

■ Exercise 7: Inference from Figurative Language

THE RAINY DAY

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1807-1882

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

Answer the following with *T* (True) or *F* (False).

- _____ 1. The poet has not achieved his early expectations.
_____ 2. The season of the year is probably spring.
_____ 3. The phrase "the wind is never weary" refers to the unceasing nature of the wind and his troubles.
_____ 4. The poet sees no hope for better times.
_____ 5. The poet feels that his dark spirits and misfortunes are unique.

■ Exercise 8: Inference from Factual Material

Except for some minor internal disturbances in the nineteenth century, Switzerland has been at peace inside stable boundaries since 1815. The basic factors underlying this long period of peace seem to have been (1) Switzerland's position as a buffer between larger powers, (2) the comparative defensibility of much of the country's terrain, (3) the relatively small value of Swiss economic production to an aggressive state, (4) the country's value as an intermediary between belligerents in wartime, and (5) Switzerland's own policy of strict and heavily armed neutrality. The

difficulties which a great power might encounter in attempting to conquer Switzerland have often been popularly exaggerated since the Swiss Plateau, the heart of the country, lies open to Germany and France, and even the Alps have frequently been traversed by strong military forces in past times. On the other hand, resistance in the mountains might well be hard to thoroughly extinguish. In World War II Switzerland was able to hold a club over the head of Germany by mining the tunnels through which Swiss rail lines avoid the crests of the Alpine passes. Destruction of these tunnels would have been very costly to Germany, as well as to its military partner, Italy, since the Swiss railways were depended on to carry much traffic between them.

Wheeler, Kostbade and Thoman, *Regional Geography of the World*

Answer the following with *T* (true), *F* (false).

- _____ 1. The author implies that Switzerland is rich with raw materials for economic production.
- _____ 2. The most important economic area of Switzerland is protected from its neighbors by the Alps.
- _____ 3. In World War II Germany did not invade Switzerland primarily because of the five basic factors listed by the author.
- _____ 4. The maintenance of a neutral Swiss position in World War II was due in part to a kind of international blackmail.
- _____ 5. If it had not been for the railroad access to Italy through Switzerland, Germany would have been defeated sooner.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

To arrive at a conclusion, the reader must make a logical deduction from both stated and unstated ideas. Using the hints as well as the facts, the reader relies on prior knowledge and experience to interpret motives, actions, and outcomes. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of perceived evidence, and because perceptions differ, conclusions can vary from reader to reader. Generally, however, the author attempts to direct the reader to a preconceived conclusion. Read the following example and look for a basis for the stated conclusion.

UNDERGROUND CONDUCTOR

Harriet Tubman was on a northbound train when she overheard her name spoken by a white passenger. He was reading aloud an ad which accused her of stealing \$50,000 worth of property in slaves, and which offered a \$5000 reward for her capture. She lowered her head so that the sunbonnet she was wearing hid her face. At the next station she slipped off the train and boarded another that was headed south, reasoning that no one would pay

attention to a black woman traveling in that direction. She deserted the second train near her hometown in Maryland and bought two chickens as part of her disguise. With her back hunched over in imitation of an old woman, she drove the chickens down the dusty road, calling angrily and chasing them with her stick whenever she sensed danger. In this manner Harriet Tubman was passed by her former owner who did not even notice her. The reward continued to mount until it reached \$40,000.

We Americans by Leonard Pitt

Conclusion: Harriet Tubman was a clever black woman who became a severe irritant to white slave owners.

What is the basis for this conclusion?

(Her disguise and subsequent escape from the train station provides evidence for her intelligence. The escalating amount of the reward, finally \$40,000, proves the severity of the sentiment against her.)

■ Exercise 9: Drawing Conclusions

Read the following passages and indicate evidence for the conclusions that have been drawn.

A tragic counterpoint to the voluntary movement of American workers in search of jobs was the forced relocation of 120,000 Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. Responding to racial fears in California after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt approved an army order in February 1942 to move both the Issei (Japanese-Americans who had emigrated from Japan) and the Nisei (people of Japanese ancestry born in the United States and therefore American citizens) to concentration camps in the interior. Forced to sell their farms and businesses at distress prices, the Japanese-Americans lost not only their liberty but also most of their worldly goods. Herded into ten hastily built detention centers in seven western states, they lived as prisoners in tar-papered barracks behind barbed wire, guarded by armed troops.

from *America Past and Present*, vol. II, by Divine, et al.

