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*Sincerely,  
Karen Haag*

## I CAN Teach Students to Infer (5 lessons)

### Lesson 1 Think Aloud Salad

**Learning Target:** I can explain that reading is reading and thinking.

1. Genre: fiction.
2. Source: Based on reading in *Comprehension Connections* by Tanny McGregor.
3. Formative Assessment: Partner Journals

#### Materials

1. Read aloud book (*Tough Boris*)
2. Bowl/student & teacher.
3. Baggie of 1" red squares and 1" green squares/student and teacher.
4. Picture book/student

#### ENGAGE

1. Ask a student to explain how to make a salad. Be sure to identify the final step, mixing it together.

#### MODEL

2. T: "I'm going to read a book and make a reading salad. Sometimes I will put red squares in my bowl and sometimes I will put green squares in my bowl. See if you can figure out the pattern I'm using to determine when I put red and when I put green squares in my "salad" bowl.  
Read aloud. (*Whenever I come across words I want to think about, I read those words a couple times. I put a red square into my salad bowl when I read the words. If I explain my thinking about those words, I put a green square in my bowl.*)

#### Formative Assessment: Partner Journal

- Ask students to write the answer to this question in their reader's notebooks: What is the pattern I used to determine when to put red and when to put green squares in my "salad" bowl? (K-2 Think-Pair-Share.)
- Switch journals. Read and respond to your partner's notebook.
- Reach consensus on the answer. Red is the words; green is my thinking.

**EXPLAIN Learning Target:** I can explain that reading is reading and thinking.

Formative Assessment: **I can work with a partner to figure out the 2 parts of reading.**

#### EXPLORE

1. Read your picture book. When you notice that you're thinking, put a green square in your salad bowl. When you notice you're reading, put a red square in your salad bowl.
2. EXPLAIN what you observed from reading this way. (Mixed reading and thinking? All reading? Etc.?)

#### EVALUATE

1. Write the most important idea of the lesson in your reader's notebook. (K-2: Partner 1 states and partner 2 responds.)
2. Switch. Read and respond to your partners' entry. (K-2: Partner 2 states and partner 1 responds.)
3. Reach consensus on the most important idea of the lesson: Reading is reading words **and** thinking.
4. Ask students to revisit what they wrote in their reader's notebooks and revise if necessary.
5. Collect and read partner journals so that you know whether you will reteach or move on tomorrow.

#### EXTEND

One student reads the book and the other child thinks aloud at the stopping points the teacher marked. (See photo, right.) Students evaluate whether the thinking is on course or going off course. If it's on course, ask students to identify what clues work to make the conclusion probable. If it's off course, ask "thinker" to explain what is causing the confusion - maybe a word or concept she doesn't know or maybe she needs the text reread, etc.



**Sample Lesson 2: Don't believe everything you think!**

**Learning Target:** I can infer from evidence in a photo. (Throughout this lesson, stress that we don't know if our inferences are correct if we don't have enough information.)

**Genre:** Visual Literacy

**Source:** <http://www.liketoread.com/infer.html> Little Inferring Piece handout

**Formative Assessment:** Headline Summary

**ENGAGE and MODEL**

1. Display photo. Ask, "What happened here?" (Show photo below, p. 3.)
2. Show students how to observe using evidence in the photo. Students need to watch you work because they will be doing the same kind of inferring in small groups in just a minute.
  - Building (looks like a barn) is on a truck.
  - Looks like it's on its side.
  - Man walking toward building.
  - Other observations?
3. What can we infer?
  - Building is about to be moved?
4. Why is the building on its side? (Take suggestions, but ask students to explain why they reached their conclusions.)
5. Do we know for sure? (No. However, this is a *Charlotte Observer* newspaper story so we can check by reading the caption. I included that on page 4 so you can reveal the true information after the students observed and inferred from the photo.)
6. Stress that we often don't know if our inferences are correct because we don't have enough information. In this case, we can check.

**Materials**

1. Photo for teacher modeling - page 3 and 4 for SmartBoard
2. Photo/table of students glued on tag board with questions printed. (See EXPLORE)

**EXPLAIN LEARNING TARGET**

1. I can infer from evidence in the photo.
2. At the end of this lesson, I can write headline summary to explain what I learned.

