

# Contextual Redefinition

## Wisconsin State Standards Strand

Language

- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

**Grade Level**  
K-5

### Purpose

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

### When to Use

Before Reading  
During Reading  
After Reading

### Grouping

Whole Group  
Small Group  
Partners  
Individuals

## ABOUT THE STRATEGY

CONTEXTUAL REDEFINITION 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, during, and after reading a text. Specific context clues that should be explicitly taught are definition/explanation, synonym/restatement, antonym/contrast, inference/general, and punctuation 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.
- Select unfamiliar or familiar words that have new/unusual meanings (<10) and list them on a fillable table.
- Establish the purpose of using contextual redefinition.
- Provide students with the fillable table with the words listed.
- Have them predict the meaning of the words from schema and word parts without the context. Scaffold as needed.
- Provide students with the passage and have students read the passage to revise their definitions of the words with context. Scaffold as needed.
- Have students determine the types of clues that helped them understand the meaning of the words.

## MEASURING PROGRESS

- Teacher observation
- Conferencing
- Student journaling

## RESEARCH

- Carnine, D., Kameenui, E. J., & Coyne, G. (1984). Utilization of contextual information in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. *Reading Research Quarterly, 19*, 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 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.

