



1

# USING CONTEXT CLUES

The Angry Reader Series



2

# WHAT ARE CONTEXT CLUES?

---

# WHAT ARE CONTEXT CLUES?

Context clues are hints that an author gives to help define a difficult or unusual word within a book.

The clue may appear within the same sentence as the word to which it refers, or it may follow in the next sentence.

Because most of our vocabulary is gained through reading, it is important that we are able to recognize and take advantage of context clues.





As readers, we must be aware that many words have several possible meanings. We would have to know every meaning to a word to understand a text completely; that's impossible!

However, when we are aware of the circumstances in which a word is used, the reader can decide on definition needed to fit the context.

A reader should rely on context clues when an obvious clue to the meaning is provided, or when only a general sense of the meaning is needed for the reader's purposes.

#### NOTE:

Context clues should not be relied upon when a precise meaning is required, when clues suggest several possible definitions, when nearby words are unfamiliar, and when the unknown word is a common one that will be needed again; in these cases, a dictionary should be used instead.

## **WHAT ARE CONTEXT CLUES?**



As readers, we must be aware that many words have several possible meanings. We would have to know every meaning to a word to understand a text completely; that's impossible!

However, when we are aware of the circumstances in which a word is used, the reader can decide on definition needed to fit the context.

A reader should rely on context clues when an obvious clue to the meaning is provided, or when only a general sense of the meaning is needed for the reader's purposes.

#### NOTE:

Context clues should not be relied upon when a precise meaning is required, when clues suggest several possible definitions, when nearby words are unfamiliar, and when the unknown word is a common one that will be needed again; in these cases, a dictionary should be used instead.

**Some Types  
of Context  
Clues are:**



6

# Types of Context Clues

---

# Types of Context Clues



The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

## TYPE

1. DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION CLUE
2. EXAMPLE CLUES
3. CLUES BY SYNONYMS/ANOTNYMS
4. CLUES BY COMPARISON AND CONTRASTS
5. CLUES BY ASSOCIATION
6. TONE & MOOD CLUES
7. CLUES BY SERIES
8. CAUSE/EFFECT CLUES
9. EXPERIENCE CLUES
10. ANALYSIS/STRUCTURE CLUE
11. INFERENCE CLUES

# Types of Context Clues



The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>1.</b> DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION CLUES	A new term may be formally defined, or sufficient explanation may be given within the sentence or in the following sentence. Clues to definition include <b>“that is,” commas, dashes, and parentheses.</b>

EXAMPLE:

1. His emaciation, that is, his skeleton-like appearance, was frightening to see.  
**“Skeleton-like appearance” is the definition of “emaciation.”**
2. Colonoscopy, examination of a colon, has become a common practice to check for cancer in the colon.  
**The commas before and after “examination of the colon” point out the definition of “fluoroscopy.”**

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>2.</b> EXAMPLE CLUES	Sometimes when a reader finds a new word, an example might be found nearby that helps to explain its meaning. <b>Words like including, such as, and for example, point out example clues.</b>

EXAMPLE:

1. Nocturnal creatures, such as owls and Tasmanian Devils, are active at night.  
**“Nocturnal” obviously refers to nighttime.**



# Types of Context Clues



## The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<p><b>3.</b></p> <p>CLUES BY SYNONYMS/ANTONYMS</p>	<p>The reader may discover the meaning of an unknown word because it repeats an idea expressed in familiar words nearby <b>OR</b> it depicts the opposite of words nearby. Remember: <u>Synonyms</u> are words with the same meaning; while, <u>Antonyms</u> are words with the opposite meanings.</p>

### EXAMPLE:

1. Jerry likes using trite, **worn-out** expressions in his writing; his favorite is “sting like a bee.”

“Trite” is **synonymous with** worn-out.”

TYPE	DEFINITION
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p>CLUES BY COMPARISON AND CONTRASTS</p>	<p>Sometimes comparing or contrasting ideas in a sentence or reading, gives readers an idea of the meaning of unfamiliar words or expression.</p>

### EXAMPLE:

1. As the defendant’s guilt became more and more obvious, he realized that there would be no chance of an acquittal.

“Acquittal” means **being assumed innocent**.

# Types of Context Clues



## The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>5.</b> CLUES BY ASSOCIATION	Readers make connections with other words in the sentence to clarify the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

### EXAMPLE:

1. Janya is one of the most talented students at this school. She has won numerous awards in math, art, science, and theater. She also writes poetry and articles for the school newspaper. She is on the Student Government Association and the track team. Definitely, Janya's talents are **innumerable**.

"Innumerable" means a lot."

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>6.</b> TONE & MOOD CLUES	The author sets a mood, and the meaning of the unknown word must harmonize with the mood.

### EXAMPLE:

1. Henry looked around at the flying fairies, the forest-like backdrop, the romping animals and nymphs. Yes, everyone was free and happy; he realized the **whimsical** theme of the prom.

"Whimsical" means light-hearted, fantastical, free-willed, playful.

# Types of Context Clues



## The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>7.</b> CLUES BY SERIES	Readers acknowledge an episodic or list of items that are related, giving them an idea of the unfamiliar word.

EXAMPLE:

1. The **dulcimer**, fiddle, and banjo are all popular among the Appalachian Mountain people.

Dulcimer is a string instrument that looks like a filled/violin.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>8.</b> CAUSE/EFFECT CLUES	The author explains the reason for or the result of the word. Words like “because,” “since,” “therefore,” “thus,” “so,” etc. may signal context clues.

EXAMPLE:

1. Brad wanted to seem polished and dignified **because** he wanted to impress the **aristocrats** at the club.

“Aristocrats” are rich and dignified people.

# Types of Context Clues



## The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>9.</b> EXPERIENCE CLUES	Sometimes a reader knows from experience how people or things act in a given situation. This knowledge provides the clue to a word's meaning.

### EXAMPLE:

1. After Delmy finished searching for her journal, she noticed her room was **disheveled**; her room was totally messy.

Disheveled means lacking order, messy, untidy, unkempt.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>10.</b> ANALYSIS/STRUCTURE CLUE	The parts used to construct a word can be direct clues to meaning. <b>Knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes can aid a reader in using this type of context clue. Learning one word part can add dozens of words to a reader's vocabulary.</b> The power of word parts lies in the ability to combine the roots and affixes with the context in which a word is used to discover the author's meaning.

### EXAMPLE:

1. Noni realized Frankie's voice was incredible after she performed.

The root cred means "to believe," and the prefix in means "not." Therefore, if something is incredible, it is unbelievable.

# Types of Context Clues



The Angry Reader Series

There are many ways to analyze and understand text. Through these ways, we become savvier at comprehension and responding to the things that we hear and read.

TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>11.</b> INFERENCE CLUES	Sufficient clues might be available for the careful reader to make an educated guess at the meaning.

EXAMPLE:

1. Yani was louder than usual, pouting and whirling his hands around. He tasted the meal and faked a gag and a puke. That's when Mrs. Juarez said he was being **melodramatic**.

Melodramatic means overly emotional and over-acting.