



Make Complex Inferences and Use Evidence to Support Understanding

R/S Figure 19(D) Make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding.

Understand the TEKS

When you read a text, the author usually provides most of the information the reader needs. The author might tell about characters' feelings or thoughts or the exact setting of the text. The **textual evidence**, or concrete details in the text, are important to understand the meaning of the text. However, not every detail is stated in the text. Readers must also make **inferences** as they read.

An inference is a conclusion drawn from information in the text and your own knowledge. Making an inference requires reading and understanding the textual evidence and using your own knowledge to decide what the details mean. Consider the following text:

Before she took the stage, Nikki's fingers were shaking and she felt unsteady on her feet. For a moment, she wondered if she was going to be sick. She looked at the other candidates waiting for their turn to speak. When her name was called, Nikki took a deep breath, grabbed her notecards, and walked on stage. She took her place beneath the "Student Government" banner and calmly delivered her speech.

This text includes many concrete details:

- Nikki is going on stage.
- She is shaking.
- She does not feel well.
- She and others are candidates.
- She and others are waiting to speak.
- She is carrying notecards.
- She delivers a speech.

To understand why these pieces of textual evidence matter, you must make an inference. The inference here is that Nikki is running for student government, and she is very nervous about making her speech. The author does not directly state that she is running for student government, or that she is nervous, but the details in the text—plus your own knowledge of how people behave when they are nervous—make it easy to come to this conclusion.

When you make an inference about a text, it can help you make sense of the text in several ways. An inference can help you draw a conclusion or summarize the overall meaning. It can help you predict what might happen next. Or the inference can help you generalize, or make broad statements, about the text. Conclusions, predictions, and generalization are all types of inferences. No matter the inference, concrete textual evidence must support it.



Did You Know?

Comprehension Support inferences, conclusions, and generalizations with prior knowledge and evidence from the text.

★ Practice

Read the selection below. Then answer the questions that follow it.

Gib Morgan: Tall Tale Teller, Tell Tale Hero

Retold by Robert San Souci

- 1 Oilmen, from Pennsylvania to West Texas to oil fields around the world, have heard at least a few of the legends of Gilbert “Gib” Morgan. He was a real person, born in 1842 in Callensburg, Pennsylvania, not far from Titusville, where the first oil well was drilled in the United States in 1859. He died in 1909. He was a veteran of the Union Army, and a “boomer”—an oil gypsy who followed new strikes around the country.
- 2 A natural-born storyteller, he recounted extravagant tales that starred himself. Folks recalled him as a dark-complexioned old fellow, with a heavy gray mustache, earnest blue eyes, and a sincere-sounding voice that made people half-believe some of the outlandish tales he spun. He wandered the fields of many states, accompanied by his old tomcat, Josiah, who was mean enough to run off any dog he tangled with.
- 3 Field crews eagerly awaited Gib’s visits, watching for the figure in high leather boots, jeans, blue flannel shirt, and scruffy black derby perched on the side of his head. When they gathered in the evening to relax, Gib sat in the center of things and recounted his adventures, such as the time he built the biggest rig in the world.
- 4 According to Gib, there was a patch of Texas soil that the “rockhounds,” who scouted likely spots for oil wells, felt was oil-rich. However, the best drilling crews couldn’t make a hole to draw the crude out. The ground was too soft, and kept falling into the well. The drillers used a bit, or cutting tool, to make the hole, and then they lowered lengths of pipe to hold up the sides. But each time they lowered another section of pipe, it would have to be narrower than the previous one, so the bits had to keep being smaller as they bored deeper into the earth. Finally, the pipe was so narrow, they could no longer lower the cable and bit (what was called the “string of tools”). At last, the frustrated boss asked for Gib’s help.
- 5 First, Gib ordered special tools—some big, some little. Then he started work on the rig itself. The derrick covered an acre of ground. “I figured the work was likely to take a long time,” he said, “so I shingled the outside and plastered the inside, hung pictures, and moved in furniture. By the time it was done, the rig was so tall I had to hinge the top part so it could fold over and let the Moon by. Since it took fourteen days to climb to the top to work, I built bunkhouses for the men to sleep in on their way up or down.”
- 6 Gib started drilling using his biggest drills, and then he used smaller and smaller bits, as the workers shored up the sides of the hole. By the time he reached the 2,000-foot level, he was using the smallest of his new tools, which slid down one-inch tubing. But then



he found that the last part of the hole he'd drilled, when lined with tubing, was too narrow for even his smallest bit.

