# *The Mistletoe Bough* (dir. Percy Stow, 1904)

**Lesson by Daniel Gallacher, Teach First**

## Key Stage 3 or 4
## English

*Inference* is a word that pupils are often scared of. Replace it with 'smart guesses' and half that fear goes away. Alleviate the remaining fear using short films and adverts; a really effective way to prove to pupils of all abilities how good they are at it!

This lesson is an effective introduction to making reasonable inference, it models examples of good inference making while getting the pupils themselves to put a big red cross next to two of the poor inference styles that we often see as teachers (and know why it's not good). This lesson focuses in on what is a 'reasonable inference' through the visual aid of inference circles (provided); it makes explicit what is and is not a 'clever guess'. It does this mainly through short films and will work for pupils of almost all abilities and language acquisition levels.

### Curriculum Links

- Extract and interpret information, events, main points and ideas from texts.
- Infer and deduce meanings, recognising the writers' intentions.
- Select and compare information from different texts.
- Assess the usefulness of texts, sift the relevant from the irrelevant and distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Recognise and discuss different interpretations of texts, justifying their own views on what they read and see, and supporting them with evidence.

**Lesson Objective**

To demonstrate an understanding of *inference* and to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable inference.

**You will need…**

- **Trailer:** Internet Connection; Inference circles (supplied)
- **Main Attraction:** Internet Connection and access to *The Mistletoe Bough* (http://www.bfi.org.uk/education-research/education/gothic-classroom); Interactive Whiteboard;  Post it notes.
- **End Credits:** Internet Connection;'The Black Hole' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5_Msrdg3Hk

**Activities**

**TRAILER: TITLE**

**For capable readers**: Have this up on the board:

*Nisha walked into the class 10 minutes late with snow in her hair. She was never normally late. She ignored her teacher and her classmates and choose to sit on her own.*

Get pupils to Think/Pair/Share what we might infer about Nisha's morning. Show pupils the inference circles (supplied):

- on the outside ring are inferences (guesses) that were too obvious
- the middle ring is reasonable and detailed
- the centre is too unlikely (when we say too unlikely, what we actually mean is that there have been no hints to lead us to this inference)

Show examples e.g. the too obvious inference 'Nisha got snowed on'; the reasonable inference 'Nisha got snowballs thrown at her by bullies and that's why she's late'; and the too oblique inference 'David Cameron threw snowballs at Nisha and commanded her to be late'.

Use this time to clear up the understanding of inference, perhaps putting it across as a 'clever guess', and the idea that reasonable inference is a valid and core skill at GCSE.

**MAIN ATTRACTION: TITLE**

Watch *The Mistletoe Bough* until the point at which the bride hides inside the trunk. At this point, hand out post-it notes to each pupil. Again, this film is silent so good for learners new to English EAL, but films without words are great for inference lessons with all pupils.

Get each pupil to write a prediction on a post-it about what is going to happen in the next part of the film. Get up your inference circles again on the IWB. Collect in 10 or so of these and read them one at a time out to the class. Using coffee sticks/mini white boards/ random name

