



Reading

Clue Words and
Phrases in Context

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Lesson 130

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CR07-4130

To the Student

In Lesson 130, *Clue Words and Phrases in Context*, you will continue learning ways to figure out what unfamiliar words mean by their **context**. Remember, the context of a word or phrase is all the other words and phrases that surround it and affect its meaning. As you develop your ability to find word meanings in this way, you will improve your reading speed, reading comprehension, and reading enjoyment.

You will use your knowledge of **homonyms** in order to understand what a word means in a particular context. You will learn to use example clues to understand unfamiliar words. Finally, you will learn to look for clue words that signal **similarities** or **differences** between words.

In this lesson, you will find numbered parts called Frames. Within these Frames, you will be asked to respond to many questions about word context and word meaning. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper. Then look at the top of the next page in the lesson and check your answers.

If you use the lesson in this way, you will learn how to read words in context and better understand what you read. If you do not understand how to use this lesson, or if you need assistance with certain Frames, ask your Instructor for help.

Now turn the page and begin.

1. In this lesson, you will see how **homonyms**, **examples**, and phrases that show **similarities** and **differences** can help you understand unfamiliar words.

Homonyms are words that sound alike or are spelled alike but have different meanings.

2. You can determine how a word that has multiple meanings is used in a sentence by using the word's context.
-

3. Homonyms include both **homographs** and **homophones**. Homographs are words that are spelled the same but have different meanings. They may or may not be pronounced the same. Another way to think of a homograph is a word that has multiple _____.

For example, the word **bark** can mean both "the skin of a tree" and "the sound made by a dog." Homographs can be confusing without context, the other words that surround it, to give you the meaning of the word.

4. Homophones, on the other hand, are words that sound the same but may be spelled differently. The words **feet** and **feat** are _____. Though homophones sound the same, it is easy to see the difference while reading. The meaning of homographs may be more difficult while reading, because they have the same spelling.
-

5. The words **wait** and **weight** are _____ (homophones / homographs). The words **lead**, meaning a type of metal, and **lead**, meaning to be in charge or command of a group or team are _____.

Homonyms are words that sound the same (homophones) or are spelled the same (homographs). _____ refers to both homophones and homographs.

6. For instance, there are three meanings of the word **sole**.
 - a kind of fish
 - the only one
 - part of a shoe

Now when you see the word **sole**, you know that it has three different _____.

answers to previous page

3. meanings
4. homophones
5. homophones; homographs; Homonyms
6. meanings

7. Look at the following sentence:

The shoe repair worker replaced the leather **sole** with a nylon one.

You can find the meaning of a particular use of the word **sole** by substituting all three possible definitions in the sentence.

Since “the only one” and “a kind of fish” do not make sense when substituted for **sole**, **sole** must mean _____.

8. Look at these two sentences that use the word **sole**:

- A** Vivian was the **sole** officer to speak out against handgun laws.
B The restaurant on Main Street serves broiled **sole**.

In Sentence **A**, sole means _____.

In Sentence **B**, sole means _____.

9. Every word that is used in a sentence has a context. The **context** of a word is the rest of the sentence. The rest of the sentence gives information about what that word might mean.

10. The context of the word “sole” in Sentence B of Frame 8 tells you sole must be something to eat. You would not expect shoe parts to be served at a restaurant on Main Street. And you would not eat broiled “only.”

answers to previous page

- 7. part of a shoe
- 8. the only one; a kind of fish

11. The _____ for a word is made up of all the words that surround it.

12. Here are three meanings of **grade**:

- score earned on a test or in a course at school
- slope or incline, like that of a hill
- to classify or rank

You can determine which meaning applies to a word in a sentence by **substituting all of the possible definitions**.

13. Look at this sentence:

After a brief rest in the meadow, they continued to climb the steep **grade**.

In the sentence above, **grade** means _____.

14. Look at these sentences:

- A** They were learning how to **grade** eggs by holding them up to the light and looking for cracks, thin shells, or other problems with the shells.
- B** Sam was disappointed with his **grade** in history this past semester.

