

Escape the Clue Express

Textual Evidence, Inference & Theme: Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences by citing textual evidence; determine how a theme is conveyed through particular details and provide an objective summary; analyze how a sentence, chapter, or scene fits into the overall structure and develops the theme, characterization, setting, or plot.

Learning target: I can make inferences about a literary text and support them with the strongest evidence, and explain how details develop a theme.

Success looks like: Students use the vocabulary correctly, complete the escape room, and score 80% or higher on the evidence-based exit ticket.

Materials: Student devices, the printed lesson worksheet (one per student), projector for the mini-lesson presenter.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

60 minutes

Time	Part	Teacher does	Students do
0:00-0:08	Warm-up	Project the warm-up. Circulate, then call on 2-3 students. Save question 3 for the debrief.	Answer Part 2 of the lesson worksheet; share with a partner.
0:08-0:20	Mini-lesson	Teach with the 4-step presenter. Run each quick check with the whole class.	Complete worksheet Parts 4-11 as each slide appears; answer checks with fingers.
0:20-0:48	Escape Room	Launch Escape the Clue Express. Assign mission levels; circulate with the answer key.	Play solo or in pairs; record code pieces; complete any written evidence task.
0:48-0:52	Debrief	Ask 2 debrief questions and revisit warm-up question 3.	Finish worksheet Part 13 (prediction check + one thing learned).
0:52-1:00	Exit ticket	Hand out the exit ticket. Collect and sort with the mastery guide.	Answer with evidence independently.

Key vocabulary

Word	Student-friendly definition
Inference	A logical conclusion based on text clues plus what you already know.
Explicit	Stated directly in the text.
Textual evidence	Words or sentences from the text that support an idea.
Theme	A universal message about life developed through the story.

Word	Student-friendly definition
Characterization	How an author reveals what a character is like: speech, thoughts, actions, and effects on others.

1. WARM-UP

0:00–0:08 · 8 min

Warm-up expectations (post these): Answer in Part 2 of the lesson worksheet (or on this sheet). Number each answer to match the question. Answer in complete sentences. For math, show your work. Work silently for 5 minutes, then share with a partner for 2 minutes. Be ready to share one answer with the class.

#	Question	Look for
1	Your friend comes in with wet hair and a dripping umbrella. What can you infer? What clues did you use?	It is raining outside. Clues: wet hair, dripping umbrella.
2	What is the difference between something a text SAYS and something it SHOWS?	Says = explicit, stated directly. Shows = implied; you infer it from clues.
3	Write one sentence starter you could use to introduce a quote.	Examples: "The text states...", "According to the author...", "For example..."

2. MINI-LESSON

0:08–0:20 · 12 min

Project the Lesson presenter from the room page. It runs the whole hour: target and agenda, warm-up with timer, hook vote, 4 teaching steps (key idea, interactive tool, turn and talk, check for understanding), I do / we do / you do, a work-time screen with a timer and expectations, debrief, and the exit ticket. Press N for teacher notes, T to pause the timer, and P to pick a student.

Hook (1 min): A girl walks in, drops her backpack, slams her binder down, and says nothing. How does she feel? Class vote: Happy / Upset / Sleepy

Step 1 (3 min): Explicit vs. inference

Teach	Explicit means the text says it. An inference is what the text shows: Text clue + What I know = Inference.
Interactive tool	Visual: chain
Students do	Complete Text clue + What I know = Inference for: "Jada checked the clock for the fifth time."
Turn and talk	Why don't authors just tell us everything directly?
Worksheet Part 5A	Text clue + WHAT I KNOW = INFERENCE.
Check for understanding	"Jada checked the clock for the fifth time and tugged her sleeve." You can infer Jada is: Answer: (A) Nervous

Step 2 (3 min): Strong vs. weak evidence

Teach	Strong evidence directly proves the claim. Weak evidence is about the topic but does not prove the specific point.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Rank the two pieces of evidence in the check from strongest to weakest.
Turn and talk	How can a quote be about the right topic and still be weak evidence?
Worksheet Part 6A	STRONG evidence directly supports the claim. WEAK evidence is only related to the topic.
Check for understanding	Claim: Marco misses his grandpa. Which evidence is strongest? Answer: (C) Mom pressed the newspaper to her chest and walked away without a word.

Step 3 (3 min): Introduce evidence

Teach	Introduce every quote with a phrase: "The text states...", "For example...", "According to paragraph 3..." Then explain it: "This shows..."
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Write one sentence: "According to the text, ____, which shows ____."
Turn and talk	Why is it not enough to drop a quote into your answer?
Worksheet Part 7A	Introduce evidence with phrases like "THE TEXT STATES" and explain it with "THIS SHOWS."
Check for understanding	Which is the best way to add evidence? Answer: (B) According to the text, "she smiled for the first time all day," which shows she felt welcomed.

Step 4 (3 min): Theme develops

Teach	A theme develops across the story. Track what the character learns, how they change, and what the title or ending suggests.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Make a beginning / middle / end chart for a character you know.
Turn and talk	How can a story's ending help you figure out its theme?
Worksheet Part 8A	Track how the character CHANGES to find the THEME.
Check for understanding	Which best helps you find a theme? Answer: (C) How the main character changes

I do: worked example (shown one step at a time)

1. Inference: Marcus is nervous about the game.
2. Evidence A: "The game started at 7:00."
3. Evidence B: "Marcus retied his shoes for the fourth time."
4. Step 1: Does A show nervousness? No. It is about the game but proves nothing about Marcus.
5. Step 2: B shows a nervous habit. B is the strongest evidence.

