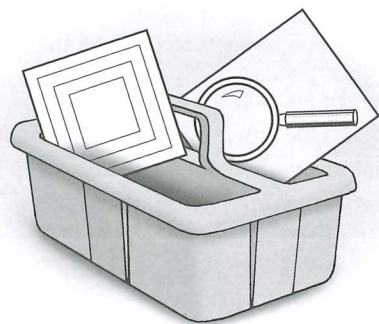


Thinking tool: Inference Square



The Inference Square is a particularly effective strategy for **stimulating curiosity** and for encouraging students to take ownership of the inquiry process. It is also useful for students who tend to take information at face value, as it encourages them to:

- 'Read between the lines' – **drawing inferences** from what they see or read
- Take a more **critical approach** to the information and evidence they are using during their inquiry, therefore increasing the validity of their conclusions



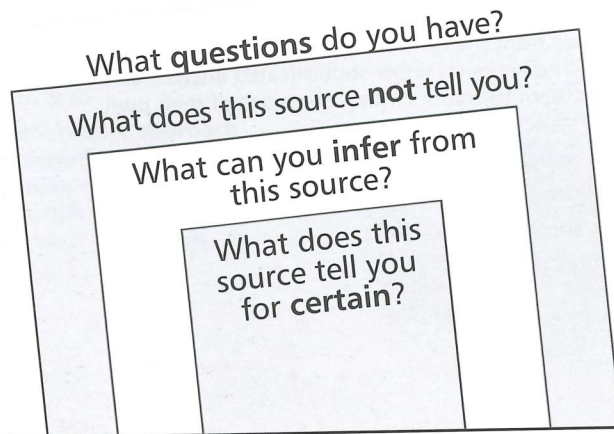
Inference Square instructions



The Inference Square stimulates curiosity by starting with an intriguing source, usually a picture or photograph.

- 1 Organise students into groups of four and distribute the source and the Inference Square template. (See next page.)
- 2 Working outwards from the centre, students must respond to a series of questions that draw them into an increasingly sophisticated analysis and evaluation of the source and spur them to create inquiry questions of their own:
 - 'What does this source/picture/information tell you for certain?'
 - 'What can you infer (work out) from this source?'
 - 'What does this source not tell you?'
 - 'What questions do you have?'

Inference Square template

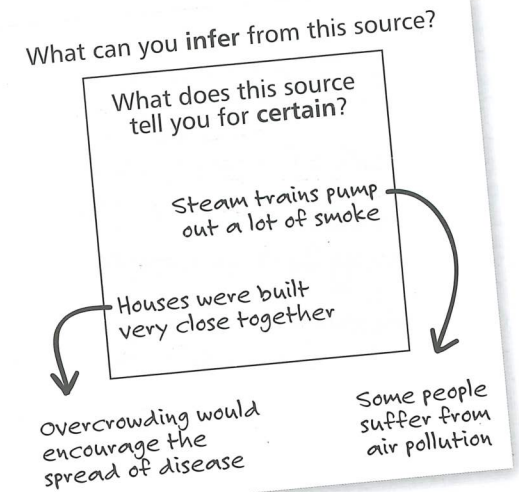


Inference Square teaching tips



With a more complex picture, you could overlay a grid and ask each group of students to look in detail at a different section. This tends to encourage students to look longer and 'see more' within their particular section.

Make the skill of inference more explicit and visible to your students by asking them to draw lines between facts they have recorded in the central box and the related inferences. The example is taken from an inference square on Victorian towns.



Inference Square – talking about thinking



Students will find the following words useful to help them talk about their thinking:

fact	opinion	certain	infer/inference	hypothesis	source
evidence	challenge	question	evaluate	useful	reliable
connection	prove	inquire			

Encourage students to explain the inferences they have made with reference to the source:

- *'What made you think that?'*
- *'What are the clues in the source that led you to that conclusion?'*

Other talking points might include:

- *'What's the difference between giving an opinion and making an inference?'*
- *'What's the difference between imagining and making an inference?'*
- *'When might 'reading between the lines' be a useful skill to have in everyday life?'*

