

Cloze Passage

Wisconsin State Standards Strand

Language

- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Grade Level
6-12

Purpose

Use with students to support vocabulary development: explicitly teach them how to use context clues to learn new words

When to Use

During Reading
After Reading

Grouping

Whole Group
Small Group

ABOUT THE STRATEGY

A CLOZE PASSAGE is a contextual analysis strategy that helps students learn to predict and verify word meaning of unfamiliar words or familiar words that have new/unusual meanings by searching for clues in nearby words, sentences, and paragraphs of a text. It is used before reading a text. Specific context clues that should be explicitly taught are definition/explanation, synonym/restatement, antonym/contrast, inference/general, and punctuation in context. Learning to use context clues is a skill that develops over time with students practicing this skill with multiple print and digital texts in diverse media, formats, and lengths.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

- Select a self-contained passage of text that contains unfamiliar words (or familiar words that have new/unusual meanings) in a length appropriate for students' grade level.
- Leave the first and last sentences and all punctuation intact.
- Carefully select the words for omission. You can omit specific words or use a word-count formula, such as every fifth word or other criteria.
- When preparing the final draft of the passage, make all blanks of equal length to avoid including visual clues about the lengths of omitted words.
- Establish the purpose of using a cloze passage.
- Provide students with the passage and have students read the entire passage before they fill in the blanks. Scaffold as needed.
- Have students predict the meaning from the clues around the blank, encouraging them to fill each blank if possible. Scaffold as needed.
- Have students reread the completed passage to verify that the words they chose make sense in the passage. Scaffold as needed.
- Provide students with omitted words and discuss the meanings of the omitted words with the words students selected. Scaffold as needed.

MEASURING PROGRESS

- Teacher observation
- Conferencing
- Student journaling
- Cloze passage as informal assessment

RESEARCH

- Carnine, D., Kameenui, E. J., & Coyne, G. (1984). Utilization of contextual information in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. *Reading Research Quarterly, 19*(2), 188-204.
- Fukkink, R. G., & de Glopper, K. (1998). Effects of instruction in deriving word meaning from context: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 68*, 450-469.
- Nash, H., & Snowling, M. (2006). Teaching new words to children with poor existing vocabulary knowledge: A controlled evaluation of the definition and context methods. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders, 41*, 335-354.

Context Clues

Contextual analysis helps students learn to predict and verify word meaning of unfamiliar words or familiar words that have new/unusual meanings. Students search for clues in nearby words, sentences, and paragraphs of a text. Specific context clues that should be explicitly taught are definition/explanation, synonym/restatement, antonym/contrast, inference/general, and punctuation in context. Learning to use context clues is a skill that develops over time with students practicing this skill with multiple print and digital texts in diverse media, formats, and lengths.

Type of Clue	Example of Clue
Definition/Explanation	Access to clean water would ameliorate, and improve upon, living conditions within the village.
Synonym/Restatement	Access to clean water would ameliorate living conditions within the village such that life would be tolerable for the people who live there.
Antonym/Contrast	Access to clean water would ameliorate living conditions within the village whereas continued reliance on a polluted river will exacerbate a bad situation.
Inference/General Context	Access to clean water would ameliorate living conditions within the village. Clean water would make life tolerable as residents could focus on other pressing needs such as finding food and shelter.
Punctuation	Access to clean water would ameliorate--make tolerable--living conditions within the village.

Context Clues

Print out text excerpts from a text. Cover the words with Post-It notes to play "Guess the Covered Word." Students guess the covered word and explain which "clues" were in the sentence that helped them.

1. "Meeting Harris would never have happened were it not for liberal quantities of Schlitz and Four Roses. For nearly all of my remembered childhood there was an open bottle of Schlitz on a table. My parents drank Four Roses professionally from jelly jars – neat, without diluting ice, water, or mix.

They were, consequently, vegetables most of the time – although the term vegetable connotes a feeling of calm that did not exist. They went through three phases of drunkenness: buzzed (happy), drunk (means as snakes), and finally, _____ (Four Roses coma)" (1).

2. "By this time I had figured Harris was pretty much _____; it didn't seem that anything could harm him. But he was clearly concerned and I felt his uncertainty infect me. The hair went up on my neck. 'Don't see who?'" (27).

3. "Milking lasted perhaps two hours but it seemed a lifetime, an endless _____ of foamy-topped milk, a tidal wave of milk" (33).

4. "The effect was cataclysmic. Pig dung and mud went thirty feet in the air in a spray that seemed to block the sun and I learned – along with the fact that I had made a terrible mistake – something about basic physics: a lighter object, say a falling hundred-pound boy, cannot hope to move a heavier object, say a three-hundred-pound sow. Added to that was the realization that a sow covered in mud is too slippery to hang on to, and the final knowledge that the sows only seemed _____ and were up and ready to do battle with any and all forces in less than a second" (40).

5. "The time of summer ended suddenly enough. In the fields along the driveway there was a forty-acre piece in corn. It was _____, - or field corn – as opposed to sweet corn – and meant to feed the milk cows in the winter and grew to truly gigantic proportions" (149).

Excerpts from Paulsen, G. (1993). *Harris and me*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.