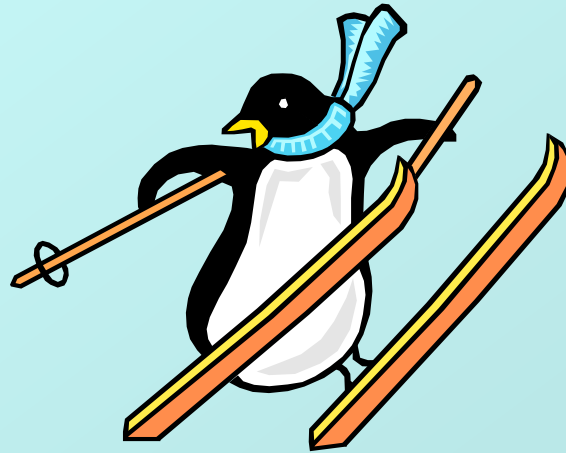# Using Schema to Make Inferences

Essential Questions

- Why is it important to activate my schema before I begin to read?

- How can my schema help me to make inferences?

Activating Your Schema

- Your schema is what you already know about a topic
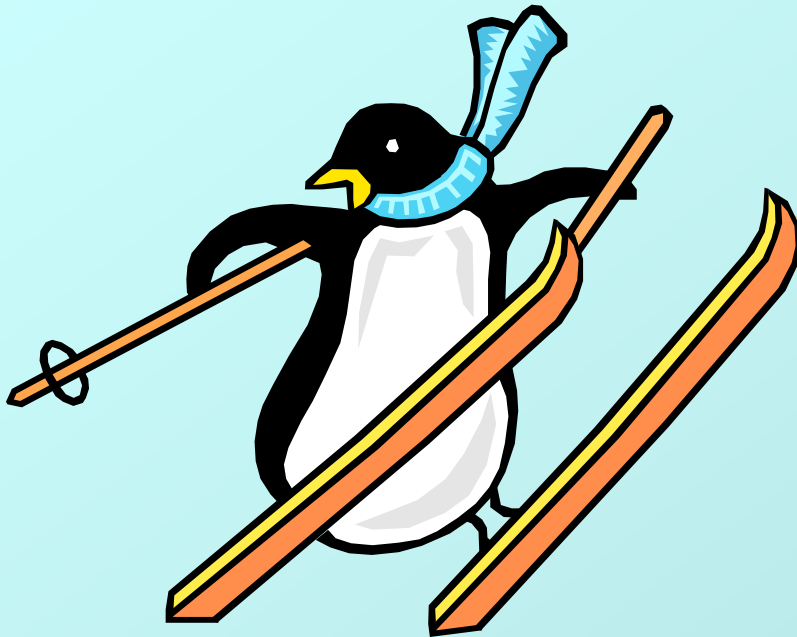- Think about a schema as a file folder in your mind

Activating Your Schema

- When you start to read a text, you need to open up the file folder about the topic
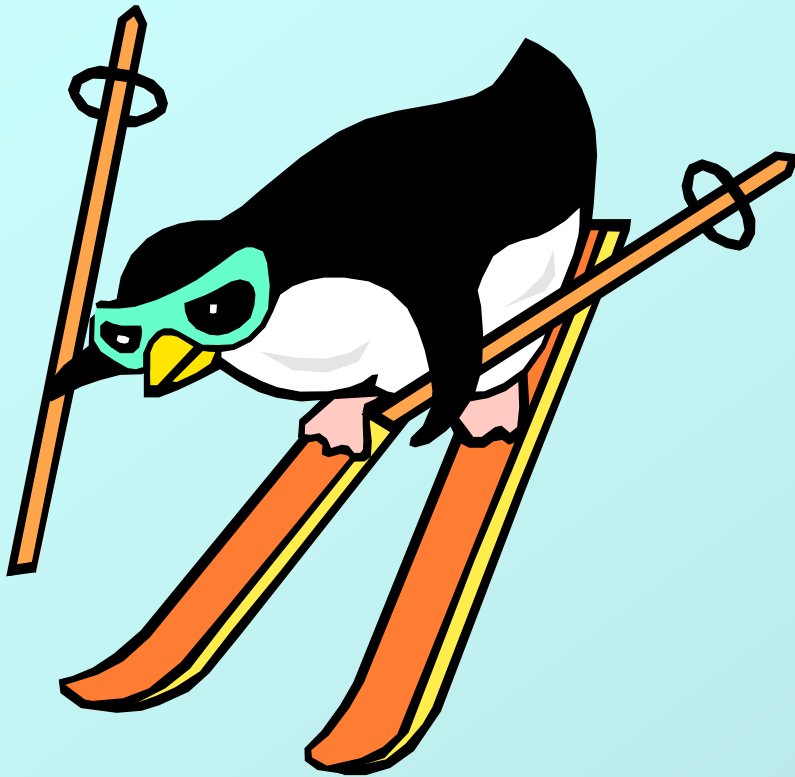- This is called "activating your schema"

Activate Your Schema!