**EXPLORE** Give each group a photo from a magazine or print a photo from real life. When each group has a photo, ask them to discuss these questions. (Questions are ready for the SmartBoard or DocCam on page 4.)

1. What evidence so we have? What do we know for sure?
2. What do we infer?
3. Do we know our inferences are right?
4. Why do we know or not know that our inferences are right?

**SHARE** Ask each group to show their photo under the Doc Cam or on the SmartBoard.

Tell what the observed and they know is absolutely true.

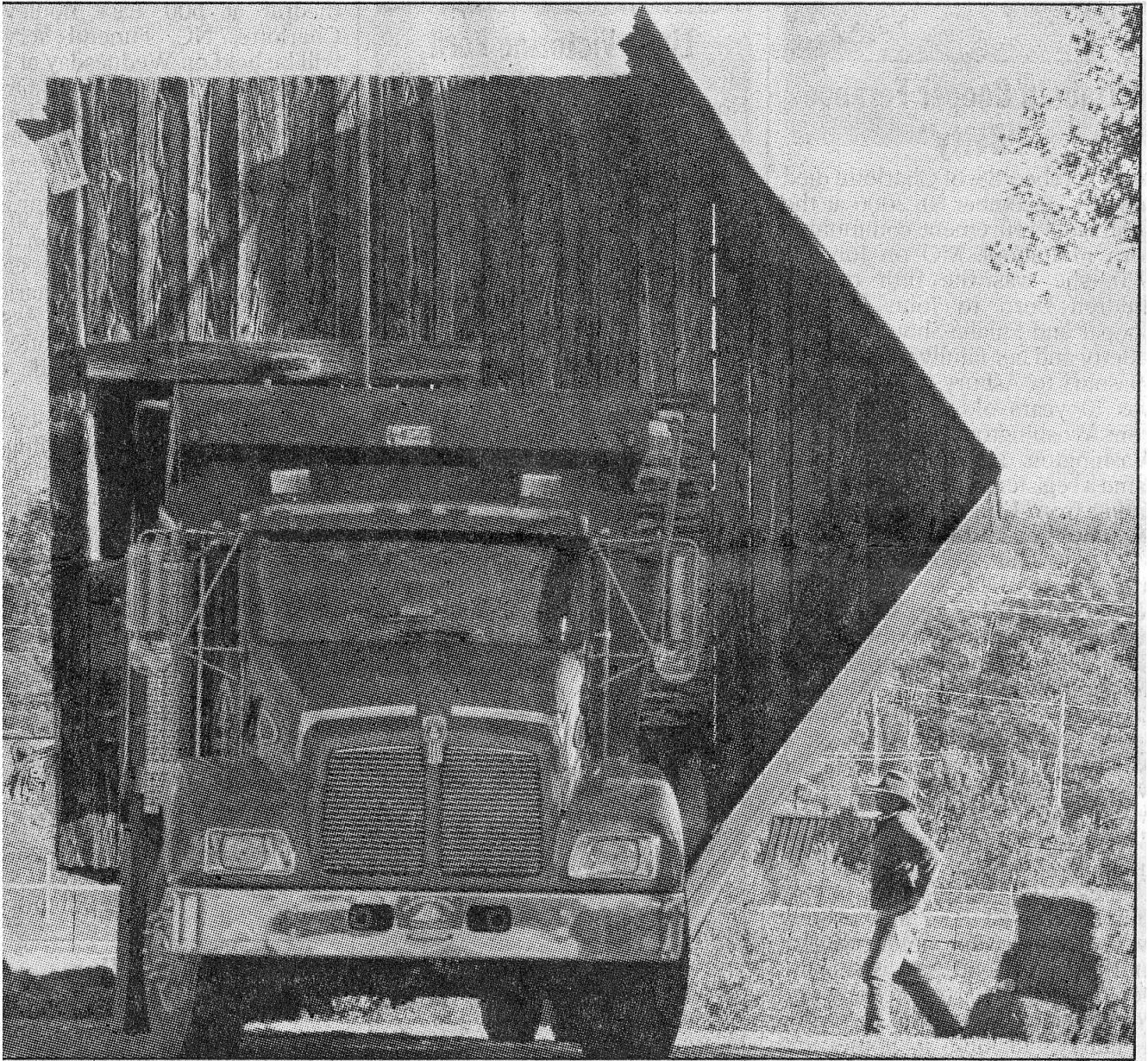
Ask them to tell what they inferred about the photo.

