Lesson Skill: Using context clues

Strand Reading--vocabulary

SOL 6.4
7.4
8.4

Materials
- Copies of the attached Five Types of Context Clues handout
- Various reading materials, such as textbook selections and released test items pertaining to context clues
- Various art supplies and/or computer presentation software, as needed

Lesson
Part 1

1. Distribute copies of the Five Types of Context Clues handout, and review the different types and how they are used. Have students practice finding examples of each type in various reading materials.

2. Divide the class into groups of three or four, and have each group choose five unfamiliar words. Have each group write a multiple-choice question for each of their five words, using the word in a sentence, providing one type of context clue to the word's meaning, and giving four answer choices. Each group will create five questions to correspond to the five types of context clues.

3. Have groups exchange their questions and then answer them to determine the meanings of the words. Allow students to refer to their Five Types of Context Clues handout.

4. Have groups return the questions with the answers to the original groups for grading.

Part 2

1. Have each group of students create a Guide to Types of Context Clues that includes a description of each of the five context clues and a new example of each. Allow groups to choose the format for their guide, such as an electronic presentation, poster, or brochure.

2. Create a grading rubric with the students to determine how the guides will be graded.

3. Have groups exchange guides and grade them, based on the grading rubric.

Five Types of Context Clues

1.   Definition/Explanation Clue

The meaning of a word or phrase is revealed by an explanation immediately following.

Example: "The city holds a **bazaar**, or market, every other Saturday."

The meaning of the noun *bazaar* can be found in the appositive, *market.*

2.   Restatement/Synonym Clue

The meaning of a word or phrase is revealed by a simple restatement or synonym.

Example: "The **remote** site was far away from our current location."

The sentence provides a synonym, *far away,* for the adjective *remote*.

3.   Contrast/Antonym Clue

The meaning of a word or phrase is revealed by a statement of the opposite meaning.

Example: "We wanted to **contribute** to the project, not take away from it."

The word *not* signals that the verb *contribute* is an antonym to "take away from." Therefore, the reader knows it means "add to."

4.   Inference/General Context Clue

The meaning of a word or phrase is revealed elsewhere in the text, not within the sentence containing the word. Relationships, which are not directly apparent, are inferred or implied.

Example: "The **haberdashery** was Lou's favorite place. He loved shopping for nice suits. The people who worked there were so friendly and helpful."

The meaning of the noun *haberdashery* is inferred by the information in the next two sentences: it is a place to buy nice suits and is staffed by helpful people, i.e., it is an upscale clothing store.

5.   Tone and Setting Clue

The meaning of a word or phrase is revealed by the actions or setting.

Example: "The **hostile** dog barked at everyone and everything in sight. He even thought a piece of trash was an enemy, so he barked at it, too."

The meaning of the word *hostile* is shown by the dog's actions, which are "unfriendly" and "aggressive."