Lesson Plan # 9:
Reading Skills – Inference (for advanced learners 9.0-12.9)

INTRODUCTION:
Inference is a mental process by which we reach a conclusion based on specific evidence. We engage in inference every day. We infer people are thirsty if they ask for a glass of water. We seek purposes and reasons. Inferences are not random but are based on supporting evidence. In reading, inference (or "reading between the lines") is an important skill for advanced level readers. Students learn that they can infer, or interpret, what an author means based on word selection, context, structure, and/or a specific reference. Reading for inference is an important skill for successful transitioning to post-secondary education or training.

OBJECTIVES:
In this lesson, students will be able to:
- recognize that word selection, context, and structure can provide clues to meaning
- recognize that reference is important to meaning and overall comprehension
- understand how the ability to make inferences, to "read between the lines," enhances reading comprehension

PROCEDURE:
1. Teacher chooses a passage to read.
2. Teacher and students read the passage.

Sentence in sample passage: **During World War II, the United States fought the Germans, mainly in Europe, and the Japanese, mainly in the Pacific.**

3. Teacher asks: What are we not told specifically about the Pacific? (*Answer: that it's an ocean.)*
   Teacher points out: We have to understand the **reference**—that the "Pacific" refers to the "Pacific Ocean." Why might that be important to our overall understanding of the rest of this article, whatever it may be? (*Answer: because if we know that Europe is a continent and the Pacific is an ocean, we will be better able to understand what the author is talking abo*ut.)

4. Teacher asks:
   According to the sentence, which of the two countries may we **infer** engaged in the most naval battles with the United States? *(Answer: Japan)* Why do you think so? *(Because if we fought Japan mainly in the Pacific, and the Pacific is an ocean, those fights would have been at sea and thus naval battles.)*

5. Teacher asks:
   From the sentence, can we **infer** who won World War II? *(Answer: No. The sentence simply states a fact. It contains no reference or inference regarding victory).*

6. Teacher asks:
    From the sentence structure, can we infer from whose point of view—the United States, Germany, or Japan—that the rest of this article is most likely written? (*Answer: Yes. The United States. The United States appears first in the sentence. If the article had been written from the POV of Germany or Japan, the sentence would most likely have been constructed to read: "During World War II, Germany fought..." or "During World War II, Japan fought...")*

7. Teacher asks:
    Want to see what happens if we change the word selection a bit? Let's change the sentence to read: **During World War II, the United States attacked Germany, mainly in Europe, and Japan, mainly in the Pacific.**
    How is "attacked" different from "fought"? Would that change the meaning? (*Answer: "Attacked" implies offensive rather than defensive action. "Attacked" is stronger than "fought", and it implies or infers that the United States made the first strike. So, yes, it would change the meaning.)*

CONCLUSION:

After numerous opportunities to practice inferential reading with various passages and texts, students gain familiarity with "reading between the lines" and recognize that authors intentionally include certain words, references, contexts, and structures to convey meaning that is inferred rather than directly stated. The ability to perform inferential reading is an extremely important reading skill as students progress in their studies and transition to post-secondary education.

Lesson plan developed by Linda Cox, SIPDC - 2008

Reference:
Dan Kurland, www.criticalreading.com/inference_process.htm "Reading and Writing Ideas As Well As Words"