Drawing a conclusion is similar to playing detective. Suppose, for example, you have a new puppy that likes to chew things like books, hats, and slippers. On Saturday morning you are looking for your baseball glove, but cannot find it in your closet. What conclusion are you likely to draw? Did you conclude that the new puppy chewed your glove? Your conclusion proves correct when you find your glove under the bed, with a guilty-looking pup exercising his jaws on it.

Drawing a conclusion is making a decision (or forming an opinion) by applying reason to a set of facts or ideas. When you read, you are often led by authors to draw conclusions. For example, in one book the author presents many facts about troubles between Native Americans and settlers in the Old West. You conclude from the book that the Native Americans were very badly treated, which is what the author intended for you to conclude. In this case, the author led you to draw a conclusion in order to make the point about which the author feels strongly.

Authors of mystery and adventure stories often lead you to draw conclusions that are wrong, perhaps to fool you or build up to a surprise ending. In the story from which the following passage is taken, the author leads you, through the character of Sara Jane, to several wrong conclusions. In the opening scene, Sara Jane is awakened by a banging and a voice calling “Fire! Everybody out!” Sara Jane and the reader come to the conclusion that her house is on fire, and only later find out that the fire is really in another building.

Later, Sara Jane is led to another conclusion.

That crumpled piece of paper! What was on it that could get her brother so upset?

Sara Jane had to know. She went over to the basket, reached in, and drew out the paper. As quietly as possible, she unfolded it. She couldn’t believe what she was reading.

“We have your husband. Stay by the phone and wait. If you call the police ....”

The reader draws the conclusion, along with Sara Jane, that her brother is involved in a kidnapping. Later, the reader finds that the brother was forced to write the note.

Finally, another wrong conclusion is made. Sara Jane releases Mr. Madden, the store owner, thinking he is an innocent victim. The author has again led the reader to draw the wrong conclusion, adding to the story’s excitement.

By leading you to draw conclusions, authors can convince you to agree with their own ideas ... or amuse you by fooling you for a little while.
What is the conclusion that you can draw from each of the following paragraphs?

1. There were four slices of bread on the counter when John walked out of the kitchen. When he came back, he found only two slices of bread and his large Irish Setter hiding under the kitchen table.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________

2. When Marvin walked into Social Studies class, he was unhappily surprised to hear the teacher say, “Today we are going to have a quiz on the Civil War.” Out of the ten questions on the quiz, Marvin could answer only two.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________

3. She undid the lock and swung open the door. “Mr. Rogers will be so ....” But the words froze on her lips. Her eyes grew wide with shock and disbelief as she stared at the empty shelf. “But it’s not possible!” she mumbled out loud, searching the locker’s dark shelf with her hand. Nothing! Again she searched, sliding her hand carefully from corner to corner over the cold metal. Again, nothing.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________

4. Lemu knew he would have to find a better hiding place — and fast! He pulled himself up onto a wing of the airplane, and squirmed into the cockpit.
   The lions slowly walked over to the plane. They sniffed the wheels and the propeller. One lion put his paws up on one of the wings and looked at the cockpit. Lemu squirmed down as far as he could.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________

5. In 1904 it was still just a dream. Jim liked athletics, but he could not even hold a football properly. He could do one thing better than most: he could run like a deer. He could out race anyone he had ever met. He knew he was faster than all the players on the Carlisle team. To achieve his goal, he told himself all he needed was the height and weight. So he had to be patient.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________

6. The class was going to act out *A Christmas Carol* and both Max and Roberto wanted to play the part of Mr. Scrooge. The teacher said tryouts would be held and the class would vote on who would get the part. Roberto read his part, mumbling the words to himself, so no one could hear him. When Max read his part, he used a great deal of expression and spoke loudly and clearly. The class cheered when he was finished.
   Conclusion: __________________________________________________________