

The Detective's Desk: Mastering Inference with Max

Learning objective: To develop the ability to infer meaning by identifying subtle clues in text and synthesising evidence to draw logical conclusions.

Max the monkey has been observing various scenes in the jungle and the library. He has left you a series of 'Evidence Logs'. For each log, you must act as a literary detective. Read the clues provided, then use your powers of inference to deduce the hidden truth. You must provide a piece of 'Evidence' from the text and your 'Deduction' (what you inferred).

Word bank: observation · evidence · deduction · implication · context · inference · clue · underlying

1. Evidence Log 1: Pip the caterpillar is wearing a yellow raincoat and is looking at the library window with a frown. She is holding a soggy, unread book. What can you infer about the weather and Pip's feelings? Justify your answer. (2 marks)

2. Evidence Log 2: Nova the owl has been staring at her telescope for three hours. She has several crumpled star charts on the floor and is currently drinking a very strong cup of tea. What can you infer about the success of her stargazing session? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

3. Evidence Log 3: Zara the zebra is standing in front of a canvas. She has paint smudges on her hooves, and her studio is filled with half-finished sketches of sunflowers. She has just put down her brush and sighed. Compare and contrast two possible emotions Zara might be feeling. (2 marks)

4. Evidence Log 4: Leo the lion is pacing back and forth in his study. He has a quill in his hand, and there are dozens of pieces of paper scattered across the floor, each with only one or two lines written on them. What can you infer about his writing process? (2 marks)

5. Evidence Log 5: Finn the dolphin has been mapping the coastline. He returns to the shore with his map covered in ink blots and a worried expression. He immediately begins checking his compass. What might happen if Finn does not re-check his calculations? (2 marks)

6. Evidence Log 6: Kit the fox is sitting at a computer. His screen is glowing brightly, and he is typing at a frantic speed. Suddenly, he leans back, crosses his arms, and a wide grin spreads across his face. What has likely occurred? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene that provides 'clues' about a character's day (e.g., a messy desk, a broken umbrella, or a half-eaten sandwich). Ensure there are at least three subtle items in the drawing that would allow a detective to infer what happened without you having to write it down.



Extension challenge: Select one of the Evidence Logs above and write a short, one-paragraph prequel that explains exactly why the character ended up in that specific situation. How does your prequel change the way a reader might infer the character's motivation?