

LESSON PLAN	
Lesson Length: 50 minutes	Course: Words That Work Lesson: Unit 4, Lesson 3: Using Context Clues
LESSON AIMS Main: - Students will build reading comprehension skills by decoding words in context. Subsidiary: - Students will understand that dictionaries/search engines provide answers, but do not build skills. - Students will become familiar with vocabulary that might be used in the workplace.	
Outcomes for Students: Students will gain confidence and competence in the power of their reasoning abilities.	
Anticipated Problems: - Students may rely on prior knowledge rather than examining the context clues provided. - Students may guess about words' meanings, as opposed to examining the context around them. - Students may become frustrated and may look to Teacher for 'answers.' Solutions: - Teacher will support students in analyzing text, asking plenty of questions to guide inquiry. - Teacher will remind students that lesson is not about how many words they know, but about whether they can explain how context <i>facilitates</i> an understanding of the words in question. - If students are guessing without examining context clues, Teacher will challenge students to articulate how they arrived at the guess is supported by <i>the context provided</i>.	
Materials: <i>Using Context Clues</i> (Handout)	
TIME & AIM	PROCEDURE Material in quotation marks is offered as a sample script which Teacher might use to punctuate discussion. Teacher should avoid lecturing; if reading verbatim from the handout, infuse frequent pauses to check for understanding. Be sure to promote discussion as much as possible, and use the resulting student insights to guide instruction.

Time: 2 minutes Aim: Introduce the distinction between using context clues and the way that vocabulary is typically taught.	<u>INTRODUCTION:</u> • “Many of us remember being in school and receiving lists of vocabulary words to look up in the dictionary.” • “Today we’re also going to get familiar with some words you might not know...but we won’t be looking them up.”
Time: 6 minutes Aim: Foster discussion to promote reasoning and critical thinking.	<u>DISCUSSION:</u> Q: “How will we define unfamiliar words without looking them up?” A: “With context clues—using what we KNOW to help make sense of what we DON’T KNOW.” • “The words <i>around</i> the unfamiliar word offer clues about their context.” • “Context clues won’t always lead us to a clear definition, but at minimum they’ll help us rule out definitions that don’t make sense.” Q: “When a word is unfamiliar, are we more likely to remember its meaning if someone else does the work to figure it out (as with a dictionary), or if we do the work?” A: “Our own words are usually more memorable to us—and make more sense to us—than someone else’s. That’s part of why we’re avoiding dictionaries today.” • “The other reason for avoiding dictionaries is that it forces us to build knowledge ourselves rather than relying on someone else’s knowledge.”
Time: 8 minutes Aim: Formally define context clues and establish the value of using them.	• Distribute <i>Using Context Clues</i> (Handout) • Have each student volunteer each read a paragraph on first page. • Check for understanding before moving on.
Time: 32 minutes	USING CONTEXT CLUES • If students default to using prior knowledge, remind them that

Aim: Use context clues to determine the meaning of key words.	this lesson is about exercising reasoning skills, not about testing prior knowledge. • For ‘useful context clues,’ students should write down any words, phrases or ideas from the text that seem important to the word in question. If students are unclear about what to write, Teacher should encourage them to ‘connect the dots’—to break down what the context might be trying to telling us about the vocabulary word in question. • Complete at least the first two examples as a class. If student comprehension permits, assign students to complete the rest in pairs and then share back with the class.
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LESSON/HANDOUT FOLLOWS BELOW...

USING CONTEXT CLUES

CONTEXT CLUES are hints that can help careful readers to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases. The word “context” means *surroundings*, so to use context clues is to examine the surroundings of whatever is unfamiliar. We take information found in the surroundings, and use it to make an educated guess about the word or phrase in question.

Using context clues doesn’t always lead us to a perfect dictionary definition of an unfamiliar word. Even so, using context clues has two huge benefits:

- 1) **It forces us to think**—and the brain, like a muscle, is strengthened by repeated practice. When our first stop for unfamiliar words is always Google or the dictionary, we’re not exercising our brains very much.
- 2) **It reframes how we think about vocabulary: not as set knowledge, but as a skill.** Many people think that having a big vocabulary is about memorizing words. In fact, it’s more about being willing to wrestle with context clues.