Continue to ask, do you know your inferences are right? Keep making the point that without someone to check with, we can't really know.

**EVALUATE using and EXIT SLIP** For more on headline summaries, read [www.liketoread.com](http://www.liketoread.com) - summaries

1. If you have not already, show students how to write a headline summary (1-6 words). They should write the gist of what they think you taught in a headline of 1-6 words. A normal newspaper summary is like this: Dog rescues man from burning building. For this lesson, students should show they understand that we don't always have enough evidence or the right evidence to infer. A headline summary might be: *Don't always believe what you think!* (clever) Or, *Be careful when inferring.* (literal)
2. After students write their summaries, share that what you thought you taught. You might show the photo on page 5 as your headline summary.
3. Collect and read exit slips so that you know whether you will reteach or move on tomorrow.







TED RICHARDSON - (RALEIGH) NEWS & OBSERVER PHOTO

# What – leave the barn behind? No way

Curtis Hogan (right) helped load this old storage barn Monday onto a trailer on Homestead Road in Chapel Hill. The barn was to be moved to the farm of his cousin Rob Hogan about a mile away on Old N.C. 86. The barn was turned sideways to help it fit under power lines along the way. The barn stood almost 21 feet tall while upright, and just 18 feet tall on its side.

**When your group has your photo, discuss these questions:**

- 1. What evidence so we have? What do we know for sure?**
- 2. What do we infer?**
- 3. Do we know our inferences are right?**
- 4. Why do we know or not know that our inferences are right?**



**Sample Lesson 3: BK + TC = I****Learning Target: I can apply what I know to the text to infer.**

1. Genre: poetry.
2. Source: Based on reading in *Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Ann Goudvis
3. Formative Assessment: drawing

**ENGAGE**

T: "I'm going to read a poem with a made-up word to demonstrate how I infer what any word means."

**THINK ALOUD**

Teacher Think Aloud - using a poem with a made up word (I Hear)

**I Hear**

by Gabriel Mack

I hear  
the wind  
blowing  
and people  
**commotioning**  
leaves swishing  
sometimes I  
hear nothing  
but silence

Karen's THINK ALOUD

commotioning --> commotion (root word)  
commotion → noise, out of control because my mom used to say,  
Why is there so much *commotion* in here?  
commotioning → "ing" --> verb → movement, action  
wind blowing, leaves swishing, and  
"people commotioning"  
opposite: silence → "sometimes I hear nothing but silence"

Therefore, I think a synonym for commotioning is moving.

**Materials**

1. Poem to read aloud for fun
2. Copy of "I Hear" on SmartBoard
3. Doc Cam
4. 1 poem/student or pair
5. Exit cards run off.
6. Music with no words

**TEACH BK + TC = I.**

T: "The reason we had so much trouble inferring with our photos is that we didn't have enough information, background knowledge, to know if we were inferring right. We have a formula for inferring that may help you: BK + TC = I. Background Knowledge + Text Clue = Inference. You have to have pay attention to both to make a good inference. I just modeled that when I read the poem.

**Text Clue:** wind blowing, leaves swishing, people commotioning → lots of movement in the poem

**Background Knowledge:** commotion → noise, out of control because my mom used to say

**EXPLAIN Learning Target**

1. I can apply what I know AND what I think to infer when reading. BK + TC + I
2. I will demonstrate I learned the learning target by writing the most important idea shared today.

**EXPLORE** Show the directions on page 8 so students know the steps of what to do.

Students read poetry either alone or in pairs. They apply what they know and what they think to the text to figure out any question that comes up. They might infer a new word, a concept, or the theme. I would select poems with difficult words, but I wouldn't search for poems with nonsense words.

**Students EXPLAIN**

Think-Pair-Share with someone new: Stand up. Face the center of the room. Take 15 steps across the room. Find a partner. Come back to your space when the music stops. (Music playing)

What did you learn?

What does BK + TC = I mean? BK + TC = I (Background knowledge + text copy = inference; what I know applied to text = inference)

**EVALUATE Learning Target**

Formative Assessment: **EXIT SLIP**→ Students write on an index card or on papers on which you write questions. (Lesson 3 Sample Exit Slips are on page 9.)

