which means “Great Charter” in Latin. The main effect of this document, which was written in Latin, was to secure the liberties of the English Church, the rights of English nobles, and to restrict abuses of royal power. It required the king to concede certain rights to the nobles. In essence, it meant the king could no longer rule by whim, such as arresting anyone for any reason, but had to respect certain legal procedures. The Great Charter gave the king’s subjects certain rights that the king could not violate.

One of the laws that the Great Charter set out was the rule of habeas corpus. This is a Latin term meaning “show me the body,” and it meant that the king or his officers had to prove that a person in their custody had broken a law and was not in jail because the king was mad at him or wanted his property.

King John had taken the throne upon King Richard’s death. King Richard was his oldest brother, and according to English property law of the time, the oldest son inherited all his father’s land. As the youngest son, John inherited no land and was known as “John Lackland.”

Without land, King John could only raise money to support himself by taxing his subjects, and this made him very unpopular. He was the king that the famous Robin Hood fought against.

**Which of these statements can the reader infer from this passage?**

- A. John hated Richard because their father had given him all the land.
- B. When someone was jailed, jailers had to show the king the body.
- C. After 1215, King John could not make the nobles do as he wanted.
- D. After 1215, King John could steal the land from English noblemen.

**Passage K .**

(1) Originally from Japan, kudzu is a vining plant first planted in the United States in the nineteenth century by southern farmers looking for a fast-growing plant that cattle and other livestock could graze. Kudzu hay has a high nutritional content compared to other types of forage. Unfortunately, the nutritional quality decreases as vine content increases relative to the leaf content. Unlike alfalfa hay, which grows like a grass, kudzu is hard to bale due to its vining growth and tendency to absorb rain.

(2) The climate of the Southeastern U.S. is perfect for growing kudzu. The vines grow as much as a foot a day during summer months, climbing trees, power poles, and anything else they contact. Under ideal conditions kudzu vines can grow 60 feet each year. Southerners joke that if you don’t close your windows at night, it’ll climb inside the house. In Japan, kudzu is kept in check by insects, but it has no natural enemies in the U.S.

(3) While they help prevent erosion, the vines can also destroy valuable forests by climbing trees and preventing them from getting sunlight. This problem has led researchers to find methods for killing kudzu. After years of research, they found that one herbicide actually makes kudzu grow better while many have little effect. Even with the most effective herbicides, it takes many years to kill the plants.

(4) Today, kudzu covers more than seven million acres of Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina.

**What can the reader infer from paragraph 3?**

- A. American researchers are not very efficient.
- B. Kudzu is a hardy plant that is difficult to kill.
- C. Finding a solution to kudzu took a long time.
- D. Erosion is a big problem in southern forests.

## **Passage L**

### **The Art of Making Pizza**

Pizza is a scrumptious and mouth-watering dish that requires no introduction. It is one of the most popular foods around the globe today. It is a dish that can be enjoyed as a snack and can also be eaten as a family meal. While everyone knows how delicious a pizza is, not everyone is aware of the effort that goes into creating this mouth-watering piece of art. Pizza is said to have originated in Greece. However, the Greek pizza was more like a flatbread without any topping. The modern-day pizza, on the other hand, originated in Italy. The story goes that King Umberto I and Queen Margherita were on their way to Naples after the unification of Italy in 1861. They demanded a change from their usual meals and were presented with an assortment of pizzas. The type of pizza that Queen Margherita enjoyed the most had a topping of red tomatoes, green basil, and soft white cheese. This variety of pizza thus came to be known as pizza Margherita. However, the art of pizza making was little known beyond the borders of Naples. It was only after the 1940s that pizza making spread like wildfire, and different cultures across continents adopted it, adding their own flavours to make it more appealing to the local public. Pizza evolved from a simple flatbread with a melted cheese topping to a dish with several varieties and all kinds of toppings.

