Observation vs. Inference Quiz

Background

An **observation** is a statement you make about something you have seen, heard, or noticed in the world. An observation is based on evidence; other people given the same evidence should be able to validate and agree with your observation.

An **inference** is a conclusion that you draw based on the observations that you've made. Inferences are educated guesses—they are based on evidence, but you can't be 100% sure that they are true. Other people might make similar observations as you but draw different inferences from them.

A statement can be both an observation *and* an inference depending on the context. For example, if you were looking at a tree and counted four birds, then "there are four birds in that tree" would be an observation. However, if you are very familiar with birdcalls and think you hear four different types of birds but can't see the tree, then "there are four birds in that tree" would be an inference. The line between observations and inferences is not always clear, but we hope that it will become easier to understand by taking this quiz!

When we study archeology, it is important to understand the differences between observations and inferences so that we do not accidentally make assumptions about societies that turn out not to be true!

Directions

Divide your paper into 3 sections. Within each section, number 1-5. Take a look at each of the pictures below, and for each statement, write "O" if you think it is an observation and "I" if you think it is an inference.

Once you're done, check your answers on the last page!

Picture 1:

1. The boy with the soccer ball is wearing an orange shirt
2. The two men talking on the right (brown shirt and yellow shirt) are friends
3. The man with the sunglasses is riding a skateboard.
4. The man with the toolbox is on his way to work
5. The man with the dog has a job walking dogs.
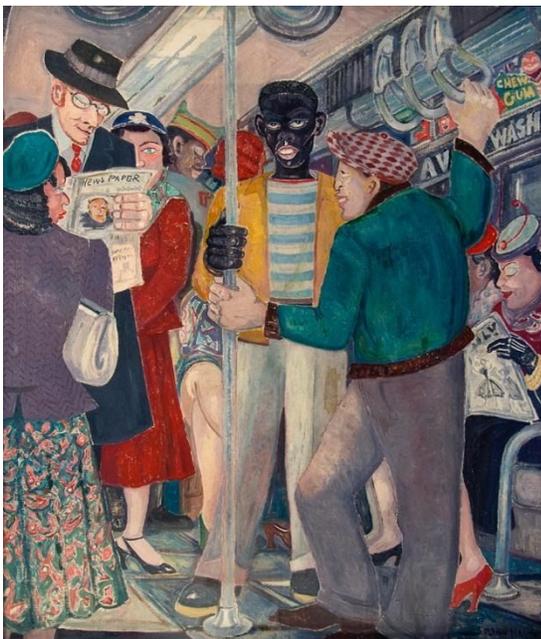
Picture 2:

1. This scene takes place at a Post Office
2. The lady wearing red is carrying a present.
3. It is Christmas time.
4. There is a tree in the back of the yellow car.
5. The dog in the picture belongs to the little girl standing next to it.

Picture 3:

1. The women wearing white is stealing from the basket of fruit.
2. The man in the back left has a black mustache
3. There are four people in this painting.
4. The row of yellow fruits in the front are lemons.
5. There are 10 yellow fruits lined up in this painting.

Picture 3:

1. The man wearing glasses is reading a newspaper
2. This is a painting of a New York City subway car.
3. The man in green is holding onto the pole and handrail because the ride is bumpy.
4. All of the people in the painting are strangers
5. The man in the yellow jacket is taller than the man in the green jacket.

Answers:

Picture 1:
1. Observation
2. Inference
3. Observation
4. Inference
5. Inference

Picture 2:
1. Observation
2. Observation
3. Inference
4. Observation
5. Inference

Picture 3:
1. Inference
2. Observation
3. Observation
4. Inference
5. Observation

Picture 4:
1. Observation
2. Inference
3. Inference
4. Inference
5. Observation