Helpful Hint: Places to Make Inferences in Books

Authors give readers a lot of information in the words they write, but readers have a job too. They have to figure out other information using what they already know (prior knowledge) and clues the author leaves in the words or the pictures—this is called *Making Inferences*. It is important for readers to make inferences so you really understand the books you read.

Where to Look	Prior Knowledge to Use	Inferences You Might Make
Illustrations of the characters, especially their faces	Prior knowledge about feelings/emotions	Infer how characters are feeling or what they might be thinking.
Illustrations of events and text describing events	Prior knowledge or life experiences of a similar event or situation. Knowledge of the plot thus far.	Infer events that the author didn't tell you about or how the events will change the remainder of the story.
Text and illustrations about the setting	Prior knowledge about settings in other texts that are similar or life experiences in similar places.	Infer what it's like for the characters to be in that setting (Hot/cold, noisy, exciting, crowded, etc.)
Dialogue and actions of a character	Prior knowledge about people who act that way or similar characters from other books.	Infer what the character's traits (honest, generous, etc.)
Choices the author made about the details in the book (e.g. a character or place name or appearance, a certain word or phrase)	Prior knowledge of vocabulary and other books of the same genre or from the same author	Infer why did the author made those choices? What does s/he want you to think? (ex – In 101 Dalmatians, Cruella Deville has the words 'cruel' and 'evil' in her name, which makes the reader think she is going to be an antagonist.)
A reference a character makes to something that happened in the past	Prior knowledge or life experience of a similar event, knowledge of the character's traits.	Infer the details and importance of that event if the author doesn't fully explain it.

Helpful Hints for Making Inferences

- Inferences are open-ended and do not have one right or wrong answer, but they must be supported by text evidence. For example, a student reading Goldilocks and the Three Bears might infer that Goldilocks is adventurous and bold because she sneaks out against her mother's orders, and another student might infer that she is a troublemaker for the same reason.

- Model making inferences for your student. You can do this during tutor read aloud and when you introduce the skill. Include textual evidence and your background knowledge to explicitly show the student your thought process.

- Here are some common inferences from popular texts:
  - "I infer that Cinderella feels left out because her stepsisters get to go to the ball and she can't go. I can tell by the expression on her face in the picture and also I know when my siblings get privileges that I don't, I feel disappointed and left out."
  - "In Grace for President, she is shocked that there has never been a female president. In the text it says, "she can't believe her eyes" and there are pictures of all of the male presidents in her classroom. I know when I hear something I can't believe is true I feel shocked and surprised."

Core Read Aloud Titles to Support Making Inferences

Grade	Core Read Aloud Books
2	• *Dear Juno* • *If the Shoe Fits* • *My Rotten Red-Headed Older Brother* • *Oh, Brother!* • *Black Dog*
3	• *Hewitt Anderson's Great Big Life* • *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* • *The Gardener* • *Verdi* • *Love that Dog*
4	• *Lon Po Po* • *Grandaddy's Gift* • *Probuditi* • *The Memory Coat*