Making a pizza may seem simple, but that is far from the truth. A good pizza isn't simply about kneading dough, adding toppings, and baking. To make a delicious pizza, one needs to be passionate about the process involved in creating it. One of the key factors in creating a delicious pizza is to use fresh ingredients. Pizza toppings should be farm fresh and tasty. No compromises should be made with the ingredients, especially the cheese. Cheese is what gives pizza its essential flavor, and only the best quality cheese should be used. The next important factor is the pizza dough, which needs to be at the right temperature and of the right quantity, and flattened correctly to make a smooth and even layer. The final and most important part of creating the perfect pizza is baking it at the right temperature. The result, if all goes well, is a perfectly cooked base topped with delicious melted cheese and a garnished with a choice of ingredients. Ultimately, whether pizza is a thin crust, deep dish, or the New York slice, its history and the art of creating it remain marvelous.

## **Passage M**

### **Consumption of Pizza Should Be Reduced**

There is perhaps no other dish that delights people as much as pizza. Pizza has the reputation of being considered one of the most satisfying foods around the world. There is no proper count to the varieties of pizza available in the world today, but it surely surpasses any other fast food. But have you ever stopped to think about the health effects of consuming pizza on a daily basis? Pizza definitely cannot be categorized as a "healthy food," yet the consumption rate of pizzas is startling. For example, 4% of pizza consumed by children in the United States is during breakfast time. Having pizza for breakfast, which is ideally the healthiest meal of the day, can only have a negative impact on the health of children. The amount of calories that children consume through pizzas is staggering, and can lead to numerous health problems. Even though children's calorie intake through pizzas has reduced considerably between 2003 and 2010, it still leads to obesity, gastrointestinal difficulties, and other health problems among children aged between 2 and 19.

According to government policy in the United States, all school meals must contain some vegetables. In 2011, the amount of tomato sauce used on pizza was enough for it to be considered a "vegetable" by the United States Government. This fact is not only absurd, but also makes something as unhealthy as pizza easily available to children in school cafeterias.

There are several reasons to avoid eating pizzas. One major reason is the increase in blood cholesterol levels that makes people prone to heart disease. This is due to the calorie and sodium content in pizza. Saturated fats in pizza cause blockages in arteries that can lead to heart attacks. Adolescents absorb an extra 230 calories, 5 grams of saturated fat, and 484 milligrams of sodium on days when they eat a pizza. These figures indicate a much higher level of intake than what is required by our body on a daily basis. This in itself is an indication that pizzas should be avoided as much as possible.

The point that nothing good comes out of eating pizzas cannot be stressed enough. Farm fresh ingredients, the best quality cheese, and the most delicious meats cannot hide the fact that pizzas ultimately do more harm than good to a person's health. A snack like pizza can never be completely removed from the diet. But through conscious effort, pizza consumption can surely be reduced considerably.

## Using Reference Words

To prevent the same word more than one time in a sentence or in some sentences of the same paragraph, writers always use **references**. References are words that substitute for other words or phrases. They usually refer back to ideas that have already been expressed, but they can occasionally refer forward to ideas yet to be stated. Thus, in order to see the connection between items of information, we need to find the reference of the substitution word. Below is a list of the most often used references.

1. **Personal pronouns:** I, me, my, mine, she, her, hers, he, him, his, it, its, they, them, their, we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours (replace nouns)
2. **Impersonal pronouns:** one, ones (replace nouns)
3. **Demonstrative pronouns:** this, that, these, those (replace nouns, phrases, or sentences that refer to a fact or idea)
4. There, then (replace adverbials of place or time)
5. Such + noun (replaces the description of the person or thing named by the noun)
6. The former, the latter, the same (replaces the previously mentioned person, thing, or idea)

In the following paragraph, the references are italicized.

Speed-reading is a skill every student should master in order to succeed their study. In relation to *this*, some students read slowly but don't know that *they* do; *others* read slowly and know *it*. *Their* reading problems are the same, but *the latter* can be helped more easily because they are already aware of their problem. Before *the former* can be helped, however, *they* must be made aware of the problem.

## Understanding Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. Pronouns are small words, but they are very important when you are reading. We use pronouns to avoid repeating a word again and again. The antecedent or the referent is the word or words that a pronoun replaces.

