

# Context Clues:

How to Figure Out the Meaning of  
Any Word!



MS. BARNES

# The Great Unknown...



- When you're reading, you often come upon unknown words.
- Do you look them all up in the dictionary?
- Do you ask your teacher?
- Do you just skip them and don't worry about them?

# What are Context Clues?

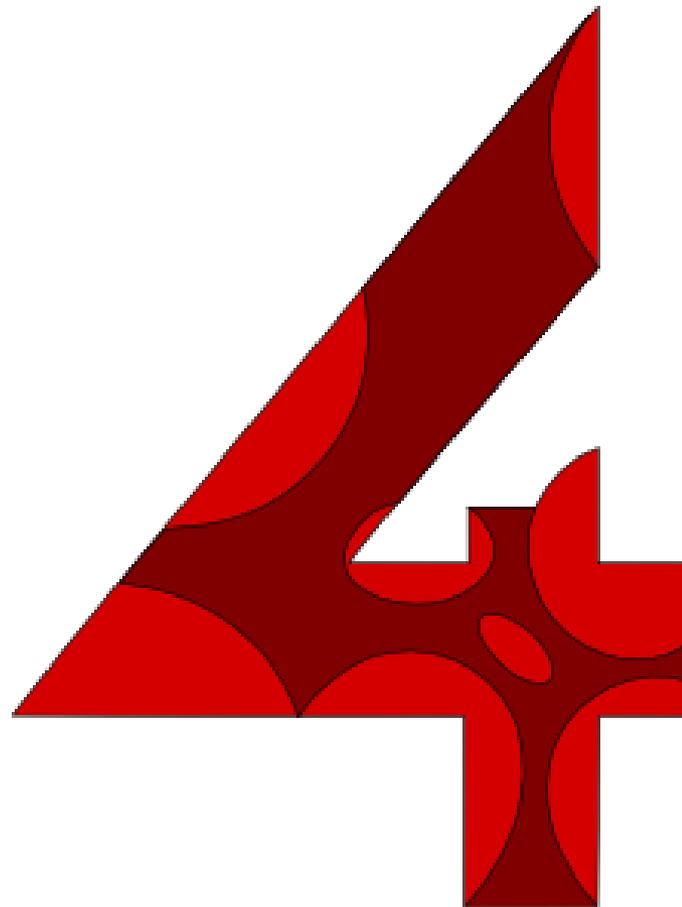


- Words, clauses, and phrases around the unknown vocabulary word.
- These “hints” help you figure out the word’s meaning.
- Don’t have to memorize all the words in the dictionary!

# An Example...



- The **acerbity** of the lemon caused the little girl to spit out the bite she had just taken.
- Why would she “spit out the bite”?
- What reaction does a “lemon” cause?
- Based on these clues:
  - **Acerbity** must mean “bitter or sour”.



# Context Clue #1: Definition/Restatement



- The meaning of the vocabulary word is in the sentence itself, usually following the vocabulary word.
  - Jack's **duplicity**—crafty dishonesty—caused him to steal his coworkers' pensions by funneling their money into an offshore account.

## Context Clue #2: Synonym



- The sentence uses a similar word to help explain the meaning of the vocabulary word.
  - The baseball coach punished the team's **duplicity** or **deceitfulness** after they admitted to using steroids to boost their batting averages.

## Context Clue #3: Antonym/Opposite/Contrast



- The sentence uses a word with an opposite definition to give the meaning of the vocabulary word.
  - It was your **duplicity** that caused me to break up with you! Had you been **honest**, I wouldn't have felt the need.
  - Unlike my last employee who had **integrity** to spare, you have nothing more than **duplicity** and will not receive a recommendation from me for another job.

# Context Clue #4: Example or Explanation



- This type of context clue uses examples to help the reader infer the meaning of the vocabulary word.
  - His **duplicity** involved lowering his employees' salaries, increasing their stock options, and then stealing the money he saved by doing so.
  - I was aghast at her **duplicity** when she stole my diamond earrings, sold them on eBay, and lied to me about it the whole time.



BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE...

Your turn to try...Determine the meaning of the orange vocabulary word, based on the context clues in the sentences.

# Animosity = ??



- Pablo always showed **animosity** toward his teachers by throwing spitballs and mouthing off, but his sister Mary was kind and sweet.
  - a) Compassion
  - b) Anger
  - c) Dislike
  - d) Silliness

# Lunacy = ??



- From the far past to the present day, the moon has been thought to cause **lunacy**. Some studies have shown that this momentary insanity does have some association to the moon's phases.
  - a) **Changes**
  - b) **Darkness**
  - c) **Happiness**
  - d) **Insanity**

# Abhorrence = ??



- My sister shows a great **abhorrence** for crowds, whereas my little brother Michael loves to be the center of attention.
  - a) Loathing
  - b) Affection
  - c) Shame
  - d) Fondness

# Minions = ??



- The sorcerer's **minions**, or devoted followers, were willing to perform any sorcery he could conjure.
  - a) Superiors
  - b) Followers
  - c) Friends
  - d) Enemies

# Hackneyed = ??



- “Busy as a bee” and “quiet as a mouse” are **hackneyed** phrases—they’re used all the time.
  - a) Cross-eyed
  - b) Simple
  - c) Weird
  - d) Commonplace

# Ocular = ??



- The little girl was showing signs of **ocular** problems—she squinted to read the blackboard and complained of headaches after working on the computer for too long.
  - a) Visual
  - b) Tactile
  - c) Emotional
  - d) Social

# To Conclude Context Clues...



- Let context clues help you!
  - Other words in the sentence.
  - Phrases that come immediately before or after.
  - Your brain can come in handy, too!
- “**R**eading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.” ~ Joseph Addison ~
- And, as always...your teacher is there to help! 😊