

## In a Nutshell

- ✓ Inferences must be logical and valid (based on details/evidence available to the reader in the text)
- ✓ To be logical, use the information provided to you in a text and your prior knowledge
- ✓ Be wary of bias in a text and your own personal biases
- ✓ Carefully examine all information and be open-minded—don't jump to hasty conclusions!
- ✓ Keep in mind that various types of creative writing will employ literary devices
- ✓ These literary devices can help us to make inferences

## Give it a try!

The term “neon light” was originally applied to a particular type of vapor lamp using the inert, colorless gas neon. A long tube was filled with neon, which then became luminous at low pressure when an electric current was passed through it. The lamp then emitted the characteristic reddish-orange light of neon. Today, the term “neon light” is given to lamps of this general type which may be filled with a variety of gases, depending on the color that is desired. Argon, for example, is used to produce blue light. Colors can also be altered by changing the color of the glass tube. The tubes must be quite long in all these lamps to produce light efficiently. As a result, high voltages are required. Neon tube lamps are not practical for indoor illumination, but they have found widespread outdoor use in glowing, colorful advertising signs.

**Which of the statements below are valid inferences?**

1. The meaning of the term “neon light” has changed over time.
2. Today’s “neon lights” never actually contain neon.
3. The primary market for neon lights is businesses rather than private households.

## Works Cited

Henry, D. J. *The Effective Reader*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 2011. Print.

Lofthouse, Erin. “Making Inferences: Reading between the lines, CLAD Workshop.” *City College of San Francisco*. CLAD, 27 Sept 2013. Web. 24 May 2016.

Answers 1 and 3

# Inferences

**The Communications Center**  
BACA 207  
myascbrandon@gmail.com  
813-259-6598

**HCC ASC**  
BRANDON ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

# Inferences

**Inferences** are essentially educated guesses. They are conclusions that readers come to based on what an author suggests or implies (facts or details that are written). The information in inferences is not explicitly stated in the text.

*For example...*

What can you infer about this person based on this picture of their feet?



If you said this person recently wore flip flops, spent time in the sun without sunscreen, or recently injured or blistered one of their toes, you made a logical inference!

## Valid Inferences

The most important thing to do when making an inference is to be sure that it is **valid**.

Valid inferences are based on details and **evidence**.

The good news is that you already do this dozens of times every day of your life – for example, any time we have a conversation with another person, we are constantly reading that person's facial expressions and tone of voice to infer how they are feeling and reacting to us.

## Avoid Invalid Conclusions

Conclusions or inferences NOT based on evidence or logic are **invalid**. This is a quick mental checklist that you can use to ensure that your inferences are VALID:

- ✓ **Verify** and value the facts
- ✓ **Assess** prior knowledge
- ✓ **Learn** from the text
- ✓ **Investigate** for bias
- ✓ **Detect** contradictions

## Inferences in Creative Expression

If the text you are reading does not come from a news article, research article, or textbook, it is possible that it may employ some creative expression. One of the ways authors do this is by using **literary devices**. The following are some of the most common literary devices:

- ❖ **Connotation**: the emotional meaning or connections of words.  
*For example*: He is very intelligent—sly, even. (The word *sly* means 'smart' but has heavy connotations of dishonesty/deceit.)
- ❖ **Metaphor**: a direct comparison.  
*For example*: ...and Juliet is the sun! (In direct comparisons you have item 1 [Juliet], the verb ['to be'], and then item 2 [the sun].)
- ❖ **Personification**: imposing human traits on things that are not human. *For example*: The sea is angry tonight. (The sea cannot actually have emotions.)
- ❖ **Simile**: an indirect comparison.  
*For example*: Life is like a box of chocolates. (The words 'like' or 'as' are always used with indirect comparisons.)
- ❖ **Symbol**: something that stands for or suggests something else.  
*For example*: The dove is a symbol of peace.