In Sentence **A**, grade means _____.

In Sentence **B**, grade means _____.

answers to previous page

- 11. context
- 13. slope or incline
- 14. classify; score earned in a course or class

15. Here are three meanings for the word **fair**:

- mild or favorable weather
- a group of exhibits, games, and carnival rides
- just and honest

16. You can determine which meaning applies to such words by **substituting all of the possible definitions**.

Look at this sentence:

Most of the audience thought the judge's decision was **fair**.

In the sentence above, fair means _____.

17. Here are two more ways a writer might use the word fair:

- A** Aunt Irma won a huge stuffed animal at the county **fair**.
- B** The evening weather report predicted **fair** weather all weekend.

In Sentence **A**, fair means _____.

In Sentence **B**, fair means _____.

answers to previous page

- 16. just and honest
- 17. group of exhibits, games and rides;
mild or favorable weather

-
18. The word **game** has several meanings. You might use a deck of cards to play a game of poker in the evenings. Or you might be a hunter and like to go hunting for wild game. If you're game enough, you might be willing to dance all night and go to work the next morning!

You can see that game has three very different meanings. In order to understand which meaning of game is intended, you must look closely at the word's _____.

-
19. For this and the following frames, select the meaning that best fits the use of the **boldfaced** word. _____

Mary Jo had to **face** the fact that she would need to learn special skills to operate heavy machinery.

Note that each choice below represents a possible definition for the word face.

- A position toward
- B surface
- C accept or acknowledge
- D front of the head

-
20. It did not take long to **train** the dog to bark on command. _____

Each choice below represents a possible definition for the word train.

- A railway cars, hooked together
- B to educate, instruct, or teach
- C to aim an object
- D to direct the growth of a plant

answers to previous page

- 18. context
- 19. **C**
- 20. **B**

21. Juanita forgot to **bolt** the door, and a blast of wind blew it open. _____

- A** to run away quickly
- B** to fasten shut or lock with a sliding bar
- C** to swallow or eat hurriedly
- D** a roll of cloth

22. Roy Earl waited for Jimmy on the west **bank** of the Sunny River. _____

- A** a financial institution
- B** to bounce off a corner or edge toward a goal or target (as in pool or basketball)
- C** the edge of a body of water
- D** to follow a curve or incline

23. Before Bob could leave, he had to **file** the papers on his desk. _____

- A** to put in a particular order in a filing cabinet
- B** to grind with a metal tool
- C** to move in a line
- D** a tool used to grind

24. Sometimes you may need to read an entire paragraph or passage and look for context clues about an unfamiliar word.

All the other words and sentences in a paragraph are called the **general context**. The context gives you helpful information about unfamiliar words.

answers to previous page

- 21. B
- 22. C
- 23. A

25. Look at this passage:

Steve was lonely. He had not made friends with any of his new coworkers. The people he had met in his new neighborhood were unfriendly. He was among 7 million people in the city, but he felt **alienated**.

Even if the sentence that includes the word **alienated** does not tell you what the word means, the surrounding sentences provide a **general context**.

Read the passage again and complete the following sentences. The words that fit the blanks below are general context clues.

Steve was _____.

The people were _____ in his neighborhood.

He had no _____ at work.

26. Use the clues above to select the best definition for **alienated**. _____

- A crowded
- B from another planet
- C angry with other people
- D isolated from other people

27. You have learned how to use the context of a word to select the best meaning of a word with multiple meanings.

You have learned that sometimes you must look beyond the sentence for context clues. Sometimes you must consider an entire _____.

answers to previous page

25. lonely; unfriendly; friends
26. **D**
27. paragraph or passage
-

28. Sometimes you can learn the meaning of a word by paying attention to any examples a writer may give.

Here are some clue words that often introduce a specific **example**:

- **like**
 - **for example**
 - **such as**
 - **for instance**
 - **especially**
-

29. These clue words tell you to look carefully at any details that follow. Details following these clue words will help explain the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
-

30. Look at this sentence:

Ms. Rancoir's remarks were frequently **caustic**. For example, she told Daisy, "That shirt looks like you slept in it last night!"

