

# Context Clues - Reteach



## TEKS 3.3(B)

### Objective:

I can figure out what an unfamiliar word means — or which meaning of a word the author intended — by reading the clues the author left in the sentences around it.

### The anchor strategy students repeat all lesson:

Cover, read around, uncover. (Cover the word you don't know → read the sentence and the sentences around it → look for clues the author left → uncover the word and say what it means using those clues. The author almost always tells you — you just have to read past the word instead of stopping at it.)

## TEACHER NOTES

### Before you begin — have these at every student's desk:

- Context Clue Detective card (below) printed at desk size
- Sticky notes or sticky flags (to mark the clue words they find)
- Highlighter — one color to highlight the target word, a second color to highlight the clue words around it
- Dry-erase sleeve with a blank "Clue Catcher" organizer inside (below)
- Pencil

### Pacing:

This standard asks students to do two different things that feel the same but require different thinking: figuring out an UNFAMILIAR word (a word they've never seen) and choosing the RIGHT meaning of a MULTIPLE-MEANING word (a word they know, but it means something different here). Do NOT teach both in one session.

- SESSION 1: unfamiliar words — using context clues to figure out what a new word means.
- SESSION 2: multiple-meaning words — using context clues to decide WHICH meaning fits (separate day, after Session 1 is solid).

Each session follows I Do / We Do / You Do with fewer passages and more scaffolding. Read every passage aloud. Mastery of fewer passages with full understanding beats rushing through more.

**Misconceptions this lesson targets:**

1. Stopping at the unknown word — a student hits a word they don't know and freezes or skips the whole sentence. They don't know that the ANSWER is usually in the sentences around the word. Teach the habit: "When you hit a wall, read PAST it."
2. Guessing from the first letter or the look of the word — a student sees "tremendous" and guesses "tree" or "trembling" because of the letters. Context clue work is about MEANING, not spelling or phonics.
3. Only reading the sentence the word is in — a student reads one sentence and gives up if the clue isn't there. The standard says "within AND BEYOND a sentence" — the clue is often in the sentence before or after.
4. Picking the most familiar meaning of a multiple-meaning word — a student knows "bark" means a dog sound, so they write that even when the passage is about trees. They don't check whether their meaning makes sense in the sentence.
5. Not being able to explain the meaning in their own words — a student finds the right clue but can't restate it. They copy the whole sentence instead of saying what the word means. The sentence frame "This word means \_\_\_ because the author said \_\_\_" forces the two-part answer.
6. Thinking context clues only means a definition is nearby — students look for "which means" or a parenthetical definition and give up if there isn't one. Clues come in many forms: examples, opposites, descriptions, and cause-effect, not just built-in definitions.

**Teacher language to keep repeating:** "Don't stop at the word — read PAST it." •

"What clues did the author leave you?" • "Does your meaning make sense if you plug it back in?" • "Read the sentence before and the sentence after — the clue might not be in the same sentence." • "Say what it means in YOUR words."

## The Context Clue Detective Card (print at desk size):

### CONTEXT CLUE DETECTIVE

- ☐ 1. SPOT the word (highlight it)
- ☐ 2. COVER it up (sticky note over the word)
- ☐ 3. READ AROUND it
  - Read the sentence it's in
  - Read the sentence BEFORE it
  - Read the sentence AFTER it
- ☐ 4. FIND THE CLUE (highlight clue words)  
Look for:
  - Examples or lists near by
  - An opposite ("but" or "unlike")
  - A description or explanation
  - Cause and effect nearby
- ☐ 5. Say it in your own words  
“The word means \_\_\_\_because the author says \_\_\_\_”
- ☐ 6. Say it in your own words  
Replace the word with your meaning and reread the sentence.

Students physically check each box as they complete the step.

**The Clue Catcher Organizer (dry-erase, reusable):**

|                                                           |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | Does it make sense? |

**Why the Clues Are There (2 minutes, no reading yet):**

Say: "Authors are not trying to trick you. When they use a hard word, they almost always leave clues nearby so you can figure it out. Your job isn't to already know the word — your job is to be a detective and find the clues. The clues are in the sentences around the word. If you only read the word and stop, you'll miss them. Today we learn to read PAST the word."

**Do a quick non-reading example:** "Imagine someone tells you: 'Hand me the grozzle — the long, flat one next to the hammer.' You have no idea what a grozzle is. But you know it's long, flat, and near a hammer. You'd grab a screwdriver or a ruler, right? You used the clues. That's exactly what you do with words in a passage."