### ➤ A pronoun replaces a noun

#### Example A:

Mary Simms lives in New York city. She has an apartment near central park. Mary jogs in the park. She thinks that jogging is good for her. So, she jogs three times a week.

All the underlined words take the place .....

#### Example B:

Jogging is good for your health for a few reasons. It is especially good for your hear. If you do it a few days a week, you heart will be stronger. It is also good for your legs. And many people believe it is good for your mind. All of the underlined pronouns take the place of .....

### ➤ A pronoun replaces a group of words

Sometimes pronouns can take the place of a group of words

#### Example A:

The central park police officer often meets dangerous people. Some people go to the park to steal. Other people are there to sell drugs. And sometimes serious gun fights start in the park. The park police officer may meet any of these in the park.

#### Pronouns

#### referents

.....

.....

#### Example B:

It is not easy to the mayor of a large American city. Many people need homes and jobs. The buildings and streets need to be fixed. The schools are old and the students are not learning enough. The streets are dangerous at night because of crime. These are big problems, and the mayor must work on all of them.

**Pronouns** ..... **referents** .....

.....

.....

### ➤ Related Words: Specific to General

Related words are words which refer to the same idea. When writers use related words, the second word is usually less specific and the next is even more general.

#### **Example A:**

David had a wonderful trip to Paris this spring. He loved the beautiful buildings in the French capital. To him, it was a city full of magic and beauty.

“French capital”, “city” and “Paris” are related words.

**Specific:** .....

**Less general:** .....

**General:** .....

#### **Example B:**

The Pope visited Colombia, Peru and Mexico last year. Crowds of Catholics greeted him in these countries. It was his first visit to that part of the world.

“these countries”, “that part of the world” and “Colombia, Peru and Mexico” are related words.

**Specific:** .....

**Less general:** .....

**General:** .....

#### **Practice:**

##### **Task 1: Identify the pronouns and their referents in the passage.**

##### **The Boston Marathon**

Every year, in the middle of April, thousands of people go to Boston. They go to run the Boston marathon. This is one of the oldest road races in the United States. It began in 1897.

Each year, more runners join the Boston marathon. They come from every part of the world. In 1984, 6,164 runners from 34 different countries ran in the marathon. About 5,290 of them finished it.

The Boston race is 26.2 miles, or 42 kilometers. The runners go through thirteen towns during the race. It ends in the center of Boston. Crowds of people watch them as they go through the towns. They clap their hands and cheer for them.

<b>Pronoun</b>	<b>referent</b>	<b>pronoun</b>	<b>referent</b>
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

##### **Task 2: Identify the pronouns and their referents in the passage.**

Jogging is a very popular activity in New York City. In the winter, the weather is too cold for it. But in the spring, it is warmer, and many New Yorkers go out to jog in Central Park. This is a very good place to run.

Other New Yorkers also like to go to Central Park. Many of them go with their dogs. Dogs can run in the park. Sometimes the dogs run after the joggers. They may try to bite them. So, the joggers sometimes kick the dogs or throw stones at them. The dog owners do not understand. They wonder why the joggers do not like dogs. The park police are trying to solve this problem. They want all of the people to use the park in peace.

Pronoun	referent	pronoun	referent
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

**Task 3:** There are 17 pronouns in this passage. Write their pronouns and their referents below.

Mary Simms and Jim Fuller went jogging in Central Park last Saturday. They ran into a problem: a large white dog. It ran after them and tried to bite their legs.

They were scared and did not know what to do. Mary took a big stick and tried to hit the dog. She wanted to scare it away. But the dog just barked at her.

Then, Jim threw a large stone at the animal. It hit the dog on the head.

The dog's owner was very angry

"Stop hurting my dog!" she shouted. "It will not hurt you. It is just a puppy".

Then, she took a large stick and tried to hit Mary and Jim.

Just then, a park police officer came along the path. He saw them fighting.

"This is terrible!" he said, "Stop fighting!"