The part in quotation marks helps define **caustic**. The writer is giving an example of a caustic remark. You can tell that caustic remarks are _____ (compliments / harsh statements).

31. That's right, caustic remarks are harsh statements or bitter, mean comments. They might hurt someone. The word "caustic" is commonly used to describe chemicals that can burn or harm your skin or eyes.

answers to previous page

30. harsh statements

32. In Frame 30, the clue phrase “for example” signaled that an example would follow. Often a writer will supply an example to clarify, or make clear, any unfamiliar words.
-

33. Look at the sentence below:

The bass guitar was barely **audible** over the other instruments, especially when the drums were pounding at maximum volume.

What clue word signals that an example will follow? _____

34. What follows the word “especially” is a **reason** the bass guitar was barely audible. It is an example of why the bass guitar was barely audible. The example tells you that the word audible has something to do with noise or volume.
-

35. If the bass guitar is barely audible, then it is barely _____ (heard / usable).

answers to previous page

- 33. especially
- 35. heard

36. For this and the following frames, select the definition that best fits the meaning of the **boldfaced** word. _____

Some snakes kill their prey by **constriction**. For instance, the anaconda snake coils itself tightly around small animals and strangles them.

- A squeezing
- B biting
- C poisoning
- D harmless venom

37. Certain **canine** breeds, such as pit bulls, Doberman pinschers, and German shepherds, may be more aggressive than other breeds. _____

- A of or relating to animals
- B of or relating to dogs
- C of or relating to pets
- D of or relating to cats

38. An applicant's **demeanor**—like her calm actions, pleasant expressions, and sensible remarks—often will be the reason she gets a job. _____

- A bad temper
- B confidence
- C work experience
- D overall manner or behavior

answers to previous page

- 36. **A**
- 37. **B**
- 38. **D**

-
39. Now let's look at another example. Remember to look at the clue words and the details that follow them.

Many people have one or more **phobias**. For instance, some people are afraid of high or open places. They might refuse to live on the seventh story of an apartment building or go hiking in the mountains. Others might avoid enclosed spaces—such as cars, elevators, or closets—because they are very frightened in these small, closed spaces. Still other people fear specific animals like spiders, dogs, cats, or snakes.

Mr. Whitley, a counselor I once knew, was terribly afraid of cats. One day a student brought a stray kitten into Mr. Whitley's office. The counselor started shaking, raced for the nearest door, and yelled, "Get that cat out of here, now!"

What are the signal words or phrases in the passage above that indicate examples will follow? _____

-
40. The first signal phrase is **for instance**. It is in the second sentence of the paragraph in Frame 39. It shows you that an example of phobias will follow.

What word in the second sentence gives you an idea of what a phobia is? _____

Do most people refuse to live on the seventh floor of an apartment building?

Do most people refuse to get in cars or elevators? _____

answers to previous page

- 39. for instance, such as, like
- 40. afraid, no, no

41. According to the passage in frame 39, People with **phobias** have fears that are _____ (more/less) severe than most people.

42. You can figure out that a phobia is a strong _____, greater than the fears that most people have.

43. Now try another one:

Farmers in America are **plagued** by many difficulties. For instance, they often have to buy and maintain expensive machinery in order to farm their land effectively. Another problem is insects. Many insects, such as the fruit fly and the gypsy moth, have become practically immune to common insecticides. Also, much of the land farmers are using today is less productive due to harmful effects of artificial fertilizers. Taxes are high. Work hours are long. It is no wonder that farmers are closing their farms and selling the land off to developers.

Make a list of the difficulties farmers are faced with:

44. In the passage above, the word **plagued** means _____ (sick with illness / troubled by).

answers to previous page

- 41. more
- 42. fear
- 43. expensive machinery, insects,
less productive land due to artificial fertilizers,
high taxes, long work hours
- 44. troubled by

45. You can see that examples are usually easy to spot. They are usually introduced by clue words or phrases like “such as” or “for example.”