7 "That didn't stop me," Gib boasted. "I brought in the well with a needle and thread. Soon's I poked that needle into the oil sand, the gas pressure pushed the oil up the borehole, and 'black gold' gushed from the top of the rig. Luckily, I'd put a real sturdy roof on the derrick, or that oil woulda shot a hole in the sky. Then he added, "With some of the money I got, I built a hotel forty stories high with narrow-gauge railroads on each floor to take guests from the elevators to their rooms. Since most folks like south and east exposures, I put that hotel on a turntable, so ever'body got to face those directions at least part of the time."

8 One of his favorite stories was about Strickie, the boa constrictor Gib supposedly found on a drilling expedition to South America. Drilling had stopped because Gib had used up 10,000 feet of cable drilling a deep well, and he was waiting for more cable from the United States. The minute he saw the boa, which was about 20 blocks long, Gib got an idea. He had his men haul the snake back to the rig, where he used him as replacement cable. This was the start of their friendship. Gib kept the snake well fed and well cared for. A grateful Strickie slept in front of Gib's bunkhouse door, guarding him at night. If Strickie's length wasn't quite enough, the snake would obligingly shed his skin, thus doubling the length of cable, and letting the men finish a well. . . .

- 1** Read the sentence from paragraph 2.

Folks recalled him as a dark-complexioned old fellow, with a heavy gray mustache, earnest blue eyes, and a sincere-sounding voice that made people half-believe some of the outlandish tales he spun.

The narrator's description of Gib in this paragraph shows that Gib is —

- A** rude but honest
- B** a believable liar
- C** handsome and wise
- D** a convincing salesman.

- 2** In paragraph 3, the narrator says "Field crews eagerly awaited Gib's visits . . ." This detail suggests that —

- F** the crews enjoy his tall tales
- G** Gib brings the mail when he visits
- H** the bosses do not appreciate Gib's stories
- J** the crews do not know that they are being lied to

- 3** Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

At last, the frustrated boss asked for Gib's help.

What is one conclusion the reader can draw from this sentence?

- A** The boss is annoyed with Gib.
- B** Asking Gib for help is a last resort.
- C** The boss is not concerned about the job.
- D** Gib doesn't know what to do.

- 4** Which detail from the selection supports the idea that Gib is an expert in the oil business?

- F** He is a veteran of the Union Army.
- G** He was born near the site of the first oil well in the United States.
- H** He draws oil from the soft ground in Texas.
- J** He goes on drilling trips to South America.

- 5** Based on the details about Gib's hotel, what can the reader reasonably conclude?

- A** Gib is lying about everything.
- B** Gib was famous for many reasons.
- C** Gib is telling the truth about his construction work.
- D** Gib made a lot of money in the oil business.



- 6** Read the following sentence from paragraph 5.

By the time it was done, the rig was so tall I had to hinge the top part so it could fold over and let the Moon by.

Gib uses this description of the hinged rig to show —

- F** the extraordinary beauty of the rig
- G** the incredible height of the rig
- H** how much time he spends in the rig
- J** how powerful the rig is

- 7** Which sentences from the selection best support the idea that Gib has a healthy imagination?

- A** *First, Gib ordered special tools—some big, some little. Then he started work on the rig itself.*
- B** *Gib started drilling using his biggest drills, and then he used smaller and smaller bits, as the workers shored up the sides of the hole. By the time he reached the 2,000-foot level, he was using the smallest of his new tools, which slid down one-inch tubing.*
- C** *One of his favorite stories was about Strickie, the boa constrictor Gib supposedly found on a drilling expedition to South America. Drilling had stopped because Gib had used up 10,000 feet of cable drilling a deep well, and he was waiting for more cable from the United States.*
- D** *The minute he saw the boa, which was about 20 blocks long, Gib got an idea. He had his men haul the snake back to the rig, where he used him as replacement cable.*

- 8** In paragraph 8, the author includes the sentence “Gib kept the snake well fed and well cared for” to show that Gib —

- F** cares about what other people think about him
- G** is kind to the snake because it helped him with a job
- H** fears that the snake will attack him if he does not feed it
- J** treats animals better than he treats humans

- 9** What is the author’s primary purpose in this passage?

- A** To expose Gib as a liar who deceived many people
- B** To recount stories about an interesting character
- C** To show that even tall tales can have some truth
- D** To raise doubts about whether Gib actually existed

- 10** Which characteristic of Gib’s stories leads the reader to conclude that the stories are false?

- F** The narrator’s description of Gib’s appearance as “earnest”
- G** The narrator’s description of Gib’s voice as “sincere”
- H** The exaggerated nature of the details in the stories
- J** The unlikeliness of someone traveling around the country to follow oil strikes