

It's a case for
Detective Sergeant Factual

"The facts ma'am, just the facts"

TEACHER: Assumptions and inference have been covered in a previous grade. This exercise affords the students an opportunity to examine inferences and assumptions in what might be considered a real life situation. Before reading this story to the class, review the definitions on page 05-01, and draw an inference and assumption reliability scale on the board.

And now the situation.

Sgt. Factual approached the Downtown High School. Out in front, a small crowd gathered. In the center of the crowd were two girls shouting at each other, and saying some very nasty things.

Sgt. Factual stepped into the crowd and said, "Ladies, I am a police officer. Can we lower our voices and tell me what's going on?"

Lahasha retorted, "It's all her fault. She is going to the junior prom with Tyrell."

Sgt. Factual looked puzzled, but he knew more was coming. "All right, she is going to the prom with, what's his name, ah, Tyrell. But what does that have to do with all this screaming?"

Lahasha answered, "Two weeks ago Tyrell asked me if I liked to dance, and which dance was my favorite. He was going to ask me to the junior prom, even though I am not a junior. I know it. But then Janeen mooched in and..."

"Did not!" shouted Janeen.

"Did so! And you used to be my friend."

"Lahasha, that is your name, right? Tyrell never really asked you to the prom, did he?"

"But he would have."

"Well, maybe he would have, and maybe he wouldn't." said the sergeant. "I know you are terribly disappointed, and that's understandable. But I think your problem belongs with what you

assumed about Tyrell, not with Janeen. But you know what, if a guy is that much of a tease, maybe you're better off without him."

Sgt. Factual paused, looked at the pouting girls and said, "Now that you have cooled down a bit, why don't you both walk off in different directions, before I have to do something official."

Questions for discussion

How did this problem start?

Where did Lashasha put her inference about an invitation on the Inference and Assumption scale?

We're not sure why Lashasha assumed her friend Janeen mooched in.

Have you ever been upset when someone assumed something about you for no good reason, and would not listen to reason?

Was Lashasha listening to Sgt. Factual, or was she still hanging on to her inference?

Why might it have been so important to Lashasha to have Jeffery ask her to the junior prom? (She was not a junior)

Could this have influenced her to infer that Tyrell would ask her?

What inference could the girls draw from the sergeant's statement "...before I have to do something official?"

When we want to believe something, we become very susceptible to inferences and assumptions. Advertisers and political speech writers know this and use it. Don't get trapped.