**I DO #1 — One Passage, Very Slowly (Clue in the Same Sentence):**

This is a made-up word to help students focus on clues rather than the word.  
Passage: "The opollous elephant towered over the other animals at the zoo, it's body as big as a school bus."

Say, "I read this aloud first. Now let's say I don't know what 'opollous' means."

"Checklist *step 1*: I spot the word. I highlight OPOLLOUS."

"*Step 2*: I cover it up with a sticky note. Now the sentence reads: 'The \_\_\_ elephant towered over the other animals at the zoo, its body as big as a school bus.'"

"*Step 3*: I read around it. What clues did the author leave? 'Towered over the other animals' — that means it was taller or bigger than everything else. 'As big as a school bus' — that's a huge comparison. I highlight those clue phrases."

"*Step 4*: the clue type is a DESCRIPTION — the author described what it looked like."

"*Step 5*: I say it in my own words. 'opollous means really, really big — because the author said it towered over everything and was as big as a bus.'"

"*Step 6*: I plug it in. 'The really big elephant towered over the other animals.' Does that make sense? Yes."

|                                                           |                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         | <i>opollous</i>                                                                   |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) | <i>towered</i><br><br><i>big</i>                                                  |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     | <i>really big or huge</i>                                                         |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | <i>The really big elephant toward...</i><br>Does it make sense?<br><br><i>yes</i> |

**I DO # 2— One Passage, Clue BEYOND the Sentence:**

"The classroom was in chaos. Crayons were scattered across the floor, two students were arguing over a book, and the hamster had escaped from its cage."

Target word: chaos

Clue words: crayons scattered, students arguing, hamster escaped

Meaning: a big mess, everything out of control

Plug in: "The classroom was a complete mess."

|                                                           |                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         | <i>chaos</i>                                                                                                   |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) | <i>crayons scattered<br/>students arguing<br/>hamster escaped</i>                                              |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     | <i>crazy, out of control, big mess</i>                                                                         |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | <i>The classroom was in a big mess.<br/>Crayons were scattered everywhere...</i><br><b>Does it make sense?</b> |

"This is WHY we read the sentence BEFORE and AFTER — the clue was not in the same sentence as the word."

### We Do – Two Passages, Student Does More Each Time:

Teacher reads the passage aloud. Student highlights, covers, finds clues, and fills the Clue Catcher with teacher watching.

Passage 1 (clue in the same sentence):

"The squirrel was so **nimble** that it leaped quickly from branch to branch without slipping or falling."

Clue words: leaped quickly, branch to branch, without slipping or falling

Meaning: quick and light on your feet – able to move easily

Plug in: "The squirrel was so quick and light that it leaped from branch to branch without slipping."

|                                                           |                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         | <i>nimble</i>                                                                                                               |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) | <i>leaped, branch to branch</i>                                                                                             |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     | <i>athletic, able to move, quick</i>                                                                                        |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | <i>The squirrel was so quick and able to move that<br/>it leaped from branch to branch...</i><br><b>Does it make sense?</b> |

**WE DO Passage 2 (clue is an OPPOSITE):**

"The other kids were chatty and loud at lunch, but Sam was very **reserved** and sat quietly eating his sandwich without saying a word."

Clue words: "but" signals a contrast, other kids were chatty and loud, Sam sat quietly, without saying a word

Meaning: quiet and keeping to yourself — the opposite of chatty and loud

Plug in: "Sam was very quiet and sat eating his sandwich."

Point out to the student: "The word 'but' was a huge signal. When you see words like, 'unlike,' 'but,' 'however,' or 'instead,' the author is giving you an OPPOSITE clue. The meaning is the reverse of what comes next."

|                                                           |                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         | <i>reserved</i>                                                                                                  |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) | <i>but</i><br><i>sat quietly</i><br><i>without saying a word</i>                                                 |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     | <i>quiet, doesn't want to be social</i>                                                                          |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | <i>The other kids were chatty and loud at<br/>lunch, but Sam was very quiet...</i><br><b>Does it make sense?</b> |

**You Do – Two Passages, Student Works Independently:**

Teacher reads the passage aloud. Student highlights, covers, finds clues, fills the Clue Catcher, and writes the sentence frame on their own.

Passage: "The lemonade was so **tart** that Jayden's face scrunched up and he quickly reached for his water to wash the sour taste away."

Clue words: face scrunched up, quickly reached for water, sour taste

Meaning: a strong, unpleasant, sour taste

Plug in: "The lemonade tasted so bad and sour that Jayden's face scrunched up."

Passage: "Maya was **elated** when she found out she made the soccer team. She jumped up and down, hugged her mom, and couldn't stop smiling the rest of the day."

