

CONTEXT CLUES AUTHORS LEAVE



Here are examples of context clues authors embed so readers can determine the meaning of tough words.

A Clear Definition: The word's meaning follows a comma, dash, the word *or*, or the phrase *is called* or *are called*, or is in parentheses that come right after the word. Example: *Lewis and Clark thought Sacagawea could help them buy horses from Shoshones who lived at the headwaters (source of a river) of the Missouri.* (From "Lewis & Clark" by Matt Warshauer. In *Junior Scholastic*, Vol. 106, No. 7.)

A Concrete Example: The example the author provides helps readers figure out the word's meaning. In the following example, connect *household chemicals* to *pervasive* and figure out what *pervasive* means. Example: *Robbi Savage, president of World Water Monitoring Day, says some of the most pervasive pollution now comes from household chemicals such as oil and pesticides.* (From "Drip Dry" by Sean Price. In *Science World*, Vol. 61, No. 13.)

Repetition of a New Word: Authors repeat a difficult word or concept in familiar and different situations. This helps readers get the meaning by using what they already know. Example: *America is a nation of immigrants. Immigrants are people who come to a new land to make their home.* (From *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration*, unpagged picture book.)

In Other Sentences: The clue is in sentences that come before and/or after the word. Example: *This, along with sulfur dioxide and other pollutants, makes acid rain. Precipitation—rain, snow, hail, or sleet—mixes with the poisons and slowly kills plants and fish.* (From "Drip Dry" by Sean Price. In *Science World*, Vol. 61, No. 13.)

Restated Meanings: The author explains a tough word by restating its meaning. Commas can set off the restated meaning. You'll also find restatement after *or*, *that is*, or *in other words*. Sometimes the meaning is stated in sentences that follow, using examples that help you understand the meaning. Example: *The Corps endured scorching heat, heavy rains, frigid temperatures, and relentless mosquitoes. Throughout their journey, the men were by turns sick, exhausted, and half-starved.* (From "Lewis & Clark" by Matt Warshauer. In *Junior Scholastic*, Vol. 106, No. 7.)

In a Nonfiction Feature: Definitions of terms can be in captions, sidebars, diagrams, and so on. Example: *Scientists believe that air pollution magnifies Earth's natural greenhouse effect, causing global warming (average increase in Earth's temperature).* (In a sidebar from "Drip Dry" by Sean Price. In *Science World*, Vol. 61, No. 13.)