- What does BK + TC = I mean? BK + TC = I
- How can you use what you learned to the reading you have to do?

Collect and read exit slips so that you know whether you will reteach or move on tomorrow.

**EXTEND**

Double-entry journals: Ask students to read a short text - just a paragraph, a joke, poem, or cartoon. Use 3 columns for recording thinking: BK/TC/I. Students read *and record* the text clues (TC) which lead them to think about their background knowledge (BK) and the inference (I) they reached as a result. Compare writing to see if thinking is on or off course.

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*From Kids' Poems: Teaching Second Graders to Love Poetry* by Regie Routman

# I Hear

by Gabriel Mack

I hear  
the wind  
blowing  
and people  
**commotioning**  
leaves swishing  
sometimes I  
hear nothing  
but silence



SmartBoard Poster adapted from *Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

$$\mathbf{BK + TC = I}$$

**Step One** – Ask yourself a question. Wonder about something in the text.

**Step Two** – Consider the textual evidence left by the author that may represent important clues.

**Step Three** – Think about what you know about the evidence. What does your background knowledge tell you about these clues?

**Step Four**- Using the clues in the text and your background knowledge about the topic, try to answer the original question.

Exit Slip Your Name:  
What does  $BK + TC = I$  mean?

Exit Slip Your Name:  
What does  $BK + TC = I$  mean?

How can you apply what we did today to the reading you have to do?

How can you apply what we did today to the reading you have to do?

Exit Slip Your Name:  
What does  $BK + TC = I$  mean?

Exit Slip Your Name:  
What does  $BK + TC = I$  mean?

How can you apply what we did today to the reading you have to do?

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Exit Slip Your Name:  
What does  $BK + TC = I$  mean?

How can you apply what we did today to the reading you have to do?

How can you apply what we did today to the reading you have to do?



**EXTEND**

**Read one frame at a time.** TOGETHER, write possible observations and possible inferences. Allow children to write their own IF they are believable and based on facts. By the third frame they should be writing their own observation and inferences with a partner and discussing as a group or class.

**Possible Double Entry Journal for Zits**

Frame	Possible Observations	Possible Inferences
1	Dad talking to Jeremy on phone. Dad holding his head. Jeremy thanks Dad.	Jeremy is lost. Dad is tired, exasperated, bored? Jeremy is thankful his dad is going to help.
2	Dad asks Jeremy to say what he sees around him. Jeremy sees a grocery store, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble.	Jeremy doesn't know where he is. Jeremy is telling dad landmarks that could be anywhere.
3	Dad asks Jeremy to keep talking about what he sees around him. Jeremy tells dad he sees the bakery and his old elementary school.	Dad still doesn't know where Jeremy is. Jeremy hasn't realized where he is.
4	Dad looks surprised? Dumbfounded? Dad tells Jeremy that he went to school in Indiana. Jeremy says, "What's your point?"	Dad knows Jeremy is far away. Jeremy doesn't understand how lost he is or how far away he is.



**Sample Lesson 4: Picture This!**

Learning Target: I can use text clues and background knowledge to predict (as correctly as possible) when reading.

Genre: Picture books

Source: *Comprehension Toolkit -the idea of leaving tracks of your thinking in the sand with sticky notes*

Formative Assessment: WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

**Materials**

1. One puzzle card
2. Teacher selects a read aloud or collects texts for small groups
3. Students explore predicting with individual picture books or in small groups.
4. Sticky notes

**ENGAGE**

Inferring card - what do you infer will happen?

Inferring cards pages 7-9. Not all cards are appropriate for primary. You have enough puzzle cards to use in your lessons and to put in a Strategy Station.

**EXPLAIN Learning Target**

I can use text clues and background knowledge to predict when reading.

**TEACHER MODELS** (like you saw in the video)

Either during shared reading or in small groups, model predicting (a form of inferring) based on evidence and background knowledge by reading a book selected purposefully for teaching predicting. BK + TC = I

**EXPLORE**

Show students a text where you used the strategy and left the sticky notes on the pages.

Tell students to read and leave the sticky notes in the text as a track of their thinking like footprints in the sand.

The sticky notes will be where they predict things will happen.

**STUDENTS EXPLAIN**

Reach consensus on what is the most important idea of this lesson.

