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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

Infer Pronouns

NOTE! Teachers teach students so they have a basic understanding of nouns --- the name we use for words that refer to people, places, things, and ideas.

Materials:

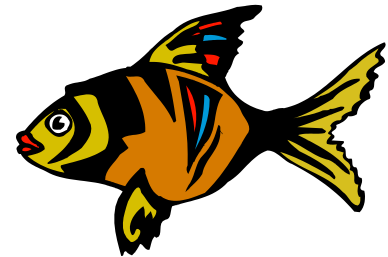
Overhead of pages 6-10 of handout, overhead projector and screen or DocCam or SmartBoard
Students need a copy of page 11 and a highlighter (Two on a page; need to be cut in half)
Independent reading for each student – whatever the child is reading right now.
Students need partners

ENGAGE	Share real piece of writing found in a church bulletin, <i>“For those of you who have children and don’t know it, there’s a nursery provided on the first floor.”</i> Why is this confusing? What do you infer the writer meant, really? (If you don’t know there’s a nursery; it=nursery, not children)
LEARNING TARGET	Readers need to know how to infer... <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What words mean▪ The setting(s) of the story▪ The answers to the questions the reader doesn’t understand▪ Pronouns – to what do they refer? FOCUS OF THE LESSON▪ How to use text to understand characters▪ Fact from opinion▪ Explanations for events▪ The underlying message from the author <p>Learning Target: I can identify a pronoun and to what noun it refers.</p>
EXPLORE	Let’s define pronoun. I looked it up: <i>Any of a small set of words in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named or understood in the context.</i> he = President Obama they or we = this class It = homework
Daybook	Date the next fresh page. Title your page “pronouns”. Set up daybook in double-entry columns: pronoun / referent
1st paragraph of FISH story	Read the first paragraph and identify the pronouns: they --- firefighters it --- flames How do you know what to what the pronoun refers? What are you reading to find out?
2nd chunk	it = fish How do you know what to what the pronoun refers? What are you reading to find out?
3rd chunk	Each (of) them --- the students his He } the fish his } he } him } How do you know what to what the pronoun refers?

	<p>By now the children should see a pattern or the teacher should lead them to an understanding of how pronouns work. (How much to share depends on ability.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The same pronoun can refer to different things in the same story so referencing the text is important. 2. Pronouns refer to the closest specific noun right BEFORE the pronoun. 3. Sometimes, we use our own background knowledge to infer the identity of the pronoun. 4. We should ONLY use pronouns after the noun is clearly identified. <p>What are you reading to find out?</p>
End of story	<p>Confirm inferences about how pronouns are used and meaning of text. Come back to unedited sentence at the beginning. Do you see now why the wording is confusing? <i>For those of you who have children and don't know it, there's a nursery provided on the first floor.</i></p>
EXTEND	<p>Ask the children to read their books looking for pronouns today. Mark one sentence to share. (The best pronoun to mark would be one the reader really needs help figuring out.)</p>
CLOSURE	<p>Bring the children back after reading to share as a class or in small groups. Add pronouns to the pronoun chart. Discuss, Do the pronouns refer to a noun BEFORE it? Were we right?</p>

TEACH children how to infer . . .

- What words mean
- The setting(s) of the story
- The answers to the questions the reader doesn't understand
- Pronouns – to what do they refer?
- How to use text to understand characters
- Fact from opinion
- Explanations for events
- The underlying message from the author



As part of my fourth grade writing classes this winter, I gave each child a sheet that explained how their writing would be scored. In every class, I heard this question, “What does ‘Pronouns used correctly mean?’” and no one seemed to know.

Using and understanding pronouns is an inferential activity. Using pronouns correctly must be taught, not assigned.

I used to get frustrated with responses that included answers like, “She gave it to him,” that I didn't let my students use pronouns the first 6 weeks of school. It took that long for them to understand what a pronoun was. After that, we looked at the correct ways to use pronouns.

Kylene Beers, author of *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do*, writes "Instead of telling students something vague like 'make an inference,' we can give students specific types of inferences to make by using comments like... "Look for pronouns and figure out what to connect them to."

ENGAGE: A Fish Story!

Put the lead of a story on the overhead like this one from *The Charlotte Observer*.

A smoke alarm summoned firefighters to school in the middle of the night, but when they arrived, the flames already had been put out. Dory took care of it.

- Identify the pronouns. (they) (it) (Start making a list on chart paper or in daybook!)
- Substitute a specific word in place of the pronoun. (they – the firefighters) (it – the flames)
- Explain how you know. (they – the nearest noun right before the pronoun is 'firefighters.')
- (it – Dory took care of the problem – the problem is the fire. Using background knowledge.)
- Make an inference if there isn't enough information and read on to confirm!

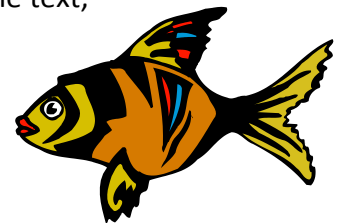
Second Cycle: Put this part of the story on the overhead.

Dory is a fish, a betta kept in a vase on a desk in a third-grade classroom at Trinity Lone Oak Lutheran School. A forgotten candle started a small fire on the desk Jan. 24, setting off the smoke alarm and shattering the fish bowl, spilling enough water to put out the flames.

Firefighters found a few embers still glowing on the desk – and Dory alive in a puddle.