Pronoun	referent	Pronoun	referent
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
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.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

**Task 4:** In these sentences, the pronouns are underlined. Circle the referents.

1. Running on a very hot day can be dangerous. It can cause serious illness.
2. Runners often wear special shoes, socks, shorts and shirts. These are all important. But runners agree that shoes are the most important.
3. If you go to Central Park, you will see joggers, dogs and bicyclists. They are all part of life in the park.
4. Two Frenchmen went up in a basket under a balloon. They built a fire to make the air hot. This made the balloon stay up in the air.
5. The pilot of a balloon can control its altitude. He can raise and lower the balloon to find a good wind direction. That is how a good pilot can control where the balloon goes.
6. Early photographers had to carry film and heavy equipment everywhere they went. But this did not stop them.
7. Helen Keller was deaf and blind. She could not speak until she was seven years old. But these problems did not stop her. She became a famous writer and teacher.

8. A tornado is a very dangerous storm. It brings strong winds and it travels very fast. The strong winds can blow over cars, destroy houses and kill people. And this happens in just a few minutes.
9. Tornadoes blow dust and dirt into the air. They make a cone shape in the sky. When people see this, they get ready for the storm.
10. When tornadoes touch the ground, they move along at about 35 or 34 kilometres per hour. No one know which way they will go.
11. In a small town, a tornado can destroy a street full of homes and stores. Many people can be killed. The government tries to help when this happens.
12. Tornadoes are common in the middle part of the united states. Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri are states with many tornadoes every year. People in those states worry when they see a cone-shaped cloud in the sky.
13. The wind of a tornado is strong. No one knows exactly how fast the wind is in the centre. The wind always breaks the machines used for measuring it!

**Task 5:** In each passage, there is a word underlined. Find and circle the related words in the passage. The first one is done for you.

1. Liz and Val moved to Paris last month. They like the city very much.
2. Hiroko plays the violin in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The sound of this stringed instrument is very special.
3. The president of the city council gave a long speech. As the leader, she has to plan many new projects.
4. The tornado hit a small town in Kansas. The storm swept down the main street. The terrible winds caused five stores to fall down.
5. Lemons, limes, and oranges are all very good to eat. These citrus fruits are also very healthy for you. They are a good source of vitamin C.
6. Many Americans skip breakfast. They say they do not have time for food in the morning. But this is a mistake. The human body needs that meal.
7. Joanne's big car uses a lot of gasoline. She has to stop often to fill the tank with fuel.
8. We saw a lion with three little cubs at the wild animal park. The cats were lying on the rocks in the warm afternoon sun. We were happy to see such wonderful animals in such a nice place.
9. In some countries, the winter is long and cold. It is not a very popular season. Some people are so unhappy at that time of the year, that they get sick.
10. Astronauts from the United States and the Soviet Union all have one problem: they get motion sickness. This illness makes it difficult to do their work. Doctors and scientists are working on this problem.

## Skimming

### 1. What is Skimming?

Skimming is a high-speed reading that can save you lots of time. You skim to get the general sense of a passage or a book.

Speed is often very important when you are reading. You may have a lot to read, but not much time. For this kind of reading, you usually do not want to know and remember everything. You only want to find out something about it. You can do this by skimming. It is three to four times faster than normal reading. Generally, skimming is used to get through text very quickly. Consequently, skimming is used when students have a lot of reading material to get through, or have been assigned a task in an activity that requires some quick reading first, prior to completing the task. Skimming has also been used as a strategy in research when the student wants to determine if a text/article is a resource than can be used.

You may want to skim:

- Newspaper or magazine articles
- Book covers in a book store (so you can find out if you want to buy the book)
- Library books (so you can find out if they have the information you need).
- Mystery, detective or other novels.

### 2. How do you skim?

You should read only the words that will help you get the sense of the text. The following passage shows what parts you should read. These are the parts that usually give the author's ideas or opinions.

Read the first sentences or paragraph quite carefully. The beginning often contains general information about the rest of the text.

If the text is long, you might also read the second paragraph. Sometimes the first paragraph is only an introduction and the second paragraph contains the main idea.....

.....After that, you should look at the beginning of each paragraph .....

.....maybe read a few words.....

