

Lesson Skill: Context clues in nonfiction

Strand Reading — Nonfiction

SOL 3.4

4.4

5.4

Materials

- Index cards (2 per student)
- Context Clues Graphic Organizer 1 (attached)
- Context Clues Graphic Organizer 2 for differentiation (attached)
- Varied nonfiction texts that have strong context clues
- Chart paper or available technology

Lesson

1. Post on the board or on chart paper: “How do you figure out the meaning of a word that you do not know?” On the board or chart paper, write two sentences. Have each sentence include one unfamiliar vocabulary word. The sentences must include context clues, such as a restatement, a synonym, or an example to lead students to an accurate definition. Underline the unfamiliar word in each sentence. Display one sentence at a time.
2. Give each student two index cards. On the front of one index card, have them write their prediction of the definition of the first unfamiliar word. Repeat this process with the second word, using the back of the index card to write their definition prediction. With a partner, have students share their definitions and explain how they arrived at the definition. Afterward, guide discussion so students have accurate definitions of the unknown words. Explain to students that they were able to make accurate predictions by being detectives and using the context clues in the sentences.
3. Divide the class into groups of four. Give each group a text that has examples of context clues. This may be a nonfiction selection from the basal or other textbook, or a nonfiction paragraph selection. Using the Context Clues Graphic Organizer 1, have students write an unfamiliar word, predict the definition, and identify the clues in the sentence. Have groups share with group members their definitions and how they used context clues.
4. Each student will choose a consumable piece of text (e.g., children’s magazine, student newspaper, paragraph), highlight an unfamiliar word, and determine if context clues are available in the text.
5. To conclude, have students write on the second index card the answer to the following question: “How do context clues help you find the meaning of an unfamiliar word or phrase?”

Strategies for Differentiation

- Provide text based on student readiness and interest.
- Provide text with pictures.

- Give students text with an unfamiliar word, and have them highlight/color code the context clues to help define the word.
- Have students define their words on the Context Clues Graphic Organizer 2, using the context clues in the sentences given to them. Then, have them use the word in a different, meaningful sentence that uses context clues so that another student can figure out the meaning of the word. (Underline the unfamiliar word.)
- Have students highlight, in a text, a word they think may be “tricky” for their peers. Have classmates define the word through context clues.
- For each unfamiliar word, provide students with three definitions from which to choose the correct definition.
- Assist students in choosing familiar, easily defined words, such as “tree,” “house,” and “animal.”

Context Clues Graphic Organizer 1

Name _____ Date _____

UNFAMILIAR WORD	PREDICTION OF DEFINITION	CLUES

Context Clues Graphic Organizer 2

Name _____ Date _____

1. Define the unfamiliar word.
2. Use the word in a meaningful sentence that uses context clues so that someone could figure out the meaning of the word.

Unfamiliar Word and Its Definition	Sentence