- Suppose that you are about to read a text about skiing

- To activate your schema, think: *What do I already know about this topic?*

Activate Your Schema!

- What you already know about skiing will help you as you read the text
- For example, you probably know these things:
  - Skiing happens outside
  - There is snow
  - Most people ski on hills

Using Your Schema

- Because you have a schema for skiing, you know what is and is not expected in the text
- Will there be…
  - People falling?
  - Palm trees?
  - Gorillas?
  - Hot chocolate?

Using Your Schema

- Suppose you read the text below:

  Lea picked up her equipment bag. She was excited to be headed to the slopes!

Using Your Schema

Lea picked up her equipment bag. She was excited to be headed to the slopes!

- Even though it is not in the text, you probably know what is in the bag!

- You are using your schema to make this inference

What about harder text?

- Using your schema is even more important with harder text!

At Snowy Peaks Slopes, the staff doesn't care if it snows or not. They know that they can outsmart the weather.

What about harder text?

At Snowy Peaks Slopes, the staff doesn't care if it snows or not. They know that they can outsmart the weather.

- What? Does the staff have special power over the weather?

What about harder text?

At Snowy Peaks Slopes, the staff doesn't care if it snows or not. They know that they can outsmart the weather.

- That doesn't make sense! Use your schema to make an inference. How does the staff outsmart the weather?

Making inferences

- You may know that ski slopes have huge snowmaking machines
- The staff probably outsmarts the weather by making snow!

Making inferences

- Without using your schema, you could not make this inference

Your background knowledge is important!

- Your background knowledge is very important

- When you don't have a schema for a topic, you will not be able to make good inferences
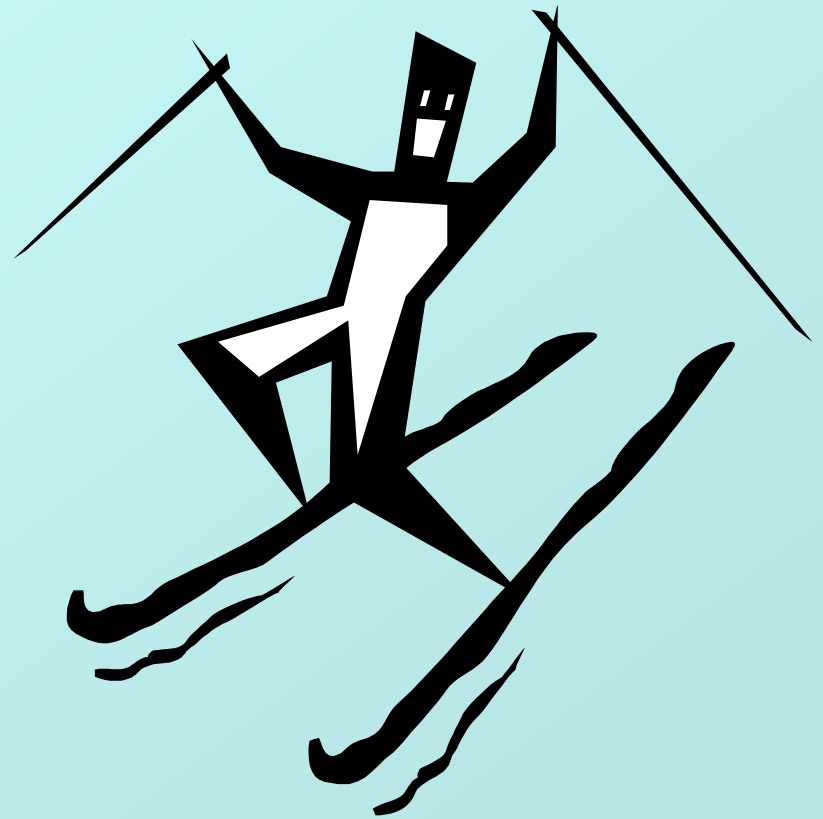
Building Your Schema

