UNIT 3 · LESSON 2

See it or think it?

Observation or inference?

AIMS

How confident are you now? Circle one face for each aim at the end of the lesson.

Content Find out what the Pompeii sources show and what they suggest. ☹ 😐 ☺

Language Use "infer", "indicate" and "interpretation" to talk about sources. ☹ 😐 ☺

Skills Check an inference: "What is your evidence?" ☹ 😐 ☺

Read: A city under ash

Read the text. Then answer the questions below.

Pompeii was a busy Roman town in the south of Italy. Thousands of people lived there. Near the town there was a mountain called Vesuvius.

In AD 79, Vesuvius erupted. Ash and small rocks fell on Pompeii for many hours. Then clouds of very hot gas rushed through the streets. The town disappeared under the ash.

Later, people forgot about Pompeii. In 1748, people started to dig. In 1863, an archaeologist called Giuseppe Fiorelli found empty holes in the hard ash. The holes had the shapes of people. He poured plaster into the holes. When it was hard, he took away the ash. These shapes are called casts.



Pompeii today, with Vesuvius behind. Photo: Commonists, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

erupt = when a volcano sends out fire, ash and rock **archaeologist** = a person who digs to find things from the past **plaster** = white powder + water; it goes hard

Check: Answer the questions

Talk with a partner. Then write your answers.

1 Why did Pompeii disappear?

2 How did Fiorelli make the casts?

3 "Thousands of people lived there." Is this an exact number or an estimate? Why?

Learn: Key words

Say each word. Read the meaning. Write the word in a language you know.

WORD	MEANING	IN MY LANGUAGE
observation	what you can see or read in a source	
evidence	information that helps us answer a question	
infer / inference	to work out an idea from evidence / the idea you work out	
indicate	to show or suggest (a formal word)	
support	to help show that an idea is true	
interpretation	what someone thinks the evidence means	

IN MY LANGUAGE **How do you say these words in a language you know? Which word is the strongest?**

shows	suggests	proves	might

Remember Unit 2? "The data suggests..." → "The source suggests..."

Model: See it or think it?

Look at Source A. Copy the teacher's model.



Source A

Plaster cast of a person, Pompeii, AD 79. Photo: falco, Pixabay.

OBSERVATION **I can see...**

INFERENCE **This suggests... because...**

HOW CERTAIN? **Does it prove it?**

Think: How certain can we be?

Look at Source A again. Circle one word for each idea. Then write your evidence.

1 **This was a person.**

no evidence · might · probably · certain

Evidence: _____

2 **This person died in AD 79.**

no evidence · might · probably · certain

Evidence: _____

3 **This person was trying to run away.**

no evidence · might · probably · certain

Evidence: _____

4 **This person was poor.**

no evidence · might · probably · certain

Evidence: _____

Read: Source B: “The last night of the world”

Read Pliny’s letter. Use it for the tasks on page 5.

Pliny the Younger

Pliny was 17. He was in Misenum, about 30 km from Pompeii, across the bay. He wrote this letter more than 25 years later.



Modern illustration.

1 For many days the ground had been shaking. That night it shook so much that we decided to leave the town. A big crowd of frightened people followed us.

2 Outside the town we stopped. Our carts rolled backwards and forwards, even on flat ground. The sea moved back from the beach, and sea animals were left on the dry sand. Over the sea there was a huge black cloud, with long flashes of fire inside it.

3 Ash began to fall, but only a little. I looked back. A thick black cloud was coming behind us, spreading over the land like a river.

4 Darkness came. It was like a room when the lamp goes out. You could hear women screaming, babies crying and men shouting. People called for their parents, their children, their husbands and wives. They found each other by their voices. Many thought there were no gods any more, and that this was the last night of the world.

5 Ash began to fall again, thick and heavy. Again and again we stood up and shook it off. If we did not, we would be buried under it.

6 At last the darkness went away and real daylight came. Everything was covered in deep ash, like snow.

Adapted from a letter by Pliny the Younger to the historian Tacitus (Letters 6.20), about AD 106. Shortened and simplified translation from the Latin for this lesson.

PRIMARY OR SECONDARY? Source B is a _____ source, because

_____

Sort: Did Pliny see it, or think it?

Tick one box for each quote. Pliny is a witness, but witnesses make inferences too.

	QUOTE FROM SOURCE B	He saw, heard or felt it	He thought it
1	“the ground had been shaking”	☐	☐
2	“a big crowd of frightened people”	☐	☐
3	“The sea moved back from the beach”	☐	☐
4	“sea animals were left on the dry sand”	☐	☐
5	“a thick black cloud… spreading over the land like a river”	☐	☐
6	“You could hear women screaming, babies crying and men shouting”	☐	☐
7	“this was the last night of the world”	☐	☐
8	“If we did not, we would be buried under it”	☐	☐

Infer: What can we infer?

Match each inference to Pliny’s evidence (A–D). Then circle how certain you are.

A “the ground had been shaking” · “our carts rolled backwards and forwards”
B “women screaming, babies crying and men shouting”
C “If we did not, we would be buried under it.”
D “Many thought there were no gods any more… the last night of the world.”

1 People were panicking. ___ no evidence · might · probably · certain

2 Some people felt hopeless. ___ no evidence · might · probably · certain

3 There was an earthquake. ___ no evidence · might · probably · certain

4 The ash was dangerous. ___ no evidence · might · probably · certain

REJECT **“Pliny saw people die in Pompeii.” Why is this inference wrong?**

_____

Write one inference in full.

I infer that _____

This is supported by Source B, which states that _____

This shows that _____

because _____

It is probably / might be true. (Circle one.)

On your own: Source C

Look closely for one minute. Then write two evidence → inference chains. In one chain, give another possible meaning.



Source C: a cast of a dog

Look at the whole body: the legs, the head, the mouth and the neck.

What can you see? What does it suggest?

Cast of a dog, Pompeii, AD 79. Antiquarium of Boscoreale. Photo: Jebulon, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Chain 1

EVIDENCE	→	INFERENCE	→	HOW CERTAIN?
_____		_____		no evidence
_____		_____		might
_____		_____		probably
				certain

ANOTHER POSSIBLE MEANING

_____

Chain 2

EVIDENCE	→	INFERENCE	→	HOW CERTAIN?
_____		_____		no evidence
_____		_____		might
_____		_____		probably
				certain

Check ☐ **a specific detail** ☐ **an inference** ☐ **how certain** ☐ **another meaning**

STRETCH **What other source would be relevant? How would it help?**

_____

_____