

## Inferring through the woods

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### Learning objectives

Infer meanings and consider more than one interpretation of a text

### Resources

- Enough copies of *Resource 2* for each student
- Google images

### Starter

Show the class a picture of woods (you could use the one in *Resource 1*). Point out interesting features of the scene so that students observe closely. Now tell them to imagine that something dramatic happened here 70 years ago. What could it be and what makes them think this?

### Introduction

Take some feedback and then show the class these two lines from the poem as a caption to the picture: 'You will hear the beat of a horse's feet, / And the swish of a skirt in the dem.' Now model for the class how you use clues in the picture and the two lines from the poem to work up some hypotheses for the dramatic event that might have happened 70 years ago. Model the process of using clues to infer then take some suggestions from students, prompting them to justify their suggestions. Now show the class the next four lines of the poem (not including the last line) and ask students in pairs to carry on inferring what happened 70 years ago. Point out that when we infer we are using clues to make guesses.

### Development

Hand out copies of the complete poem (see *Resource 3* below which has two copies on the page) and read it aloud. (You might like to accompany the reading with images of things mentioned in the poem: e.g. coppice, anemones, etc.) Put students into pairs and tell them to come up with three questions they would like to ask, based on different parts of the poem— three things that puzzle them. Tell them not to go for huge questions like, 'What does this poem mean?' Give them this example: 'Who is *they* in the first line?'

After a few minutes, gather some questions in and display them on the board. Now ask all of the groups to discuss a possible answer for each question. After a few minutes, put pairs together into fours and get them to share and compare their answers, and try to agree on one answer per group per question.

**Meanwhile: you could run a guided reading session** with a group of the most able students. (See *Resource 2* below.)

### Plenary

Take some feedback from the groups, prompting them to use this formulation: *From this clue we infer that* ...

Ask students how they have improved in exploring interpretations. Ask them where in 'real' life it is important to infer and to keep an open mind to alternative interpretations.

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Resource 1



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Inferring through the woods

Resource 2

Guided reading session plan

Teaching sequence	Teaching approaches	Prompts and questions
<b>Re-establish the objective:</b>	<p>Make the lesson objective more challenging: We are learning to infer meanings, explore layers of meaning with confidence, and explore more than one interpretation of a text.</p> <p>Explain that the aim of this session is for students to explore the poem's mysteries by probing details in the text and formulating questions about them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The poem leaves us with lots of unanswered questions, such as why was the road shut? Who shut it? Why does the second-to-last line just break off? What other questions might we want answered?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to task and text</b>	<p>Wonder aloud about details in the first verse. make sure you show how to use speculative, tentative language such as <i>perhaps, this might, could this ...</i>, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Perhaps the game-keeper knows the road was there because he is connected with what happened just before they shut the road. Or perhaps he is simply used to noticing small details ...</i></li> </ul>
<b>Strategy check</b>	<p>Ask students how they can avoid getting stuck on words they are unsure of – e.g. 'ring-dove'. How can they come up with questions that don't have a right or wrong answer, such as what does 'broods' mean?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What could you ask about the poem's mood or atmosphere?</i></li> <li>• <i>Find details that need to be worked and which could be interpreted in more than one way.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Independent reading and related task</b>	<p>Get students to work in pairs to explore at least two details in the second verse or two aspects of the poem. You could assign one verse to each pair. Watch how pairs go about the task and only intervene to support students who can't decide what to focus on, or who focus on overly factual details, or who do not try to explore more than one possible interpretation. If necessary, underline a couple of very brief bits of the poem and ask students to concentrate on those.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You can't decide, can you? Choose any bit you like to ask a question about.</i></li> <li>• <i>How about this bit? What is mysterious about that? What is odd about that?</i></li> <li>• <i>I can see that. That's good. But, you know, there is another way you could look at it. How about ...?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Return to the text</b>	<p>Ask one student to re-read the whole poem aloud and then get students to compare their thoughts. Invite them to comment on each other's questions and interpretations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ok then, [name] would you mind reading the whole poem out loud to us?</i></li> <li>• <i>[Names], what have you been talking about? What ideas have you got?</i></li> <li>• <i>What does anyone else think about that?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Review (reading target And next steps)</b>	<p>Ask students how they have improved in inferring meanings and exploring interpretations. Ask them where in 'real' life it is important to infer and to keep an open mind to alternative interpretations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Let's stop there and think about what we've achieved.</i></li> <li>• <i>What have we got better at by doing this?</i></li> <li>• <i>How could you have done it better?</i></li> <li>• <i>When in real life is it important to infer or to keep an open mind?</i></li> </ul>

### The Way Through the Woods

They shut the road through the woods  
 Seventy years ago.  
 Weather and rain have undone it again,  
 And now you would never know  
 There was once a road through the woods  
 Before they planted the trees.  
 It is underneath the coppice and heath,  
 And the thin anemones.  
 Only the keeper sees  
 That, where the ring-dove broods,  
 And the badgers roll at ease,  
 There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods  
 Of a summer evening late,  
 When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools  
 Where the otter whistles his mate.  
 (They fear not men in the woods,  
 Because they see so few)  
 You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,  
 And the swish of a skirt in the dew,  
 Steadily cantering through  
 The misty solitudes,  
 As though they perfectly knew  
 The old lost road through the woods ...  
 But there is no road through the woods.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

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