- This is why it is so important to learn all that you can from what you read
- The more you read, the more background knowledge you have
- This will help you to learn even more from future texts

Back to Making Inferences

- Think about your schema for skiing once again
- What inference can you make from this text?
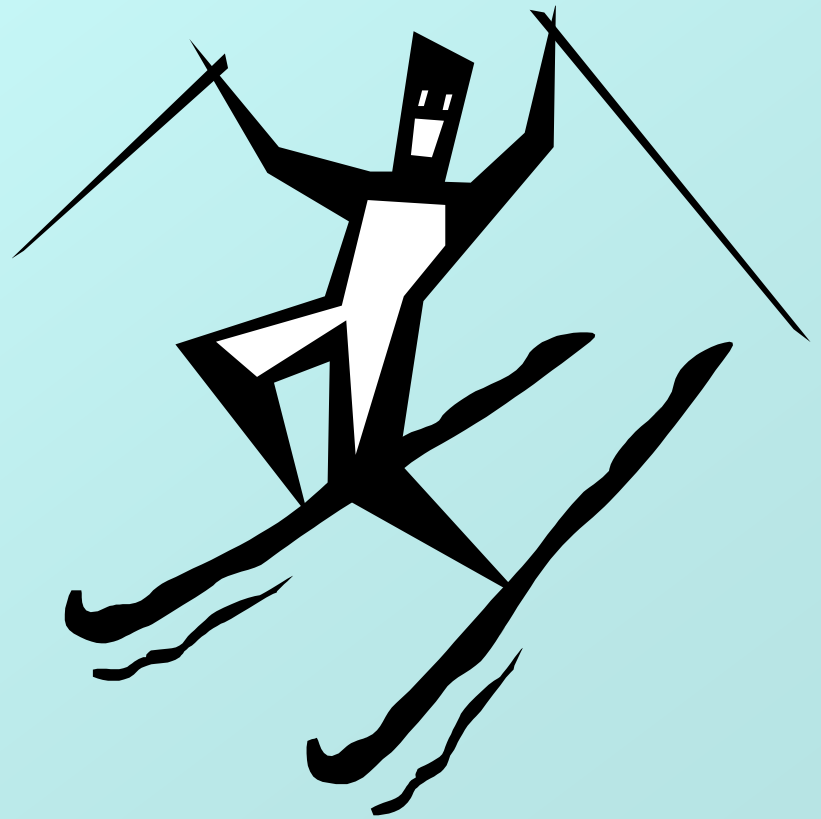- The ambulance's siren blared as it raced to the slopes.

Back to Making Inferences

- The ambulance's siren blared as it raced to the slopes.
- What happened?
- Make an inference

Back to Making Inferences

- The ambulance's siren blared as it raced to the slopes.
- What happened?
- Make an inference
- Someone probably fell as they were skiing

Back to Making Inferences

- The ambulance's siren blared as it raced to the slopes.

- You made this inference based on your background knowledge and the text clues

Another example

- Suppose that you are about to read a story
- You see this picture on the cover
- What schema does it bring to mind? What does it make you think of?

Another example

- Now, read some of the text

Luisa looked out at the sparkling water. "This is so much better than home!" she sighed. "I love this place!"

Make an inference!

Luisa looked out at the sparkling water. "This is so much better than home!" she sighed. "I love this place!"

- Where is Luisa? What is she doing?

Make an inference!

- Luisa looked out at the sparkling water. "This is so much better than home!" she sighed. "I love this place!"
- Where is Luisa? What is she doing?
- Think of your background knowledge about palm trees and where they grow

Make an inference!

- Luisa looked out at the sparkling water. "This is so much better than home!" she sighed. "I love this place!"
- Luisa is probably on vacation

Make an inference!

