

Playing out Use of Context Clues with a Range of Examples

Examples of text	Tips for teaching
<p>Unfamiliar words are <u>underlined</u>. Context clues are <i>italicized</i>.</p>	<p>Sample think-aloud language is <i>italicized</i>. Notes to teacher are in regular text. Target words are bolded.</p>
<p>Ana is a <u>friendly</u> person. She <i>says hi to other kids</i>. She <i>invites them to play with her</i>.</p>	<p>Helpful clue: Using a known root (morpheme) <i>Hmmm, I see the word friend in friendly. Friendly might have something to do with being a friend. I'll keep reading to see if that's right. Oh, the next two sentences give examples of how Ana is a friendly person. I think friendly means treating people like friends.</i></p>
<p>The little red hen was <u>aggravated</u> <i>because no one would help her</i>.</p>	<p>Helpful clue: Inference using because <i>Aggravated is an unusual word. Seeing because in the sentence is a clue that an explanation is coming. How would you feel if no one was helping you? Yes, you might feel mad (upset, annoyed, irritated). So what do you think aggravated means? Right, it means to be upset, annoyed, or irritated, etc.</i></p>
<p>Both bats and owls are <u>nocturnal</u> and <i>hunt at night</i>.</p>	<p>Helpful clues: Explanation and use of cognate (root) <i>They are nocturnal and hunt at night. Nocturnal probably means active at night. Since I know Spanish, I can see that the first part of the word, noc-, is also in noche. That makes sense.</i></p>
<p><u>Mammals</u>, <i>such as bats, cats, and horses</i>, give birth to live young.</p>	<p>Helpful clue: Examples <i>Sometimes an author gives us examples that help us understand what a word means. They might use such as or for example.</i></p>
<p><u>Unlike mammals</u>, birds hatch from eggs that incubate outside the body.</p>	<p>Helpful clue: Contrast <i>It says unlike mammals, so I know how birds are born is different from how mammals are born. Look for other clues to show differences as you read – phrases like in contrast or as opposed to.</i></p>
<p>In 1957, some schools were <u>segregated</u>. Black and white children went to <i>separate schools</i>.</p>	<p>Helpful clues: Synonym and restating in other words <i>I wonder what segregated means? The next sentence explains that segregated means separate schools for black and white children.</i></p>
<p>Over many years, <u>glaciers</u>, <i>slowly moving rivers of ice</i>, formed in the polar regions.</p> <p>Second reading, with appositive definition removed: Over many years, glaciers formed in the polar regions.</p>	<p>Helpful clues: Definition and rereading without appositive <i>This sentence has a lot of information. First, I have to figure out what glaciers are. Ah, the author defined it between the commas in the middle of the sentence. Point out the appositive phrase.</i> <i>Now that I know what glaciers are, I can reread the sentence – let's read it without the definition so I can focus on the rest of the information. I see. Glaciers took a long time to form and formed at the poles (polar regions). Refer to a map for clarity.</i></p>
<p>According to the botanist, <u>poaching</u> is the greatest threat to deserts. Because cactuses grow very slowly, <i>when a poacher steals a cactus</i>, it takes years to replace it.</p>	<p>Helpful clue: Inference from action <i>We talked about botanists so I know they study plants. But what is poaching? How does poaching hurt deserts? I am going to read on. Oh, now I see when a poacher steals a cactus. I can infer that poachers steal things. And because cactuses grow slowly, they don't just grow back right away, so I see how poaching them hurts deserts.</i></p>
<p><u>Tía</u> <i>is the word for aunt</i> in Spanish, right mami?" Juanita asks. When their mother's back is turned, Juanita <u>beams</u> Miguel a know-it-all <i>smile</i>.</p> <p>– Julia Alvarez, <i>How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay</i></p>	<p>Helpful clues: Definition and synonym This paragraph from the opening of the book has two great context clues to point out to students. <i>The character, Juanita, tells what tía means. She defines it for us. I wonder what Juanita does when she beams at Miguel. It's a know-it-all smile. So when you beam at someone, you smile at them. Though her smile is more ha! than friendly, isn't it?</i></p>
<p>Mami blinks back tears. She stands up quickly and leaves the room. "You made Mami cry!" Juanita <u>blubbers</u> <i>tearfully</i> and follows their mother out of the room.</p> <p>– Julia Alvarez, <i>How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay</i></p>	<p>Helpful clues: Morpheme and syntax <i>I know Mami is upset. But what does it mean that she blubbers? The next word is tearfully. I see a word I know: tear. So tear + fully means full of tears. And blubbers has to be a verb because it tells us what Juanita is doing. Blubbers must be a way of talking while you're crying.</i></p>
<p>They were extraordinarily beautiful, and there was a <i>strange brightness about them</i>, a sort of <u>luminous</u> quality that made them <i>glow and sparkle</i> in the most wonderful way.</p> <p>– Roald Dahl, <i>James and the Giant Peach</i></p>	<p>Helpful clue: Infer from description before and after word <i>Luminous is an uncommon word. Luminous quality. Seeing the phrase that made them is a clue: glow and sparkle. As I reread the whole sentence, I notice the phrase strange brightness about them. I'm getting a picture of luminous as bright, glowing, sparkling – and beautiful.</i></p>
<p>Each time the tips of his fingers were just about to touch (one of the tiny green things), they <u>vanished</u> into the earth! And soon, in the space of only a few seconds, <i>every single one of them had gone!</i></p> <p>– Roald Dahl, <i>James and the Giant Peach</i></p>	<p>Helpful clues: Keep reading and restate in other words <i>I have heard the word vanished, but I'm not sure what it means. I'm going to keep reading to see if there's a clue in the next sentence. What happened to the tiny green things? In a few seconds, every single one of them had gone. So vanished means disappeared.</i></p>