



Reading Comprehension

Using Context Clues

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Using Context Clues

These three vocabulary worksheet pages give your middle school and high school students confidence to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar lexicon by using contextual clues. Each new word is contained within two or three sentences in a row, and each successive sentence gives more specific clues. During my speech therapy sessions, I have my students cover up the page, revealing only one sentence at a time, while I encourage them to take guesses. I have seen tremendous progress in building vocabulary skills as my students generalize their willingness and subsequent ability to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words from contextual clues in novel situations, including the presentation of academic content within the classroom.

Name _____

Date _____

Using Contextual Clues

Often we will come across a word that we don't know. There are four basic ways to figure out what it means. Obviously, the foolproof way is to look up the definition, but this isn't always practical. A second way is to ask someone – don't be hesitant to ask!! Asking questions is a sign of intelligence! A third way is to try to figure out the definition by noting the word's root, prefixes, or suffixes. The fourth way to figure out a word's meaning is to use contextual clues. The context is what's going on in the sentence containing the unknown word or surrounding sentences. Often you can get some idea of an unfamiliar word's meaning.

Directions: Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess.
Only look at one sentence at a time—cover the rest of the paper!

- 1) Samantha foraged through the cupboards.
- 2) The bear foraged through the forest, looking for something to eat.
- 3) She didn't like to see her brother in such a wretched state.
- 4) After he finished the chemotherapy, his body was in a wretched state.
- 5) They lived in a rural part of the country.
- 6) There were few stores and businesses in the rural Mississippi town.
- 7) She snaps on a pair of disposable gloves.
- 8) I don't have to save that gown; it's disposable.
- 9) There are myriad reasons why I don't want to get married.
- 10) I can't even count the myriad ways that I admire her.
- 11) He was notorious for going out with a different girl every night.
- 12) Al Capone was a notorious gangster in the 1930s.
- 13) I'm eating a miniscule lunch today to try to lose weight.
- 14) Your cell phone is so miniscule it could fit into my smallest pocket.

Name _____

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Using Contextual Clues—Part 2

Directions: Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess.

Only look at one sentence at a time – cover the rest of the paper!

- 1) Her irrepressible nature often got her into a lot of trouble.
- 2) He was irrepressible and that landed him on the bad side of supervisors who were control freaks.
- 3) Consuming too much sugar is detrimental to your health.
- 4) Last year's dry spell was detrimental to Florida's fruit crops.
- 5) Not putting enough energy into school will be a detriment to your chances of getting into the college of your dreams.
- 6) I was worried at first, but after spending more time with my son's girlfriend I decided she was benign.
- 7) You're lucky your tumor turned out to be benign.
- 8) She was so diminutive that everyone thought she was still in grade school.
- 9) Since he only had a studio apartment, Tom looked for the most diminutive dog at the animal shelter.
- 10) Our staff meetings are always so protracted that I start to fall asleep by the end.
- 11) I thought I'd never get out of there; it was the most protracted dinner of my life.
- 12) He was incredulous when he heard about my strange experiences.
- 13) My father raised me to be incredulous so that I would never get taken by scam artists.



Name _____

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Using Contextual Clues—Part 3

- 1) Sylvia felt enraptured by the heavenly dessert.
- 2) He was so enraptured by her on their first date that he just knew she was the girl for him.
- 3) Winning the lottery was quite a windfall.
- 4) She felt like the luckiest woman on earth; she knew that this job would turn out to be the biggest windfall of her life.
- 5) He wasn't sure if he would be proficient at his new position.
- 6) John practiced for months to become proficient at surfing.
- 7) His proficiency at public speaking helped him become elected to office.
- 8) This paint job is mediocre and I want you to redo it.
- 9) She was afraid that if she didn't pursue her dream of dancing her life would be filled with mediocrity.
- 10) I couldn't get him to divulge his secret.
- 11) Will you divulge the reason that you left without saying goodbye?
- 12) He didn't want to invalidate her feelings, but he just felt he couldn't be bothered.
- 13) Go see that man in the blue cap—he will validate your parking ticket.
- 14) I don't really think that your excuse is valid.
- 15) I want to see another doctor to find out if he'll corroborate your diagnosis.
- 16) Is she going to corroborate your story or will she contradict what you told me?