.....in the middle .....

.....Usually the topic sentence is at the beginning.

But sometimes it may be at the end.....

.....skip some paragraphs.....

not important.....

You should usually read the last paragraph more carefully. The author often summarizes the main idea at the end. These are the general rules about skimming. And this is all the text you need to read when you skim!

### 3. Skimming for Point of View

Skimming is helpful when you want to find out quickly about the writer. You may want to find out what the writer thinks about some idea. This is the writer's *point of view*.

When you want to know the point of view you do not need to read everything. You only need to read a few important words.

#### EXAMPLE A

Dogs are often a problem at home. Many dogs are noisy and dirty. They may even be dangerous for small children.

Does this writer like dogs at home? no

You do not need to read all the sentences to learn this. You only have to read the words "problem," "noisy," "dirty" and "dangerous." From those words you can tell the writer's point of view. This writer is against dogs at home.

#### EXAMPLE B

An apartment looks much nicer with some plants. The green leaves make it seem cooler in summer. The flowers give it a happy feeling.

Does this writer like plants in an apartment? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know this? List the important words: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Skimming for Ideas

You can also skim when you want to find out the general idea quickly. Speed is important for this kind of skimming, too. You should skim at least two times faster than you usually read.

But you can only do this if you change the way you read. You cannot read every word or even every sentence. You have to leave out a lot. In fact, you should leave out everything except a few important words. These are the words that tell you the general idea.

Here are the steps for skimming a chapter from a book or an article from a magazine or newspaper:

1. Read the first few sentences at your usual speed. Ask yourself, "What is this about?"
2. Go to the next paragraph as soon as you can guess the general idea. Remember, you do not need to know the details. You only want to learn something very general about the chapter or article.
3. Read only a few words in each paragraph after that. You should look for the words that tell you more about the general idea. Often they are at the beginning of the paragraph. But they may also be at the end.
4. Always work quickly. Remember that details are not important.

### EXAMPLE

Here is an example from a newspaper article. Most of the article is not there. You will only find a few sentences at the beginning and a few words in each paragraph. But you should still be able to learn the general ideas of the article. Read this article and try to answer the questions.

#### Big Macs in Mexico

McDonald's hamburgers are coming to Mexico. McDonald's is a world-famous company \_\_\_\_\_ Started in California \_\_\_\_\_

in Paris, Tokyo and \_\_\_\_\_

but not in Mexico.

Last year the Mexican government changed \_\_\_\_\_ open some McDonald's restaurants \_\_\_\_\_

"Big Mac," the McDonald's specialty. Some Mexicans are not happy \_\_\_\_\_

eat only hamburgers and forget about Mexican food.

1. McDonald's is a
  - a kind of Mexican food.
  - Mexican company.
  - restaurant company.
  - kind of hamburger.
2. There were no McDonald's in Mexico because
  - Mexicans do not like hamburgers.
  - Mexicans only eat Mexican food.
  - there were McDonald's in other countries.
  - the Mexican government did not want them.
3. The "Big Mac" is a
  - restaurant.
  - kind of hamburger.
  - kind of Mexican food.
  - person who works for McDonald's.

## 5. Practice

### Task 1: Read the sentences very quickly. Ask yourself, "Is the writer for or against the idea?"

1. Candy is not good for your teeth. It is especially bad for children's teeth. If children eat a lot of candy, they will have problems later.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

2. Large cars can cause problems. They are more difficult to park than small cars. They also use more gas.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

3. In San Francisco, the air is always a comfortable temperature. It is never too hot or too cold. It is perfect weather all year.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

4. Some people take many vitamin pills every day. These people believe lots of vitamin pills are good for their health. But they are wrong. Too many vitamin pills can hurt your health.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

5. There is something sad about animals in the zoos. They never really look happy. Maybe they are thinking about their real home. Maybe they do not like people looking at them all the time.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

6. Computers are very helpful for all kinds of work. They are usually quicker and more correct than people.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

7. Computers may cause serious problems in our world. Now it is possible to keep a lot of information on a computer. The people who have that information may be dangerous.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

8. "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." This is from a popular song, but it is often true. Sometimes there are good reasons to give children sugar or candy.