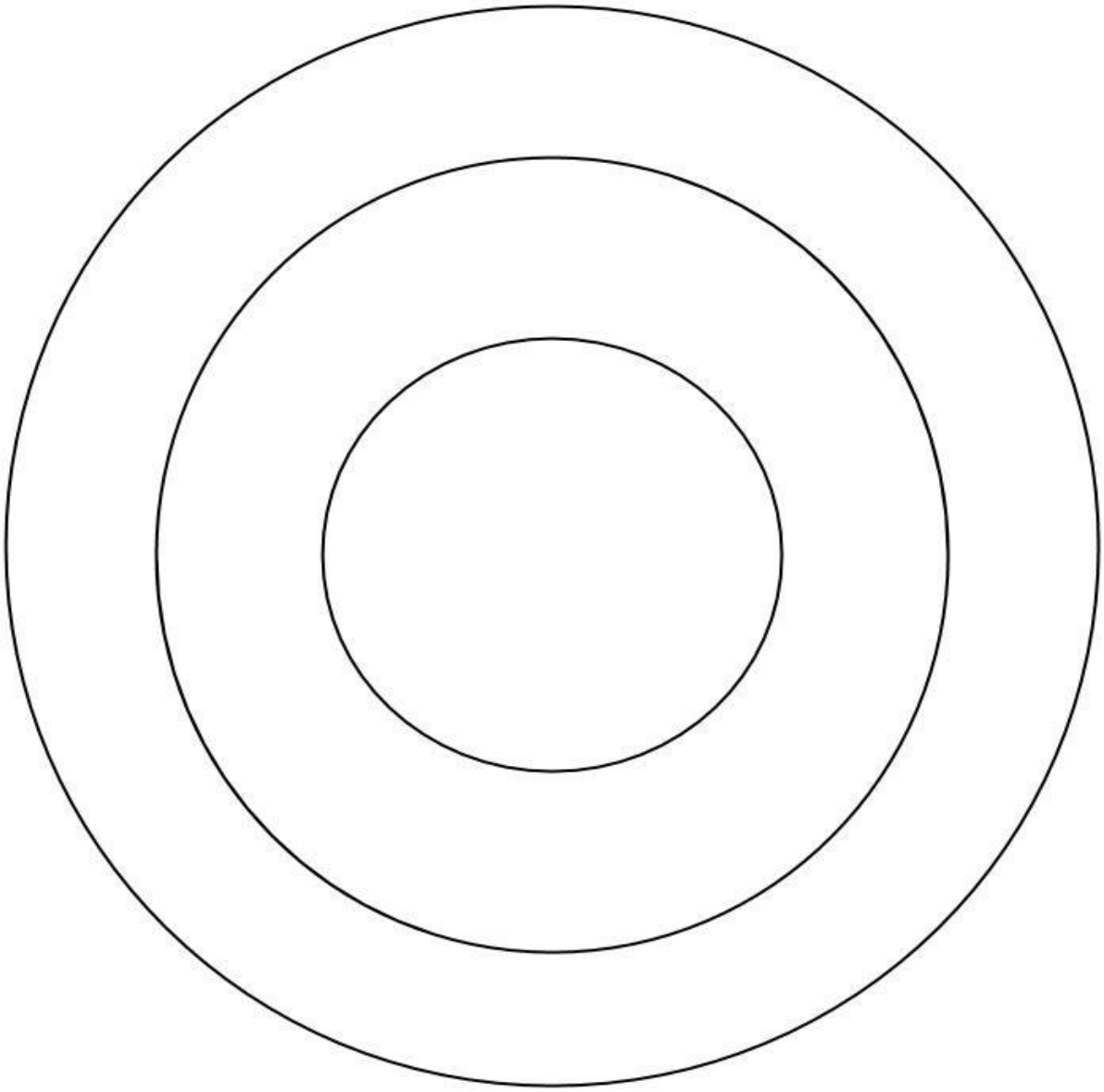
generator or whatever your preferred questioning technique is get a consensus on whether the prediction is

- A) too obvious/simple (e.g. she stays in the trunk)
- B) too unlikely/not linked to what we have seen (e.g. she goes to Mars and gets married to Justin Bieber)
- C) reasonable (e.g. she falls asleep/she gets stuck in the trunk).

Stick the post-it notes in the decided rings on IWB for visual confirmation. Be sure to praise for all reasonable inferences and then show rest of film and see who, if anyone was right.

**END CREDITS: TITLE**

Show 'The Black Hole' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5_Msrdg3Hk up to 1:27 min. Get pupils into groups of three and get them to write:

- one reasonable prediction.
- one unlikely wacky prediction (not linked to the film so far, they can have some fun with this one)
- one that's too obvious/undeveloped

Get pupils to pick a number between 1-20 and write it down in their books. Then tell them they have to write what they have learnt today using that exact number of words (if you have used this before get them to use the number of letters in their first name and second name combined).