46. There are other ways that a writer can help you understand an unfamiliar word. Writers use contrast clues to show differences. The following contrast clues show that one thing is different from (can be contrasted with) another:

- while
- rather than
- however
- instead of
- but
- alternatively
- yet
- although
- whereas
- unlike
- on the other hand
- as opposed to

47. Look at this sentence:

Janis feels disdain, rather than admiration, for her congressman.

Even if you are unfamiliar with the word disdain, you can see that it means the opposite of admiration. It is the phrase “rather than” that tells you that disdain is different from (in contrast with) _____.

48. Therefore, disdain means _____ (scorn / approval).

answers to previous page

- 47. admiration
- 48. scorn

-
49. Even if you didn't know the meaning of **scorn** or **disdain**, you could figure out that the correct definition was **not** approval.

Approval is not the opposite of admiration, and the clue words **rather than** signal an opposite meaning. Scorn and disdain mean dislike.

-
50. Try one more:

Although he was usually **punctual**, Ed was almost two hours late this morning.

What clue word tells you punctual is the opposite of being late? _____

-
51. So, **punctual** means _____.

- a. ready
- b. slightly late
- c. on time
- d. wanting to fight

-
52. In the following three sentences, identify the clue words or phrases that tell you the **boldfaced** word is opposite another word in the sentence.

- a. The local motel had no **vacancies**, but the hotel chain had several rooms open.
- b. My sister is **timid**, whereas I am bold.
- c. Instead of keeping busy, Mark often gives in to **indolence**.

The clue words or phrases used above are _____, _____, and _____.

answers to previous page

50. although
51. C
52. but, whereas, instead of
-

53. Let's examine another contrast clue.

Unlike Angela, who is very proud and boastful, Janet is very **humble**.

The signal word used to show difference is _____.

54. Here is what we know about Angela and Janet:

Angela is not like Janet (She is **unlike** Janet in at least one way).

Angela is very _____.

Janet, then is not very _____.

Therefore, **humble** means not _____.

55. Try another one:

Instead of **procrastinating**, Samuel went straight to his task.

The contrast clue is _____.

56. Here are the facts about Samuel:

Samuel went _____ to his task.

He was not _____.

Therefore, **procrastinating** means _____ (putting off work/getting right to work).

answers to previous page

- 53. unlike
- 54. proud and boastful; proud and boastful; proud and boastful
- 55. instead of
- 56. straight; procrastinating; putting off work

57. You can see how easy it is to understand an unfamiliar word if you can identify and understand contrast clues. Review the contrast clues writers commonly use:

- while
- rather than
- however
- instead of
- but
- alternatively
- yet
- although
- whereas
- unlike
- on the other hand
- as opposed to

58. The clues above signal that two words or phrases mean _____ (something different / something similar).

Look at the following example clues:

- like
- such as
- especially
- for example
- for instance

The clues above signal that an unfamiliar word will be made clearer by an example.

59. ***Especially*** is (a contrast/an example) _____ clue.
For instance is (a contrast/an example) _____ clue.
Instead of is (a contrast/an example) _____ clue.
Such as is (a contrast/an example) _____ clue.

answers to previous page

- 58. something different
- 59. an example
an example
a contrast
an example

-
60. For this and the following frames, select the definition that best fits the meaning of the **boldfaced** word.

Many religions stress that instead of showing **malice** toward those who hurt us, we should show love. _____

- A stupidity
- B intent to harm; ill will
- C thankfulness
- D superiority

-
61. The flowers she planted in 1965 were all **perennials**. For instance, the gloriosa daisies and the bed of peonies still bloom every year. _____

- A temporary plants
- B beautiful plants
- C plants able to return year after year for many years
- D plants able grow indoors

-
62. Ernesto was **renowned** at school for his strength and good looks; however, it was the unfamiliar Mario who captured Tena's heart. _____

- A well-known
- B admired
- C rich
- D unknown

answers to previous page

- 60. **B**
- 61. **C**
- 62. **A**

63. Sabina was **attentive** to the ideas presented in the lecture on the rainforest. But Blair, who was sitting right next to her, was looking around the room, twiddling her thumbs, and shifting in her seat. Blair was disinterested and wanted to go get a burger.