"It was certainly looking distinctly unhappy," firefighter Al Taylor said of the little fish.

- Identify the pronouns. (it)
- Substitute a specific word in place of the pronoun. (it – the fish)
- Explain how you know. (Dory is the fish, which I can tell by referencing the text, "Dory is a fish." and Dory is the nearest noun right before the word 'it.')
- The writer says that Al Taylor said that 'of the little fish.')
- Make an inference if there isn't enough information and read on to confirm!

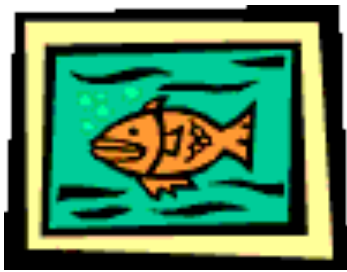


Third Cycle

Firefighters put Dory in a new container, and now the children in the class are excited about their little hero, said teacher Linda Krienke.

"Each of them wrote a story from the fish's point of view, how his Friday night went. He saw the fire, and then he got real hot and then his vase broke and he fell on the floor and the fireman came in and saved him."

- Again, identify the pronouns. (Each of them) (his) (He) (he) (his) (he) (him)
- Substitute a specific noun in the place of the pronoun. (*Each of them* – the students) (*All the rest* refer to the fish.)
- Explain how you know. By now the children should see a pattern or the teacher should lead them to an understanding of how pronouns work. (How much to share depends on ability.)
- The same pronoun can refer to different things in the same story so referencing the text is important.
- Pronouns refer to the closest specific noun right BEFORE the pronoun.
- Sometimes, we use our own background knowledge to infer the identity of the pronoun.
- We should ONLY use pronouns after the noun is clearly identified.



The final cycle

The room was heavily damaged by smoke, so the students and their little mascot were moved to the school music room. Dory, named for the sidekick who helps find a kidnapped fish in the movie "Finding Nemo," is "quite a survivor," Krienke said.

- Confirm inferences. Check (✓) the inferences that were correct. Fix the inferences that were not.

EXPLORE

1. Ask children to read books looking for pronouns today. Mark one sentence to share. (The best pronoun to mark would be one the reader needs help figuring out.)
2. Bring the children back after reading to share as a class or in small groups. To what do the pronouns refer?
3. Add pronouns to the pronoun chart.

EXTENSION IDEAS

1. Write a traditional headline for the fish story. Do not use pronouns in the headline. A headline is a cryptic summary that shows how the story is important for the reader. It almost always includes a noun and a verb.
2. Rewrite the fish story or other short passages without using pronouns to see why and how we use them.
3. Have a day or week without pronouns. It would be fun to try to write and/or talk without using pronouns. In that way, children will have to sort pronouns from other parts of speech as they try to play.
4. Make a more complete list of pronouns. Use language books to help.
5. Make sure students have a personal list of pronouns in their response journals.
6. Writers use pronouns because readers like brevity. Also, explain that writers do not like to repeat specific nouns. Another way not to use a specific noun over and over again and yet avoid using a pronoun is to use a synonym. Let the students search the article for synonyms for 'fish.' (In this story the fish is referred to as *Dory*, *little fish*, *hero*, *betta*, and *mascot*.) Then talk about how we can use that discovery in our own writing.
7. Ask children to bring passages from their writing to a small group. Check together to see if the pronouns are used correctly and not too frequently.

Other fish story activities

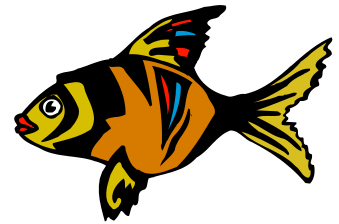
1. This is a great article to use another day for inferring vocabulary for words like summoned, betta, embers, mascot, sidekick, survivor, and Krienke. Use a triple entry approach.
 - What's the word I don't know?
 - What do I think it means?
 - How do I know?
2. Write an imaginative narrative about the fish like the third graders in the article.
3. Write the same story from different points of view: the firemen, the teacher, the fish.
4. Summarize: Tell the story in 25 words or less.

Overhead copy of page 5-10 needed for main lesson unless you use DocCam or SmartBoard

For those of you who have children and don't know it, there's a nursery provided on the first floor.

Readers need to know how to infer...

- What words mean
- The setting(s) of the story
- The answers to the questions the reader doesn't understand
- **Pronouns – to what do they refer?**
- How to use text to understand characters
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Pronoun: any of a small set of words in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns and whose referents are named or understood in the context.

Pronoun / Referent (the word to which the pronoun refers)

he = President Obama

they or we = this class

it = homework

(1)

A smoke alarm summoned firefighters to school in the middle of the night, but when they arrived, the flames already had been put out. Dory took care of it..

<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Referent</u>
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(2)

<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Referent</u>
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Firefighters found a few embers still glowing on the desk – and Dory alive in a puddle.

“It was certainly looking distinctly unhappy,” firefighter Al Taylor said of the little fish.

Firefighter put Dory in a new container, and now the children in the class are excited about their little hero, said teacher Linda Krienke.

“Each of them wrote a story from the fish’s point of view, how his Friday night went. He saw the fire, and then he got real hot and then his vase broke and he fell on the floor and the fireman came in and saved him.”

<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Referent</u>
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A bowl did the work but a fish gets credit: Better story that way

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