

Lesson: Uses context clues to discern meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary in text
Fourth Grade Objective: 1.031 enrichment

Lesson

1. Good readers often come across words while reading that are unfamiliar. What makes them good readers is that they know how to use several strategies to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words, rather than just guessing. One strategy to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word is to use context clues.
2. Context clues are words around an unfamiliar word. They give important clues about what the word means.
3. In this lesson we are going to use context clues to help us understand unfamiliar words in sentences. First we need the article we will read. You need access to the internet. Once you access the internet, follow these steps:
 - Go to www.timeforkids.com
 - Click on Grades 4-6
 - Click on Past Issues
 - Select April 4, 2008
 - Select Cover Story “A Brighter Future”
4. Read through this article.
5. Let’s look at a sentence in the first paragraph. It reads: *Little kids were wrapped in cloth on their mothers’ backs, or running around in bare feet and **tattered** clothing.* I’m going to try using context clues to help me figure out the meaning of the word **tattered**. I know this article is about poverty and beside the word **tattered** I see clothes. So I think it must be an adjective to describe the clothes. I also see the words *bare feet*. I realize that they probably do not have the money to buy shoes. So if they don’t have the money to buy shoes, they must also not have the money to buy new clothes. I think their clothes are probably really worn and may be torn for excessive use. So I think the word **tattered** means worn or torn.
6. Let’s look at the first paragraph under the heading **Water, Fertilizer, Knowledge**. The second sentence reads: *Their crops were **withering** because they could not afford the necessary fertilizer and irrigation.* I’m going to try using context clues to help me figure out the meaning of the word **withering**. Around the word **withering** are the words *Their crops were*. I know **withering** is used to describe their crops. At the end of the sentence it says their crops were **withering** *because they could not afford the necessary fertilizer and irrigation*. I know that crops need fertilizer and water to grow. If they could not afford these things, then the crops are not growing. If they are not growing, they may be wilting or dying. So I think **withering** means to be wilting or getting weaker.

Try these on your own!

What do the words in bold print mean? Use context clues to help you figure it out!

1. Some kids are needed to help with chores, such as **fetching** water and wood. (from the second paragraph under the heading **Water, Fertilizer, Knowledge**)
2. All of them worked **diligently** with the few supplies they had. (from the second paragraph under the heading **Water, Fertilizer, Knowledge**)

Check your answers

1. fetching - getting
2. diligently - carefully

Try these on your own!

1. Read a book of your choice. Keep a list of unfamiliar words. Use the context clues to find the meaning.
2. Go to www.timeforkids.com and select any issue current or past. Choose an article that is interesting to you to read. Make a list of words that are unfamiliar to you. Use the context clues to find the meaning.