For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_

**Task 2: Skim this book review as quickly as possible. Remember, you only want to find out the general ideas about the book. You should read only the underlined sentences. Then try to answer the questions. You may check your answers by reading the rest of the review.**

**Murder in the Language Lab**  
by M.L. Allen

This book is an unusual detective story. It begins with a crime, a murder. A scientist is killed in a laboratory. But no one knows who killed the scientist. Inspector Barker is the detective. He must find the killer, but he needs help.

He gets help from Sally, a chimpanzee. She lives in the laboratory. In this laboratory, scientists are studying language. They are interested in how animals like Sally can learn some language. Sally is a very smart chimpanzee. She cannot talk, but she can understand many words. She can answer questions by using a computer. Sally saw the murder. She is afraid of Inspector Barker at first. But she wants to help. So, she tells Inspector Barker who the murderer is.

If you like detective stories, you will enjoy this one. But you probably will not be able to guess who the murderer is!

1. This story is
  - a. full of information.
  - b. sad.
  - c. fun to read.
  - d. difficult to read.
2. Inspector Barker
  - a. finds the murderer himself.
  - b. never finds the murderer.
  - c. is studying language.
  - d. gets help from a chimpanzee.
3. Sally is
  - a. a scientist.
  - b. a very smart animal.
  - c. not a very smart animal.
  - d. a murderer.

**Task 3: Skim this review as quickly as possible for the general ideas about the book. Remember, you need to read only a few sentences and words. Then try to answer the questions.**

**Mother Teresa**  
by Catherine Podjil  
(Scott, Foresman and Company)

In 1979, Mother Teresa won the Nobel Prize for Peace. This book tells about her life-long work with poor people and how she finally became famous.

The story begins with her childhood in Yugoslavia. She was born in 1910. At the age of 18, she decided to become a nun. The Catholic religion was very important to her. But for her, the most important part of the religion was helping other people. She especially wanted to help the poor people in India.

She first worked as a schoolteacher in India. But her students were not poor people. So, finally, she left the school. That was when she began her real life's work. She walked the streets in Indian cities looking for people who needed help. She gave them food, clothing or medicine.

After a while, other nuns began to help her. She built hospitals and schools for the poor. She also started a special group of nuns called the Order of the Missionaries of Charity. They began to work with the poor people in many countries around the world.

Important people sometimes gave Mother Teresa money or cars for her work. But the money and cars always went to the poor people. She lived very simply and worked very hard. The Nobel Prize gave her \$100,000. She will use this money to continue her work.

This book gives many interesting details about her life and work. We may not be able to give our lives to the poor like Mother Teresa. But we can learn a lot from her.

1. This book probably
  - a. is fun to read.
  - b. is good for children.
  - c. has a lot of useful information.
  - d. tells about the problems of poor people.
2. Mother Teresa is famous because she
  - a. is an Indian.
  - b. helps poor people.
  - c. has a lot of money.
  - d. is a schoolteacher.
3. People gave Mother Teresa money
  - a. because she was poor.
  - b. so she could win the Nobel Prize.
  - c. so she could travel.
  - d. so she could help poor people.

**Task 4: Skim this newspaper article as quickly as possible. Then try to answer the questions.**

### A New Drug for Heart Attacks

Doctors may now be able to stop many heart attacks. An important new study reports that doctors have a new drug. This drug is called TPA. It may be better than any other heart drug.

Many doctors now use a drug called Streptokinase. But this drug sometimes causes problems for patients. It can even cause bleeding in the brain. Some doctors do not use streptokinase. Streptokinase can save about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the people with heart attacks. But TPA will save about  $\frac{2}{3}$ . This means many people. About 1.5 million Americans have heart attacks every year.

One reason TPA can help more people is because of time. This new drug is easier and faster to use. It will give doctors more time in hospitals. Then they can study the problem well. People with heart problems can also keep some TPA at home. When a heart attack starts, they can take some TPA right away. Then they will have time to get to the hospital. This is important because about 860,000 people in the United States die before they get to the hospital.