- Luisa looked out at the sparkling water. "This is so much better than home!" she sighed. "I love this place!"
- Luisa is probably on vacation
- She is probably staying someplace warm and tropical
- You used your schema to make the inference!
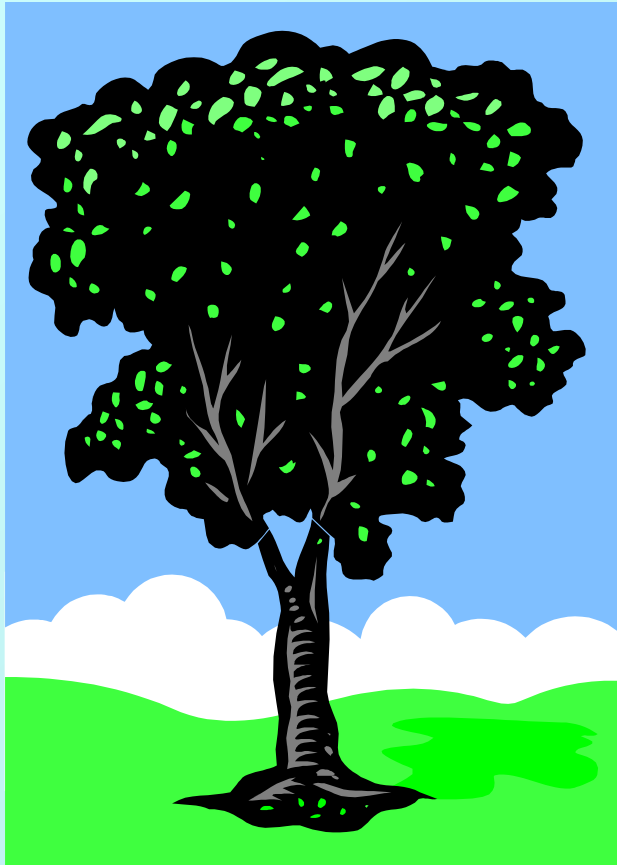
We activated our schema

- We used the picture of the palm tree to activate our schema
- This helped us to think about what we already know
- Looking at the pictures is a great way to get ready to read a text

Think about this

- Suppose you are reading a text that doesn't have any pictures!

- You can use the title of the text to activate your schema

- Suppose the title is "Layers of the Forest"

Activate your schema!

- Picture a forest in your mind
- Even though the text has no pictures, you can still activate your schema
- You know that the text will probably include trees and forest animals

Activate your schema!

- Suppose the text reads:

  The forest has many layers. The top layer is called the canopy.
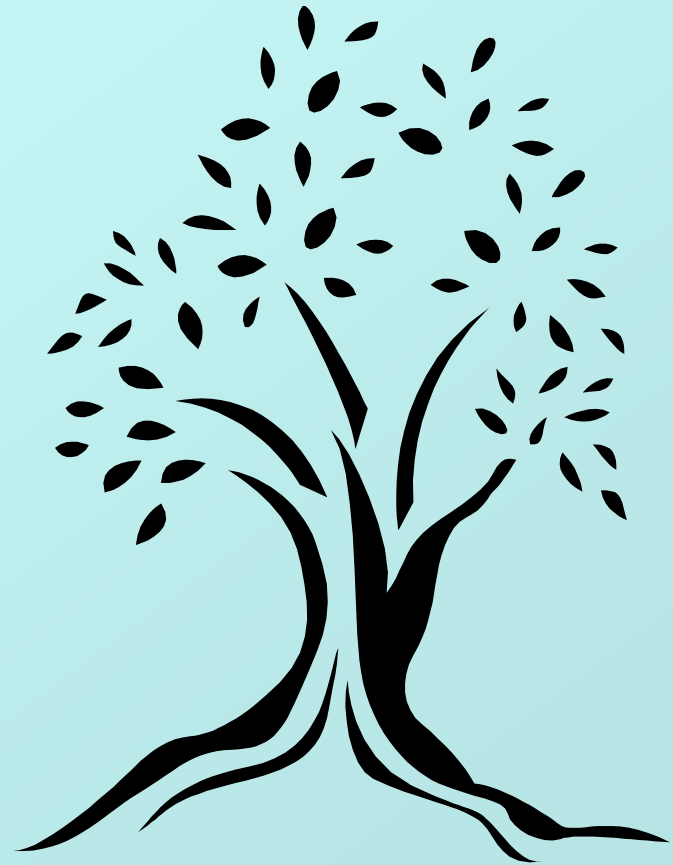
- What is the canopy of the forest made of?

Activate your schema!

- Suppose the text reads: The forest has many layers. The top layer is called the canopy.