PRACTICE WITH CONTEXT CLUES

Each example below contains a word that might be challenging. If you already know its meaning, try your best to place that knowledge aside. Instead, use the context clues—the other information in the sentence—to establish a definition of the challenging word.

PERTINENT

*“We have limited time for our meeting about timesheets,” said the manager. “While I know you each have several concerns, please raise only the most **pertinent** ones today.”*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

CANDID

*When with coworkers, Alex claimed to agree with his boss's new policy. When with friends, however, Alex offered his **candid** opinion that the policy would decrease sales.*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

LUCRATIVE

*Miles believed that the business would gain new customers by distributing fliers; however, Jane's research showed that online advertising would be more **lucrative**.*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

ASCERTAIN

*Since there was no surveillance camera near the restaurant refrigerator, and no one would admit to having left it open, we couldn't **ascertain** who caused the food spoilage.*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

INCENTIVE

*Once the company created an **incentive** through which employees could receive time off for increased productivity, many people began to work harder.*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

PROHIBITIVE

*"I wish I could offer health insurance to my employees' spouses," said Ms. Yardley, "but the cost is **prohibitive** for me as a small-business owner."*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

DISCRETION

*The employee manual states that merchandise “may be returned for a full refund within 30 days of purchase.” However, customers whose 30 days have passed would be pleased to know that “At the store manager’s **discretion**, returns beyond this period may still be accepted.”*

Useful context clues (in your own words, interpretations you can make):

Definition:

ANSWER KEY ON NEXT PAGE...

TEACHER'S ANSWER KEY

PERTINENT

*"We have limited time for our meeting about timesheets," said the manager. "While I know you each have several concerns, please raise only the most **pertinent** ones today."*

Useful context clues:

The manager asked that only certain concerns be raised. There's not enough time for all concerns. We can assume that the manager wants important ones prioritized.

Definition:

Relevant; related

CANDID

*When with coworkers, Alex claimed to agree with his boss's new policy. When with friends, however, Alex offered his **candid** opinion that the policy would decrease sales.*

Useful context clues:

Alex offered one opinion with his coworkers, and another when with his friends. We can infer that he felt safer telling his friends his true opinion, but might've been worried about telling his coworkers his true opinion in case it found its way to his boss.

Definition:

Straightforward; honest

LUCRATIVE

*Miles believed that the business would gain new customers by distributing fliers; however, Jane's research showed that online advertising would be more **lucrative**.*

Useful context clues:

Miles and Jane disagree over the best method for gaining new customers. The purpose of gaining new customers is to increase profits.

Definition:

Profitable; moneymaking

ASCERTAIN

*Since there was no surveillance camera near the restaurant refrigerator, and no one would admit to having left it open, we couldn't **ascertain** who caused the food spoilage.*

Useful context clues:

No one knows who left the fridge open. Since someone is responsible for the food spoilage, the people in this scenario are trying to figure out who it is.

Definition:

To determine or figure out

INCENTIVE

*Once the company created an **incentive** through which employees could receive time off for increased productivity, many people began to work harder.*

Useful context clues:

The company agreed that employees with increased productivity could receive time off. Time off is what motivated employees to work hard.

Definition:

Something that promotes action or increases effort

PROHIBITIVE

*"I wish I could offer health insurance to my employees' spouses," said Ms. Yardley, "but the cost is **prohibitive** for me as a small-business owner."*

Useful context clues:

Ms. Yardley can't offer the health insurance in question. We can assume that, as a small business owner, she doesn't have the money—that's what prevents her.

Definition:

Preventing or forbidding something

DISCRETION

*The employee manual states that merchandise "may be returned for a full refund within 30 days of purchase." However, customers whose 30 days have passed would be pleased to know that "At the store manager's **discretion**, returns beyond this period may still be accepted."*

Useful context clues:

The manual says that refunds can't be issues beyond the 30-day mark. The last sentence tells us that the manager may be able to grant an exception to this policy. The exception is made if the manager decides that the situation warrants it.

Definition:

Freedom of judgment