

Context Clues

Unlocking Meaning from the Words Around You

Why Guess When You Can Investigate?

Have you ever read a book and stumbled upon a word you didn't know?

Instead of reaching for a dictionary immediately, you can often figure out the meaning by looking at the **surrounding words**.

These hints are called **context clues**.

What do you do when you come across a word you don't understand?

- Context clues are hints in the surrounding text that help us figure out meanings.
- A simple example:

“The **arid** desert was dry and lifeless.”

Ask: What does arid mean? (Clue: dry)

Types of Context Clues

- Definition/Explanation: The word is explained in the sentence.

“A **habitat**, or home, is where an animal lives.”

- Synonym/Restatement: A similar word is used.
- “The movie was **hilarious**; it was so funny.”
- Antonym/Contrast: An opposite word is used.

“Unlike his **gregarious** brother, Tom is shy.”

- Example: Examples are given.

*“**Celestial bodies**, such as the sun, moon, and stars, are fascinating.”*

- Inference: Clues from the overall meaning.

*“She wore a **somber** expression at the funeral.”*

Short passage

The old house looked **dilapidated**. The windows were broken, the paint was peeling, and parts of the roof had fallen off. Many people believed the house was **haunted**, but others thought the strange noises were caused by the wind.

- **Questions:**

- What does *dilapidated* mean?

Dilapidated means **old, broken-down, and in very poor condition.**

- Which words helped you understand its meaning?

The context clues are:

- *windows were broken*
- *paint was peeling*
- *parts of the roof had fallen off*

These details describe damage and neglect, which help us understand the meaning of *dilapidated*.

What does *haunted* mean in this context?

Haunted means **believed to have ghosts or spirits living in it.**

The clue is:

- *strange noises*

This suggests people think something supernatural is happening in the house.

Another short passage

Thabo felt **anxious** before his speech. His hands were shaking, and his heart was beating fast. However, once he started speaking, he became **confident** and spoke clearly and proudly.

- **Questions:**

What does **anxious** mean?

Anxious means **nervous or worried**.

- What clues helped you?

The context clues are:

- *His hands were shaking*
- *His heart was beating fast*

These are signs that someone feels nervous, which helps us understand the meaning of *anxious*.

- What does **confident** mean?

Confident means **sure of yourself, brave, or believing you can do something well**.

The clue is:

- *spoke clearly and proudly*

This shows he felt sure and comfortable while speaking.

- Write your own sentence using the word **anxious**.

Example answer:

- I felt anxious before writing my final exam.

(Any correct sentence that shows the meaning of nervous or worried is acceptable.)

Keep Practising!

Remember the Strategy

1. **Read** the whole sentence.
2. **Look** for signal words (means, unlike, such as).
3. **Guess** the meaning based on the clues.
4. **Check** if your word makes sense in the sentence.

The Next Step

- Next time you read, try to spot the clues before looking up a word.
- You know more than you think!