1. WHAT? (I can use text clues and background knowledge to predict as correctly as possible when reading.)

**EVALUATION → EXIT SLIP**

Students either tell you, draw for you, or explain to you responses to questions 1, 2 and 3:

1. WHAT? (I can use text clues and background knowledge to predict as correctly as possible when reading.)
2. SO WHAT? (Why is it important to predict correctly while reading?)
3. NOW WHAT? (What will I do with this new information?)

Collect and read exit slips so that you know whether you will reteach or move on tomorrow.



#1: LOCATION QUESTION: He pulled his reindeer coat more closely around his shoulders and drove his dog team on into the storm. The stinging winds bit through his sealskin boots and trousers. Where was the man?

#5: TIME QUESTION: Michael gathered all the leaves onto the front porch. He placed a big bowl of candy on a table and then hid under the leaves waiting for the boys and girls to yell, "Trick or Treat!" What time of the year is it?

#2: LOCATION QUESTION: Brian liked to go down and watch the ships get closer. When he went down, he often found pretty shells. Where did Brian go?

#6: TIME QUESTION: We wanted to stop and see our friends, but when we drove to their house, there were no lights on. We decided they were not at home. What time was it?

#3: LOCATION QUESTION: After we paid for our ticket, we gave the clerk the ticket, got popcorn and found our seats. Where were we?

#7: TIME QUESTION: I see lots of children wearing nice clothes and carrying new pencils and paper. Everyone seems to have a new bookbag or lunchbox. What time of the year is it?

#4: OCCUPATION OR PASTIME QUESTION: She looked at the crying baby and picked her up. Then she took the baby's temperature. She frowned as she read the thermometer and called a prescription into the pharmacy. What is the occupation of the woman?

#8: ACTION QUESTION: The streets were covered with water. The water was over six feet deep on some of the streets, and the people living on these streets had to be rescued by boat. What is happening?

**#9: ACTION QUESTION:** A moving van pulled up to the empty house. Men started unloading furniture and taking it inside. A car drove up and a man, a woman, and a boy got out and carried some items into the house. What is happening?

**#13: OBJECT QUESTION:** The gleaming giant had eighteen wheels and it towered above smaller vehicles on the expressway. What is the gleaming giant?

**#10: TOOL OR DEVICE QUESTION:** I never have dull pencils anymore. I like to hear the whir of the machine when I put new pencil in it. What is being described here?

**#14: OBJECT QUESTION:** The little boy had waited for hours to see the special event. He could hear the sirens and the marching bands. But when it came near, he could not see it because so many people were in front of him. What is the special event?

**#11: CAUSE AND EFFECT QUESTION:** Steve grabbed a prickly thistle plant without watching what he was doing. What happened to Steve?

**#15: CATEGORY QUESTION:** The Toyota and the Ford were still in the shop being repaired, but the Nissan was already fixed. What category do you see here?

**#12: CAUSE AND EFFECT QUESTION:** The early American settlers often placed their cabins close to one another and built a stockade or high fence around them. Why did the settlers do this?

**#16: CATEGORY QUESTION:** When we eat peas, we are eating the seeds of the plant. We eat the roots of beets, carrots, and turnips. We eat the flowers of broccoli and cauliflower and the leaves of spinach, lettuce, and cabbage. What category do you see here?



**#17: CATEGORY QUESTION:** I like to go bike riding. Mr. Dodson enjoys playing basketball. My son Jason plays baseball and soccer, and my daughter Sarah prefers swimming. What category do you see here?

**#20: FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES QUESTION:** When I received the Do the Right Thing Award, my dad clapped and his eyes filled with tears. How did my dad feel?

**#18: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION QUESTION:** The side of Rick's face was swollen, and his tooth throbbed. What does Rick need to do to solve his problem?

**#21: FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES QUESTION:** When Ebony was a little girl, she did not want other people to look at her. She was afraid to go to school. When visitors came to her home, she would hide. How would you describe Ebony's feelings?

**#19: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION QUESTION:** When I got up this morning, I didn't know what time it was because the power had gone off during the night and my watch was broken. I wouldn't know when the bus would come for school. How do you think I might solve my problem?

**#22: FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES QUESTION:** On my first day at school, I was late getting to the cafeteria. After I got my tray, I looked around and all the seats were taken. How do you think I felt?

