

Context Clues: You be the Detective



Context Clues – What Are They?

- Context clues are bits of information from the text that, when combined with prior knowledge, allow you to decide the meaning of unknown words in the story or article you are reading.
- As a reader you must act similar to a detective and put together clues from sentences surrounding an unknown word in order to make an intelligent “guess” as to what the definition of a word is.

Context Clues – How Do They Help You Read New Words?

- Textbook writers and authors include words or phrases to help their readers understand the meaning of a new or difficult word.
- These words or phrases are built into the sentences around the new or difficult word. By becoming more aware of the words around a difficult word, readers can make logical guesses about the meanings of many words.

Still Wondering What a Context Clue Is?



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Types of Context Clues

Authors use many different types of context clues when writing texts. Three of these types are:

- Direct definition context clues
- Synonym context clues
- Antonym context clues

Direct definition context clues are words that say, “Stop - don’t touch that dictionary. The definition of the word you don’t know is right here in the text!”

EXAMPLES:

- ❖ **There are many *theories*, or ideas, about what made the Ice Ages happen.**
- ❖ *In this sentence the word “ideas” tells us that theories are different thoughts people have about something.*
- ❖ **After a time, *glaciers*, or slowly moving rivers of ice, formed over many parts of the Earth.**
- ❖ *In this sentence the words “slowly moving rivers of ice” tell us what glaciers are.*

Synonym context clues are words around a difficult word that mean the same or nearly the same as the word.

EXAMPLES:

- ❖ After seeing the picture of the starving children, we felt compassion or pity for their suffering.
- ❖ In this sentence the word "pity" tells us that compassion means to have understanding for.
- ❖ Mary admonished her students and they knew they were in hot water for their actions.
- ❖ In this sentence the words "in hot water" tell us that admonished means cautioned or scolded.

Antonym context clues are words around a difficult word that mean the opposite or nearly the opposite as the word.

EXAMPLE:

- ❖ Joe was reluctant to take the job of captain of the team. He was afraid that the time it would take would hurt his grades. On the other hand, Billy was eager for the chance to be the team captain.
- ❖ In this sentence the words "on the other hand" and "eager" tell us that Billy feels the opposite of Joe, therefore, reluctant means uncertain or cautious.

Now it is your turn to be a detective and follow the clues!



Use what you have learned about context clues to complete the activity on the next 5 slides.

Context Clues Practice Activity

Your friend Ryan has moved to a new country and is learning a new language. Read what he wrote in his diary and see if you can figure out the meaning to the underlined words.

Dear Diary,

I overslept this morning. I had to eat my bowl of poof-poofs very quickly, and I almost missed the tramzam. When I got to school, I realized I had forgotten my zilqinq. Luckily, Ms. Jutzi is very zoosh, and told me I could bring it tomorrow.

After school, some friends and I played plinqing. It's a new game I am learning. We scored 7 points and they only scored 5 points, so we were the zoters!

Dad says that next weekend we're going to the fladder. I can't wait! I love to swim and play in the sand. I hope I don't get a sunburn though.

Well, I better go to bed soon. I don't want to wake up late again and miss my tramzam!

Until tomorrow,
Ryan

Directions

It's time for some detective work. Take each word from Ryan's diary that is written in his new language and use the context clues in the text to figure them out!



Let's begin...

- What could the word poof-poofs mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me it is something that can be eaten. I know that it is a breakfast food because Ryan said it was morning. I also know that it goes in a bowl. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be a type of cereal.
- What could the word tramzam mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me that Ryan was going to school and he almost missed his tramzam. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be a school bus.
- What could the word zilqinq mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me that it is something Ryan needed at school. I also know that it is ok if he brings it tomorrow. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be Ryan's homework.
- What could the word zoosh mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me that a person can act this way and that Ms. Jutzi is being kind and allowing Ryan to bring his homework the next day. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be friendly or understanding.

You're doing terrific...keep going!

- What could the word **plingming** mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me it is a game Ryan and his friends play against each other and that points can be scored. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be a sport such as basketball or soccer.
- What could the word **zoiters** mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me that Ryan's team scored 7 points while the other team scored less points. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be that it means winners.

Almost there...

- What could the word **fladder** mean?
 - ▶ The sentences tell me that Ryan's dad said he could go there and when he gets there they will swim and play in the sand. Ryan also mentions not wanting a sunburn. What do you think it is?
 - ▶ The most logical guess would be a lake or a beach.
- And, remember, we already figured out the word **tramzam** probably means school bus.

Congratulations!

- ◆ You are doing a super job! You're a top notch detective. Keep going on to do more context clues activities.

Using Context Clues to solve the riddles

When you read, you can use context clues to help you figure out words that you do not know. You can use the word clues that you read to help you find the meaning of a new word.

What is the meaning of the crazy, make-believe word that is underlined in each sentence? Circle the correct meaning. Then circle at least two clue words that helped you to figure out the meaning of the word.



Question 1:

Sometimes at lunch we have **slowmoe**. **Slowmoe** is a good drink. I like chocolate but some people like skim **slowmoe**.

What is slowmoe?

Pizza

Milk

Ice-cream



Question 2:

We like to go to **glubnub** class. Sometimes we play with clay, sometimes we cut and paste using colour papers. We learn the rules for different sports. **Glubnub** is a fun class!

What is glubnub?

music

gym

Art



Question 3:

My **kitenight** is older than anyone in my family. Sometimes we visit my **kitenight** and she tells us stories about our mother when she was growing up. She also bakes us great cookies.

Who is my **kitenight**?

mother

sister

grandmother



Question 4:

Do you have a **placenet**? Dogs and cats can make good **placenet**s. My friend Ann has a **placenet** named Swimmy. Ann has to feed Swimmy each day and clean the water in Swimmy's bowl. No matter what kind of **placenet** you have, you have to take good care of it.

What is a **placenet**?

pet

rabbit

fish



CHALLENGE:

Write your own context clue riddle. Try to give good clues that will help your reader to know the meaning of the new word that you have created! Ask someone to solve your riddle for you.



Context Clues Pretest and Posttest

Use these two links to test your knowledge before and after using the activities that follow this page.

Context Clues Pretest

- <http://www.shsu.edu/~txcae/Powerpoints/preposttest/contextclues1pretest.html>

◆ Context Clues Posttest

- <http://www.shsu.edu/~txcae/Powerpoints/preposttest/cluesdefineposttest.html>

“On Your Own” Activities

- ◆ Quia Context Clues Activity
 - <http://www.quia.com/pop/117579.html>
- ◆ Study zone lesson and activity
 - <http://www.studyzone.org/testprep/e4topic.cfm?TopicID=24>
- ◆ TV 411 Activity
 - <http://www.tv411.org/lessons/cfm/reading.cfm?str=reading&num=7&act=1>
- ◆ Word Clues Activity
 - http://wps.ablongman.com/long_licklider_vocabulary_1/0,1682,11855-,00.html

More Activities For You

- ◆ Print and Do Worksheet
 - http://www.woodland.k12.mo.us/faculty/rgarner/Reading/Using%20Context%20Clues_riddles.doc
- ◆ Context Clues Practice Sheets
 - <http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/ccprac1.htm>
 - <http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/ccprac2.htm>
 - <http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/rcdc2cc.htm>
 - <http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/rcdc2cc.htm>