- _____
- A** restless, energetic
 - B** bored, tired
 - C** disgusted
 - D** interested, observant, or considerate

64. Marguerita had been **coerced** into taking part in the play. Esteban, on the other hand, was more than willing to play the role of Tom Sawyer. _____

- A** forced
- B** anxious
- C** indifferent to
- D** afraid of

65. Ronald was well-known for his **agility**; whereas, his twin brother, Roland, was known to be slow and clumsy. _____

- A** awkwardness
- B** gentlemanly conduct
- C** ability to make money easily
- D** ability to move quickly and easily

answers to previous page

63. D
64. A
65. D

-
66. Now that you recognize some common contrast clues and example clues, look at some comparison clues. Comparison clues are words used to show similarities between things.

The following comparison clues signal that words in a sentence are similar:

- like
- likewise
- similarly
- both
- in a similar way
- in the same way

-
67. Here is a passage that shows similarity between an unfamiliar word and a word you know:

Like the waterfall at Niagara, the cascade of water deep in the Amazon Basin is a sight to see.

The cascade of water and the waterfall are similar. Using the comparison word “like,” you can figure out that a cascade must be another word for waterfall.

-
68. The word like shows you that the two words, *waterfall* and *cascade* are similar. They both describe rushing or falling water.

-
69. Try another one:

Juanita is obstinate. Likewise, Rosa is too stubborn to listen to anyone else.

You can see that obstinate means _____ (stubborn / unable to listen).

answers to previous page

69. stubborn

70. For this and the following frames, select the definition that best fits the meaning of the **boldfaced** word. _____

After they won medals at the first track meet, Ed and Joe became very **arrogant**. Both behaved as if they were too good to practice with the rest of the team.

- A extremely proud; acting superior to others
 - B very happy
 - C very tired
 - D ashamed
-

71. The **putrid** odor of the burning plastics was similar to a horrible stink I remember from my childhood. We lived near a factory that produced teething rings for babies. The plastic must have been melted to be formed into teething rings. _____

- A smoky
 - B very unpleasant
 - C pleasing
 - D flowery
-

72. The common mockingbird is a **raucous** creature. Like the mockingbird, the exotic myna bird makes frequent, noisy screeches. _____

- A ordinary or common
- B brilliantly colored
- C characterized by loud, harsh noise
- D quiet and dignified

answers to previous page

- 70. **A**
- 71. **B**
- 72. **C**

-
73. Use the context of the entire paragraph to select the best word to complete the sentence.

Seat belts have saved more drivers than any other improvement in car design. Seat belts should fit correctly for a driver's safety and comfort. The lap belt should be drawn snugly across the hip bones (never across the abdomen or soft part of the stomach). The shoulder belt should have just enough _____ to let the driver reach the important controls. The shoulder belt is fitting correctly if there is enough room for a fist between the driver's breastbone and the belt. People should always use seat belts, even when driving at slow speeds or for short distances.

Which of the following words should fill the blank above?

- A** slack
- B** strength
- C** position
- D** equipment

answers to previous page

73. A

74. Try another one:

In 1990, nearly 12.2 billion dollars was distributed to young Americans to help them with the growing costs of _____ a college education. These government funds—in the form of grants, loans, and work-study jobs—made getting a college degree possible for millions of Americans. Most states now have special offices that assist students and their parents in applying for these funds.

Which of the following words should fill the blank above?

- A submitting
 - B producing
 - C acquiring
 - D recommending
-

75. Read this paragraph, which is from a short story:

They saw the deer twice that day. Jim's brother knew by the size of the animal that it was the same buck. The shot Jim took was perfect. Later, under cover of night, he carried it out. The blood had _____, so he knew it wouldn't leave a trail. He slit the stomach and down the inside of the front legs so that he could slip his arms between the hide and flesh and carry the deer out on his back. He called this a "deer backpack."

Which of the following words should fill the blank above?

- A dripped
- B clotted
- C changed
- D disappeared



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