

The Evidence Vault

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 The Evidence Vault. 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: THE EVIDENCE VAULT

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.
The Evidence Vault (.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: THE EVIDENCE VAULT

Lock 1: Meet Darius (code piece: P)

1. Claim: Darius feels ashamed about the semifinal. Which evidence BEST supports this claim? -> "Since then, he had stopped wearing his team cap to school."
2. What can you infer from "Darius said, 'Maybe later,' and closed his bedroom door"? -> He is avoiding baseball and pulling away from others
3. Tap the TWO actions that show Darius is avoiding baseball since the semifinal. -> "Since then, he had stopped wearing his team cap to school." + "When his little brother, Kofi, asked him to play catch, Darius said, "Maybe later," and closed his bedroom door."

Lock 2: The Practice (code piece: R)

1. Claim: Kofi looks up to Darius. Which evidence BEST supports this? -> "You told me the only way to get better is to keep throwing. Remember?"
2. Why is it important that Kofi keeps chasing the missed throws? -> It shows persistence, the lesson Darius has forgotten

Lock 3: The Turn (code piece: O)

1. Claim: Darius has begun to move past his mistake. Which evidence BEST supports this? -> "Darius dug his cap out from under his bed and hung it back on its hook"
2. What does the cap symbolize in the story? -> Darius's pride and identity as a player
3. Tap the THREE actions that show Darius is moving past his mistake. -> "Then he walked over, picked up a stray

tennis ball from the gutter, and handed it to his brother." + ""Keep your elbow up," he said. "Like this."" + "That night, Darius dug his cap out from under his bed and hung it back on its hook by the door."

Lock 4: Building the Theme (code piece: O)

1. Put the details that develop the theme in order. -> Darius throws a wild pitch and loses the semifinal -> He stops wearing his cap and avoids his brother -> He sees Kofi practicing and failing without giving up -> He teaches Kofi and remembers his own lesson -> He hangs his cap back up
2. Which is the BEST theme statement for "The Last Game"? -> Mistakes don't define us; we grow by getting back up and trying again
3. Which is a TOPIC, not a theme? -> Failure
4. Build the theme statement for "The Last Game." -> Mistakes do not have to define you if you keep trying.

Lock 5: Strongest vs. Weakest (code piece: F)

1. Sort the evidence for this claim. -> Strong evidence: "Keep your elbow up," he said. "Like this.", That night, Darius dug his cap out... and hung it back on its hook | Weak evidence: Darius walked past the park and heard a thunk, His fastball was so quick that the other teams' coaches whispered about it, The next Saturday...
2. Rank the evidence for the claim "Teaching Kofi helps Darius regain his confidence," from STRONGEST to WEAKEST. -> After coaching Kofi, Darius hangs his cap back on its hook. -> Darius shows Kofi how to keep his elbow up. -> Darius picks up a stray tennis ball. -> Darius had been the star pitcher since fourth grade.
3. How does Darius change from the beginning to the end of "The Last Game"? Support your answer with evidence from the story. -> Written response (RACE). Model: In "The Last Game," Darius changes from the beginning to the end of the story. He changes from ashamed and avoiding baseball to confident and ready to play again. At first, "he had stopped wearing his team cap to school," but at the end he "dug his cap out from under his bed and hung it back on its hook." This shows that teaching Kofi reminded Darius that mistakes are part of getting better, so his confidence returned and he is ready to be part of the team again.

Final code: PROOF