Conclusion: After Pearl Harbor many Japanese-Americans were treated unfairly by the American government.

What is the basis for this conclusion?

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The historical pattern of accepting death has now been largely replaced by one of fear and anxiety about dying. There is some evidence, however, that the fear of death is less pronounced in elderly people than in younger people. For some elderly people who suffer from severe and painful disabilities, death may not be feared at all, but welcomed as an end to suffering. More generally, however, the greater acceptance of death among the elderly reflects the fact that they are able to look back on many years of life and recognize that the future promises them relatively little. In addition, the elderly are typically socialized toward greater acceptance of death by the deaths of family members and peers (Kalish, 1976, cited in Atchley, 1983). Generally, however, Americans have a strong avoidance of death and commonly feel considerable discomfort even discussing the subject. This has unfortunate consequences for dying people, who feel socially isolated from friends and relatives who are unable to face up to the reality of their impending death. Furthermore, since few Americans die at home, hospital personnel—rather than family members and friends—often attend the dying.

References

- Kalish, Richard A. "The New Ageism and the Failure Models: A Polemic." *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (August 1979):398-402.
- Atchley, Robert C. *Aging, Continuity and Change*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1983.

from *Sociology* by MacLionis

Conclusion: The dying would be better comforted by a greater acceptance of death by family members.

What is the basis for this conclusion?

Pesticides are biologically rather interesting substances. They have no known counterpart in the natural world, and most of them didn't even exist thirty years ago. Today, however, a metabolic product of DDT, called DDE, may be the most common and widely distributed man-made chemical on earth. It has been found in the tissues of living things from the polar regions to the remotest parts of the oceans, forests, and mountains. Although the permissible level of DDT in cow's milk, set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is 0.05 parts per million, it often occurs in human milk in concentrations as high as 5 parts per million and in human fat at levels of more than 12 parts per million.

from *Biology: The World of Life* by Wallace

Conclusion: DDT accumulates in the environment far beyond the areas where it was directly applied.

What is the basis for this conclusion?

In their book describing what are generally considered America's best-run companies—IBM, 3M, Texas Instruments, Digital, McDonald's, Proctor & Gamble, for example—Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman find a consistent bias toward action. Problems and opportunities are analyzed and studied carefully, but analyses and reports are neither exhaustive nor exhausting. Big problems are broken into manageable chunks, attacked, and acted upon. An axiom by which these companies operate would seem to be "Do it, fix it, try it." That is, identify a problem, gather a reasonable amount of information, analyze it, find a good solution, then implement it. If it doesn't work, fix it. Experimentation—trying something to see how it works—is preferred to inaction and endless analysis. Chase Manhattan Bank accomplished a major, successful adjustment of its retail operations in just this fashion. One regional manager tried some new ideas and when he was successful, others followed suit. McDonald's introduced their breakfast menu in the same way.

from *Managing* by Reitz and Jewell

Conclusion: An eagerness to try new ideas can make already successful companies even more successful.

What is the basis for this conclusion?

Mining camps were governed by a simple democracy. Soon after a strike, the miners in the area met to organize a mining "district" and adopted rules governing behavior in it. Rules regulated the size and boundaries of claims, established procedures for settling disputes, and set penalties for crimes. Petty criminals were banished from the district; serious offenders were hanged. In the case of a major dispute, the whole camp gathered, chose legal counsel for both sides, and heard the evidence. If all else failed, miners formed secret vigilance committees to hang a few offenders as a lesson to the rest. Early visitors to the mining country were struck by the way miners, solitary and competitive, joined together, founded a camp, and created a society.

from *America Past and Present*, vol. II, by Divine, et al.

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Conclusion: Mining towns were vulnerable to rule by a corrupt majority.
What is the basis for this conclusion?

Selection 1

LITERATURE



Stage 1

Preview

The letter is written to Fitzgerald's wife.

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Fitzgerald is giving advice.

agree disagree

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