

Spider® Teacher Guide: November/December 2024

Doodlebug & Dandelion

pp. 4-8, Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Use this amusing reproduction of O. Henry's famous short story "The Gift of the Magi" to teach students how to make inferences.

Lexile: ~650L



RESOURCES

Make Inferences Worksheet

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will make logical inferences.
- Students will analyze historical figures.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **glumly** (p. 5) doing something in a sad way
- **prancing** (p. 5) walking or moving in a lively and proud way
- **hesitate** (p. 5) stop briefly before you do something, especially because you are nervous or unsure about what to do
- **puzzling** (p. 8) confusing

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How do families celebrate holidays?

Ask students to name the holidays and family celebrations when they give or receive gifts. Discuss the kinds of gifts students are excited to give and receive. Invite volunteers to describe the best gift they ever gave someone and the best gift they've ever received. Tell students that "Doodlebug & Dandelion" is about a brother and sister who exchange gifts, and then begin reading.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words. Read the terms and their definitions aloud. Next, have students work in small groups to take turns using gestures, facial expressions, or actions to show the meaning of the words while other group members try to guess the word.

READ & DISCUSS

After students have read the story, use the questions below to prompt discussion:

1. What objects do Doodlebug and Dandelion each treasure or want badly?
2. What gifts do they give each other?
3. How does each character get the money to buy a gift?
4. What do Doodlebug and Dandelion's actions tell you about them and their relationship?
5. What is the theme or message of this story?

SKILL FOCUS: Making Inferences

INSTRUCT: Explain that authors don't always tell readers exactly what a character is thinking and feeling. Instead, authors give clues that help readers to make inferences, or logical guesses, about a character's thoughts and feelings. Explain that readers can make inferences by combining story information and their own knowledge and experiences. Distribute the *Make Inferences* worksheet to all students. Work with students to make the first inference and state reasons to support it. Next, have students work in pairs to make an inference about the second story excerpt. Discuss responses.

ASSESS: Have partners work together to answer the final question on the worksheet. Discuss responses as a class.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Remind students that Doodlebug owns a Sweyn Forkbeard Viking figure. Explain that Sweyn Forkbeard was a real person. Have students research this Danish king. Display a chart in the classroom with the heading "Facts about Forkbeard." Have students add interesting facts to the chart as they discover them.

Name _____

Make Inferences

An **inference** is a logical guess that you make using details in a text and what you already know from your own experiences. In the chart below, make inferences about Dandelion’s feelings. Also write the reasons why you made each inference.

Story Information: “Dandelion hesitated outside the shop.” (p. 5)

My Inference	My Reasons
I think Dandelion feels.....	I think this because....

Story Information: “Minutes later Mademoiselle lowered her scissors and spun Dandelion around to face the mirror. Dandelion gasped. She looked like a lamb with a crew cut. Now even Doodlebug had more hair than she did.” (p. 6)

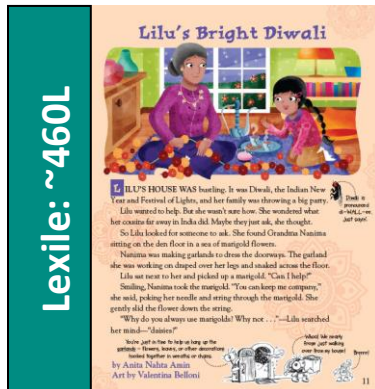
My Inference	My Reasons
I think Dandelion feels...	I think this because...

How does Dandelion feel at the end of the story? Write your inference and your reasons on the back of this paper.

Lilu's Bright Diwali

pp. 11–17, Contemporary
Realistic Fiction

Use this story about family getting ready for a big party to teach about author's purpose.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will determine themes of a text and analyze their development.
- Students will conduct a short research project and present their findings.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **garland** (p. 11) a rope made of leaves, flowers, or other materials that is used for decoration
- **lentil** (p. 12) a flat, round seed that is related to a pea; it is often eaten as a vegetable
- **misfortune** (p. 15) bad luck

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How do families celebrate holidays?

Display photos of Diwali celebrations. Explain that Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights, celebrated in the fall by millions around the world. Continue by explaining that Diwali is a celebration of good over evil and light over darkness. Tell students they will learn more about Diwali in the next story.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and read them aloud. Ask volunteers to explain the meanings of familiar words. Acknowledge correct meanings and then read the definitions aloud. Next, have students work in pairs to write sentences and/or draw pictures to illustrate these words. Allow student volunteers to share their responses.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. What is Lilu's family doing to get ready for the party?
2. How does Lilu's family respond when she asks if she can help?
3. How does this make Lilu feel?
4. How does Lilu finally find a way to help her family get ready for the party?

SKILL FOCUS: Identify an Author's Purpose

INSTRUCT: Explain that authors usually have a purpose or reason for writing. An author's purpose might be to persuade readers, to inform them, or to entertain them. Explain that the author of this story wants to entertain readers and to teach them about how families celebrate Diwali.

ASSESS: Have students work with a partner. Have the partners write a list of Diwali traditions you learn about from the story.

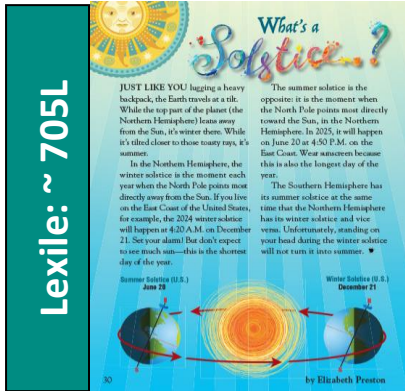
EXTEND

Social Studies: Learn about a winter holiday from somewhere around the world. Conduct online and library research to find out when and where it is celebrated. Present this information, along with facts about the history and traditions of the holiday. Include photographs, illustrations, and, if possible, traditional music with your presentation.

What's a Solstice?

p. 30, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about winter and summer solstices to teach students how illustrations can help them understand a story.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a non-fiction article.
- Students will integrate content presented in diverse media and formats.
- Students will conduct research to learn about winter solstice traditions and celebrations.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **hemisphere (p. 18)** a half of the earth; the area that is above or below the equator
- **vice versa (p. 18)** used to say that the opposite of a statement is also true

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How do families celebrate holidays?

Ask students what they think causes the different seasons we experience. Show students a globe and point out the United States and Australia. Tell students that in the next article, they will learn why summer in the United States occurs at the same time as winter in Australia.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and read aloud the words and definitions. Have students demonstrate the hemispheres of the earth using their bodies. Discuss vice versa and its meaning. Have the students turn to their neighbor and think of how to demonstrate the meaning of the word.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. What is a solstice?
2. Why does the Southern Hemisphere have its summer solstice at the same time as the Northern Hemisphere has its winter solstice?
3. How does the solstice affect the length of the day?

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Illustrations

INSTRUCT: Display page 30 and have students study the illustration. Ask students if they see anything in the illustration that they also see in their classroom. Explain that illustrations can help readers understand things in a story that the author does not tell them in words. Then, ask students what new information does the illustration give them about a solstice. (Different sides/hemispheres of Earth have different solstices.)

ASSESS: Show p. 30 to the students. Ask what details in the text are shown in the illustration? What does the illustration help you understand?

EXTEND

Social Studies: For thousands of years, people from many different cultures have celebrated the winter solstice. Conduct research to learn about winter solstice traditions and celebrations.