



**American Stories**  
**The Line of Least Resistance**  
**by Edith Wharton**

Lesson Plan  
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# Introduction

**This lesson plan is to accompany The Line of Least Resistance - a short story by Edith Wharton.**

**The approach used in this lesson is based on the CALLA approach. Through exploration of the literature content of this article, students can develop their use of English. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.**

# Lesson Elements

**Prepare**

**Present**

**Practice**

**Self-Evaluate**

**Expand**

# Prepare

Introduce the author: "Edith Wharton was an American novelist, short story writer, and designer. She won a Pulitzer prize for literature in 1921. Wharton wrote many humorous stories about wealthy Americans. Her stories showed that she understood people and society."

"Let's look together at some of the key words in the story."

# Vocabulary

**dishonor** - *n.* loss or lack of honor : damage to your reputation and loss of respect from other people

**interfere** - *v.* to become involved in the activities and concerns of other people when your involvement is not wanted

**mercy** - *n.* kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly

**waste** - *v.* to use (something valuable) in a way that is not necessary or effective : to use more of (something) than is necessary

# Present

Explain “Today we’re going to use the strategy **make inferences**. This strategy helps us find meanings that are not written in the text. We use what we know to make a guess. This is not a 'wild guess' because we know something already about the topic. So we call it an 'educated guess.' **Making inferences** can help us to understand the story. In this story the main character, Mister Mindon, is walking around his house. What can we guess about him from what the author, Edith Wharton, shows us? Let’s look at the first part of the story. See if you can make a guess about Mister Mindon's personality.”

Play the first part of the story; to "But he could hear the orchestra playing until three in the morning."

“Ok, what do you think about Mister Mindon? By **making an inference**, I guess that he is a quiet person. Maybe his wife thinks he is boring. Why?”

Show students the next slide or write the sentences on a chalkboard.

# Clues about Mister Mindon

The story tells us...	I guess that...
(he) always ate simple meals	He doesn't like big dinners
(he) did not enjoy his wife's parties.	He does not like being around people
They never seemed very interested in what he was saying.	He does not make good conversation
He would go to bed after dinner.	He doesn't like to stay up late - he leaves his wife at parties

# Practice

Say, “Now it’s your turn. Make a chart on your paper like the one I showed you. We will read some more. What do Mister Mindon's actions tell you about him?”

Play the story to "But since you are here, please telephone for a taxi cab at once."

Next, ask students to write their inferences in their chart. Show the chart with what they found as on the next slide.



# Clues about Mister Mindon

The story tells us...	I guess that...
<p>Mister Mindon was proud to be rich enough to have a perfectly useless room in his house.</p>	<p>Mister Mindon cares what other people think of him</p>
<p>If it were not for me and my money, this room would be empty!" Suddenly, Mister Mindon felt taller</p>	<p>Mister Mindon cares about money more than the love of his wife</p>
<p>He sat at the table and wrote a letter to Millicent... please telephone for a taxi cab at once."</p>	<p>He is leaving the house.</p>
<p><i>Add students' inferences</i></p>	

Say, “Let’s read some more of the story now. But this time I want you to look for clues that will help you make a guess about Millicent, Mrs. Mindon. Let’s listen to and read the next section. Be ready to look for something that tells you about her.”

Play to "And we have come here to ask you what you plan to do."

Repeat the procedure in which students fill in their inferences about Millicent Mindon's personality.

# Clues about Millicent Mindon

The story tells us...	I guess that...
she sent three men to talk with Mister Mindon	She is smart - she understands her husband
She asks you for mercy	She is not proud
<i>Add students' inferences</i>	

Say, “Let’s read the rest of the story now. Let's make inferences about both of the characters.”

**Play to the end of the story.**

Repeat the procedure in which students fill in their inferences about Mister Mindon or Millicent Mindon.

# Self-Evaluation

Ask students, “Do you think *making inferences* or *guessing* helped you understand this story? If you understand the story, then you can form an opinion about the actions of the people in the story.”

Ask students to turn to their neighbor and say what they think of Mister Mindon's decision. If time allows, ask a couple of students to share their opinion with the class, supporting their opinion with the inferences they made.

# Expand

Wrap up the lesson by asking students to think of other times they can **make inferences**. Possible answers are 'listening to a lecture, studying a textbook, or reading letters.

Encourage students to go home and make 'educated guesses' with a reading assignment; or when listening in another class.

# About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies here:

<http://calla.ws/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/strategylist.pdf>