

Discovering Meaning from Context: Student Notes

Understanding unfamiliar words or phrases is a key reading skill. By using context clues, you can infer meanings without needing a dictionary every time. This guide summarizes the concept, lists effective techniques, and provides examples.

1. Summary

- **Context clues** are hints found in the surrounding text that help deduce the meaning of unknown words or phrases.
 - Authors often provide definitions, explanations, or examples nearby.
 - Developing this skill improves reading comprehension and vocabulary.
-

2. Techniques for Discovering Meaning from Context

a. Definition or Restatement Clues

- The meaning is directly stated or restated in the sentence.
- **Signal words:** “is,” “means,” “or,” “that is,” “in other words”

b. Synonym Clues

- A similar word is used to clarify the meaning.
- **Signal words:** “like,” “also,” “as,” “similarly”

c. Antonym or Contrast Clues

- An opposite or contrasting idea is presented.
- **Signal words:** “but,” “however,” “unlike,” “on the other hand,” “whereas”

d. Example Clues

- Examples are given to illustrate the meaning.
- **Signal words:** “such as,” “for example,” “including,” “like”

e. Inference Clues

- The meaning is not directly stated but can be inferred from the overall context.
- **Strategy:** Look at the general sense of the paragraph or passage.

3. Examples

a. Definition or Restatement

- “Arboreal animals, that is, animals who live in trees, are common in the rainforest.”
 - **Meaning of ‘arboreal’:** animals who live in trees.

b. Synonym

- “The child was elated, or extremely happy, when she saw her birthday cake.”
 - **Meaning of ‘elated’:** extremely happy.

c. Antonym or Contrast

- “Unlike his gregarious brother, who loves parties, Tim is quite reserved.”
 - **Meaning of ‘gregarious’:** sociable, enjoys being around people.

d. Example

- “Celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars, have fascinated humans for centuries.”
 - **Meaning of ‘celestial bodies’:** objects in the sky (sun, moon, stars).

e. Inference

- “After running the marathon, she was famished and ate three large sandwiches.”
 - **Meaning of ‘famished’:** very hungry (inferred from eating a lot after running).

4. Tips for Practice

- Always read the sentences before and after the unknown word.
- Look for signal words and punctuation (commas, dashes, parentheses).
- Ask yourself: Does the context suggest a positive or negative meaning?
- Practice with varied reading materials to strengthen your skills.

Remember: You won’t always find a direct definition, but with practice, you can become skilled at discovering meanings from context!