What to say on every slide is in the presenter script PDF.

We do: guided practice

Text: "Maya stared at her untouched lunch and kept checking the door." Make an inference and support it.

1. Text clues: untouched lunch, checking the door.
2. What I know: people who are worried or waiting lose their appetite and watch for someone.
3. Inference: Maya is nervous or waiting for someone.
4. Evidence sentence: The text states she "kept checking the door," which shows she is anxious.

Answer: Maya is nervous or waiting for someone.

You do: independent check (2 min)

Claim: Leo is kind. Which evidence is STRONGEST? (A) "Leo was in science class." (B) "It was lunchtime." (C) "Leo had a backpack." (D) "He slid his pretzels to the middle of the table for her."

Answer: (D) "He slid his pretzels to the middle of the table for her.". Students who miss it: 3-minute reteach at the teacher table, then start the room at the Explorer level.

Misconception: "An inference is a guess." It is a conclusion based on evidence.

Misconception: "Any quote about the topic works as evidence." Evidence must support the specific claim.

Misconception: "The theme is stated in the last sentence." Themes are usually developed across the whole text.

3. ESCAPE ROOM: ESCAPE THE CLUE EXPRESS

0:20–0:48 · 28 min

Launch: project the start screen, read the story aloud, and assign mission levels (Explorer = extra support, Agent = on level, Legend = challenge). Students can open Supports any time for read-aloud, bigger text, a word bank, and a scratch pad.

- Locks open in order, so every student moves through the same sequence. Circulate and listen for which lock is causing a traffic jam.
- Pairs work well: one student reads the clue card aloud, the other controls the device. Switch roles at every lock.
- If a group is stuck for more than 3 minutes, ask "What does the clue card say about this?" before giving the hint.

Students turn in: the completion code plus their copied "turn in your work" block (Canvas Text Entry).

4. DEBRIEF

0:48–0:52 · 4 min

1. What made a piece of evidence "strongest" today?
2. How is an inference different from a guess?
3. Which detail in the activity best revealed a theme?

Close the loop: return to warm-up question 3. Answer: Examples: "The text states...", "According to the author...", "For example..."

5. EXIT TICKET

0:52–1:00 · 8 min

Print the exit ticket PDF (page 2 is the key and mastery guide). Every item requires evidence: Part A asks students to justify each choice, Part B asks for an explanation, and Part C applies the standard to a new situation using RACE. Sort results into Mastered, Approaching, and Beginning to plan tomorrow's groups.

LESSON RESOURCES

Resource	How it fits the lesson
Warm-up worksheet (PDF)	Optional standalone warm-up (also Part 2 of the lesson worksheet), with a key.
Mini-lesson presenter	Projectable, step-by-step interactive lesson with tools and quick checks (room page).
Lesson worksheet (PDF + key)	One printable packet students complete during the whole lesson: short fill-ins and quick checks in 13 small parts that match the presenter slides.
Escape the Clue Express (.html)	The escape room for Canvas, with differentiated levels, supports, and a turn-in.
Exit ticket (PDF + key)	Evidence-based check with a rubric and a mastery sorting guide.
CommonLit (extra)	Grade 6 short stories with evidence-based questions. https://www.commonlit.org/
ReadWorks (extra)	Fiction passages and paired texts. https://www.readworks.org/
ReadWriteThink (extra)	Inference and citing evidence lessons. https://www.readwritethink.org/
Khan Academy: Reading & Vocabulary (extra)	Grade 6 reading practice. https://www.khanacademy.org/ela

ANSWER KEY: ESCAPE THE CLUE EXPRESS

Lock 1: Car 1: The Dining Car (code piece: C)

1. What can you infer about Mr. Alvarez? -> He is in a hurry and worried about being late
2. Which clue BEST supports your inference? -> "He checked his watch, then his phone, then his watch again."

Lock 2: Car 2: The Sleeping Car (code piece: L)

1. What can you infer about how Ruby feels? -> Nervous or scared
2. What background knowledge helps you make this inference? -> People who are scared often want a light on and hide under blankets
3. True or false: The text directly says, "Ruby was scared." -> False

Lock 3: Car 3: The Luggage Car (code piece: U)

1. What can you infer about the suitcase owner's trip? -> They are traveling somewhere cold, hoping to see the northern lights
2. Match each clue to the inference it supports. -> Wool sweater and fur-lined hat = The weather will be cold; Bookmarked "Northern Lights" chapter = They want to see the aurora; Tag reading "Oslo, Norway" = The destination is in Scandinavia

Lock 4: Car 4: The Observation Car (code piece: E)

1. What can you infer about Jamal? -> He misses his old home and has fond memories of it
2. Is each statement stated directly or inferred? -> Stated in the text: Jamal pointed at a brick house., The house has a

basketball hoop. | Inferred: Jamal used to live in that house., Jamal feels nostalgic.

Lock 5: Car 5: The Engine (code piece: S)

1. Which is the best definition of an inference? -> A logical conclusion based on text clues and what you already know
2. "Sam's umbrella dripped on the floor, and his sneakers squeaked." What can you infer? -> It is raining outside
3. Which sentence starter is best for sharing an inference? -> "Based on the clue ____ and what I know about ____, I can infer ____."

Final code: CLUES