# Inference

'Reading between the lines'

Inferring is figuring out what the author wants you to think. For example, in Snow White, the author plants clues to infer that the witch is a bad character. There's plenty of evidence to support this inference; she tries to feed Snow White a poisoned apple; she speaks harshly to mirrors; she is horrified when she isn't considered 'fairest in the land'; she is so evil she plans to kill off Snow White. There is no need for the author to explicitly state that 'the witch is an evil character'. It is all done through inference.

## How Parents Can Help With Inference Skills In Reading, Games, Conversations

- Ask "What do you think?" and "What struck you here?" when you are reading or talking.
- Explain that we make inferences all day long, not just when reading. Encourage a conversation with your child about this.
- Model your own behind-the-scenes thinking: this technique is called a 'think-aloud'. For example, "How do you know the princess is sad?" When your child replies, ask "What clues helped you figure that out? Show me the words."
- Similarly, when they have used context to puzzle out the meaning of an unknown word, ask "What helped you figure that out?"
- Build inference skills with quick word games like twenty questions: children try to guess the identity of a mystery person or thing by asking questions – if they can't guess, the asker gets a point.
- Predict what the next page will hold; explain why you think so. Let the child agree or not and defend his position.
- Think about the author's intention i.e. why have they chosen the words 'inky, black sky'? - to create atmosphere. Why has the author used a certain technique e.g. simile - to create interest for the reader?

- Why is the black cat the only cat looking at the witch?
- Why did the witch come here? Was she just passing or did she come to the shop for a reason?
- What is the 'something familiar'? Why?
- Do the witch and the cat already know each other?

- Why are all of these people on the boat?
- What has happened?
- How do they feel about it?
- How did they manage to get so much onto the boat (including a house!)?
- Where do you think this is? Why?
- Why aren't there any other boats?