

Detective Work with Max: Mastering Inference

Learning objective: To develop the skill of inference by using clues from the text and our own knowledge to explain characters' feelings and actions.

Read the short story about Max the monkey below. Think like a detective! Look for the clues the author has hidden in the text to answer the questions. Remember, an inference is when you 'read between the lines' to understand something that isn't explicitly stated.

Max sat at his wooden desk, surrounded by scattered scraps of paper covered in complex patterns. He tapped his pencil against his chin, his brow furrowed into deep ridges. Outside, the jungle was vibrant and noisy, but Max didn't notice the colorful parrots or the rustling leaves. He stared intensely at a single, blank square on his grid. Suddenly, his tail flicked twice—a quick, sharp movement. He grabbed his eraser, scrubbed out a line of numbers, and let out a long, slow breath as his shoulders slumped. He pushed the paper away and reached for a fresh, crisp sheet.

Word bank: puzzled · clue · deduce · evidence · expression · uncertain · calculation · frustration

1. How is Max feeling at the start of the passage? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (2 marks)

2. Why might Max be ignoring the jungle outside? Explain what this tells us about his focus. (2 marks)

3. What does the action of Max's tail flicking suggest about his state of mind before he uses the eraser? (2 marks)

4. Compare and contrast Max's mood at the beginning of the passage with how he feels after he reaches for a fresh sheet of paper. Justify your answer. (3 marks)

5. What might happen if Max decides to give up on his puzzle entirely? Explain why you think this. (2 marks)

6. If Max were to ask Nova the owl for help, what do you think they would discuss? Use your knowledge of both characters to infer their conversation. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'zoom-in' of Max's desk. Include the clues that show he has been working hard, such as the crumpled paper, the pencil marks, and the mathematical patterns he is trying to solve.



Extension challenge: Write a short diary entry from Max's perspective explaining the 'math mystery' he is trying to solve. Use at least three words from the word bank and describe how he feels when he finally finds the correct pattern.