- You can use your schema for forest to figure out that the canopy is made of the top branches of the trees

Using text features

- You did not use pictures to activate your schema

- Instead, you used the title to create a picture in your mind

- You can use other text features such as headings, bold print, and captions to activate your schema
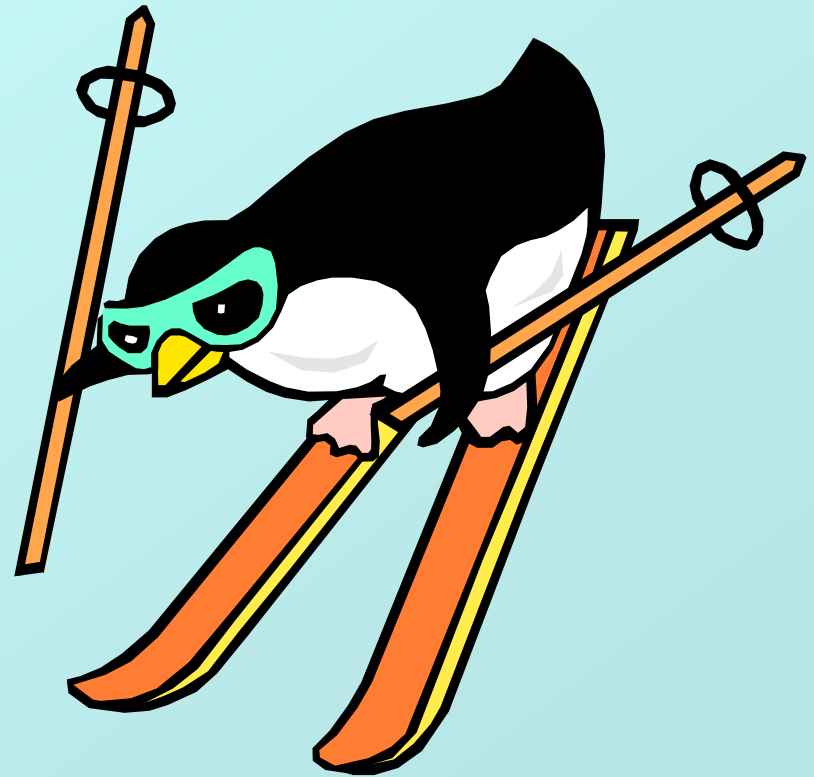
What have we learned?

- What is the word that describes the knowledge that is in our brain?
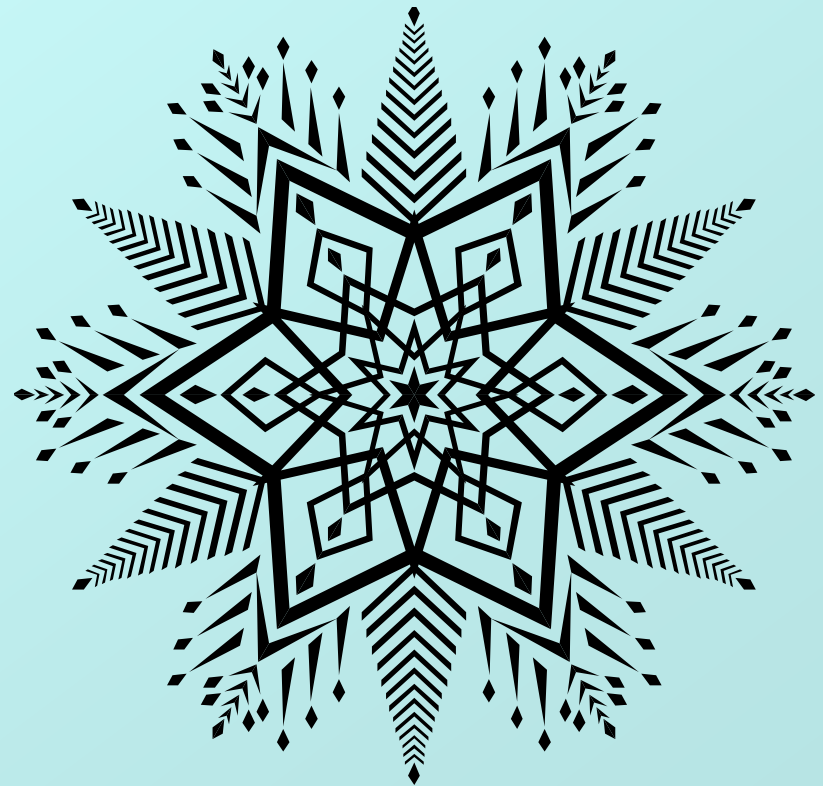
- SCHEMA

What have we learned?

- Why is it important to activate our schema before we start to read?

- When we activate our schema, we think of what we already know

- Then, we use our background knowledge to make inferences

What have we learned?

- How can we find out what the text will be about?

- We can look at the pictures, read the title, and look at the text features

by Emily Kissner