There is another reason why TPA is good news for people with heart attacks. According to the study, it is much safer. It does not cause other problems like streptokinase. TPA works only on the heart. It does not have an effect on the blood or cause bleeding, like streptokinase.

Doctors plan to do more studies about TPA. They need to test this new drug on many more people with heart attacks. But in a few years, many doctors and hospitals will probably start using this exciting new drug.

1. The new drug is
  - a. the same as streptokinase.
  - b. better than streptokinase.
  - c. called streptokinase.
  - d. bad for people with heart attacks.
2. The study says that TPA
  - a. is safer and faster than the old drug.
  - b. is very dangerous.
  - c. slower and harder to use than the old drug.
  - d. causes many problems.
3. This new drug may mean
  - a. more people will die from heart attacks.
  - b. the same number of people will die from heart attacks.
  - c. fewer people will die from heart attacks.
  - d. no one will die from heart attacks.

**Task 5: Skim this story as quickly as possible. Then answer the questions.**

THE BOSTON MAIL • Sunday, February 12, 1995

## All-night search for 3 missing children in South Carver

by Ellie Nashima

**SOUTH CARVER** - Several hundred people—police, firefighters and volunteers—searched a large area of swamp land and woods for three children who disappeared yesterday afternoon.

The children, Seth and Cindy Erland, 7 and 5, and their cousin Bruce McCaffey, 11, were last seen playing near the Erland's home on Kingston Street at about 3:30 p.m. and were reported missing about four hours later, said Carver Police Sgt. Dan Preston.

The rescue efforts were hampered by winds of 20 to 30 m.p.h. and rain mixed with sleet and snow. Temperatures last night hovered around freezing and police expressed concern about the physical condition of the children.

The searchers formed human chains to try to cover all of the 4- by 5-mile area of the swamp. The search teams included State Police, Civil Defense officials, Carver, Plymouth and Middleboro police officers and firefighters, Coast Guard officers, and several hundred volunteers from as far away as Brockton and Attleboro. Up to seven bloodhounds and German Shepherds were being used in the search, along with floodlights and

infrared lights from the Coast Guard helicopter.

By late last night, there was no sign of the children or their belongings. Earlier, some footprints had been seen in the snow which may have been made by the children, but they were washed away by the rain.

Seth is 4' 4" tall and weighs about 60 pounds. He has light brown hair and was wearing a navy jacket with red stripes.

Cindy is 4'3" and weighs about 55 pounds. She has long brown hair and was wearing a purple jacket with a pink hood.

Bruce is about 4'10" and weighs 85 pounds. He has short, brown hair and was wearing a red jacket and jeans.

A fourth child was playing with them in the woods during the afternoon, according to the police. The boy reported that they had all fallen into the swamp. He had taken a different route in getting out and had become inadvertently separated from the group.

The boy, whom police said is about 11 years old, managed to find his way home. He arrived at about 5:00 p.m. and reported the other children missing. Though he was wet and cold, he did not require medical attention.

The boy also said that the Erland's dog had been with the children when

they fell into the swamp. The dog returned home alone at about 6:00 p.m.

Carver Police Chief Anthony Marino warned of the danger of searchers getting lost. Some parts of the swamp are "up to our shoulders," he said.

The children may have headed east towards the beacon from the Plymouth Municipal Airport. Marino added: "We're looking at trouble here. That's the worst part of the swamp they might have gone into."

Richard Erland, the father of Seth and Cindy, was out with the searchers. Though all search efforts so far had been fruitless, he was still hopeful: "Those children know the woods well and the two boys have some wilderness training from Boy Scouts." He believed that the children may have found some shelter from the bad weather.

However, Paul Mahoney, a neighbor, said "Those kids could be pretty lost. It'd be impossible to stay on a path in the dark. I've gotten lost there myself."

Ken Thatcher, 22, of Plymouth, one of the volunteer searchers, said that the children faced extreme conditions. "They're wet, and it's real cold out there. We've got to get to them soon."