**Sample Lesson 5: What Were You Thinking?**

**Learning Target:** I can use Double-Entry Journals to prepare for discussion with my reading group.

Genre: Nonfiction or Fiction

Source: Ann Berthoff, *The Making of Meaning*

Formative Assessment: Double-entry journals

**ENGAGE** Model Notice-Infer with sentence, cartoon, or paragraph.

**Materials**

1. Model paragraph or sentence for teacher.
2. Notebooks or paper or chart paper for Double-Entry journal entry/student
3. Story to read and try the strategy. Cut the beginning from the ending at a good place to infer depending on the story you select so students can read on part, infer, and then read the ending.

**EXPLAIN LEARNING TARGET**

1. I can write Double Entry Journals (DEJs) to prepare for discussion with my reading group.
2. You will explore how slowing down your thinking and writing what you think works for you.

**EXPLORE**

1. Students prepare their paper by folding it in half (vertically) and writing Notice on the left-hand side and Infer on the right-hand side.
2. Students read selection you've chosen for them and try the strategy independently. (K students read together and teacher records the thinking.)
3. Students bring inferences to groups to discuss. Depending on the story selected, teachers can cut the beginning from the ending at a good place to infer. Students read, write DEJs, discuss, read ending, discuss.

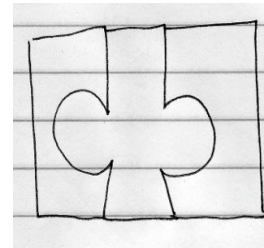
**EVALUATE**

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of double entry journals.
2. Discuss how ready kids were to discuss the story with groups.

**STUDENTS EXPLAIN** the Learning Target in pairs.

**EVALUATE**

1. Collect double-entry journals.
2. Ask students to draw a picture of infer and collect them.



infer

*“Trying to write it helps students to understand it. In fact, students probably cannot understand a concept unless they can write it in their own words. Anything you know really well, you have language AND a visual for. Double entry journals take a lot of time but have a HUGE IMPACT on long-term memory.” ---Dr. Marzano*

**NOTES**

- Some students need to read first and then record their thinking. Let students experiment to see whether they like to read and write at the same time or read and then record. In fact, double entry journals can interfere with reading for some students, especially LD students, so be in tune with their comfort level.
- Some students like to write their inference first and then go back and defend their thinking with evidence in the Notice column. They can experiment with that as well.
- Tell students why you are asking them to write. DEJs are HARD work and students won't want to work so hard unless they know why they are rewording what they're learning.

**EXTEND**

1. Students might write in the left column, draw pictures to illustrate their inferences in the right and then explain to a partner what they wrote and why.
2. Upper grade teachers ask students to take notes as double-entry journals. Set a timer or a “mental timer” for 8 minutes. After you've explained or worked with a concept for 8 minutes, ask students to record what they know on the left and what they infer on the right and explain to a partner. Students have difficulty paying attention longer than 8 minutes so this note-taking technique works well for longer lessons.

3. From Cris Tovani, Ann Goudvis, and Debbie Miller (Denver, Colorado presentation), I learned to type the text on the left side. Students infer by writing on the "text copy". They bring what they think the poem means to a group to discuss.

Date January 2, 2000 Presentation at NCTE of "Text Lifts" Ann Goudvis Chris Tovani

Inferred for meaning w/ poetry

<p>→ does he mean night dreams? no</p> <p>Dreams → tight/Keep it</p> <p>Hold <u>fast</u> to dreams For if dreams die <u>Life</u> is a broken-winged bird That cannot fly.</p> <p>Hold fast to dreams For when dreams go <u>Life</u> is a <u>barren</u> field Frozen with snow.</p> <p>Langston Hughes The poets Life, trying to copare his Life to his poem.</p>	<p>This is about what you want to be</p> <p>A bird that's hurt crouching, hopping, wing flapping, dragging</p> <p>The birds wing is like a broken heart</p> <p>deserted field, empty frozen, with out Life</p> <p>IS he Lonely? with out a dream?</p>
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I'm inferring with out a dream your heart or soul is broken/ no imagination → some thing that catches you. I think the bird is your soul or spirit. form from Debbie Miller



Inferring for Poetry Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Hold Fast to Dreams

By Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Covered with snow.

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I'm inferring... \_\_\_\_\_

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