(The word is "elated." Clues: jumped up and down, hugged her mom, couldn't stop smiling. "Elated means really happy or excited, because the author said she jumped, hugged, and smiled all day." Plug in: "Maya was really happy when she found out." Makes sense.)

**Session 1 Exit Ticket:**

Read the passage (teacher reads aloud). Fill in the Clue Catcher. Write the sentence frame. This underlined word is not an actual word, but made-up to encourage students to apply their learning to determine its meaning.

"The dog's owner was stulley when she came home and found the trash scattered all over the kitchen floor. She stomped her foot and pointed at the dog, her face red and her voice loud."

(The word is "stulley." Clues: stomped her foot, face red, voice loud, trash all over the floor. "Stulley means very angry, because the author said she stomped, her face was red, and her voice was loud." Plug in: "The dog's owner was very angry when she came home." Makes sense.)

**Mastery check:** Did the student find clue words from the sentences around the target word (not just the same sentence), say the meaning in their own words (not copy the sentence), and plug it back in to check?

## **SESSION 2 – Multiple-Meaning Words (separate day, after Session 1 is solid):**

### **Step 0 – Connect to What They Know:**

Start with one quick unfamiliar-word passage from Session 1 to rebuild confidence and remind students of the detective steps.

Then say: "Today the trick is different. You already KNOW the word – but the word has MORE THAN ONE meaning, and the author is using a meaning you might not expect. Your job is to figure out WHICH meaning the author meant. Same detective steps, but this time you're choosing between meanings, not building one from scratch."

### **The New Wrinkle – Same Word, Different Job**

Write on the board: LIGHT

Say: "What does 'light' mean?" Students will say something that helps you see, like a lamp or the sun. "What ELSE can it mean?" If they don't know, say: "A feather is light – it means not heavy at all." Write both meanings. "Same word, totally different meaning. The sentence around the word tells you which one the author meant."

Do two quick oral examples – no writing, just thinking:

- "Please turn off the light before you go to bed." → Which light? Something that shines and helps you see. How do you know? Turn off, go to bed – you switch off a lamp, not a feather.
- "The backpack was so light that the kindergartner carried it with one finger." → Which light? Not heavy. How do you know? Carried it with one finger – that tells you it didn't weigh much, not that it was glowing.

"The WORD didn't change. The SENTENCE around it told you which meaning to use."

## The Multiple-Meaning Detective Add-On:

The same Clue Catcher works, but add a row for the two meanings

|                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b>                      |                     |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            |                     |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> |                     |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     |                     |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    | Does it make sense? |

## I DO — One Passage, Very Slowly:

Passage: "Mom asked Lucas to **check** the temperature outside. He looked at the thermometer on the porch and told her it was 45 degrees."

"The word is 'check.' I already know a meaning: a checkmark — the little mark a teacher puts on your paper. But does 'put a checkmark on the temperature' make sense here? Not really. Let me read the clues. 'Asked Lucas to,' 'the temperature outside,' 'looked at the thermometer,' 'told her.' Lucas LOOKED at something and then TOLD his mom what it said. He wasn't drawing a little mark — he was finding out information. Check here means to look at something to find out or make sure. Plug in: 'Mom asked Lucas to look at the temperature outside.' That makes sense."

|                                      |                                                                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b>                      | <i>check</i>                                                   |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            | <i>mark on a paper, like a check mark, or money</i>            |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> | <i>to look at something to, to find out information</i>        |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     | <i>temperature outside, looked, told her</i>                   |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      | <i>to look and find out</i>                                    |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    | <i>Mom asked Lucas to look and find out the temperature...</i> |

"If I just picked the meaning I already knew — 'hitting something' — the sentence wouldn't make sense. The CLUE WORDS told me which meaning the author meant."

## I DO — Passage Where the Familiar Meaning Tricks You:

Passage: "The girl poured water from the **pitcher**."

"The word is 'pitcher.' I already know what a pitcher is — it's the person who throws the ball in baseball. But does that make sense here? No. The clues: 'poured,' 'water.' A pitcher is something that can hold and pour out water. My first meaning didn't fit — I had to let the clues override what I thought I knew."

|                                      |                                                  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b>                      | <i>pitcher</i>                                   |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            | <i>person who throws the ball in baseball</i>    |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> | <i>cup or container</i>                          |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     | <i>pour, water from</i>                          |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      | <i>cup or container</i>                          |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    | <i>The girl poured water from the container.</i> |

"This is the trap: your brain grabs the meaning it knows best and says 'done.' But you ALWAYS have to check: does my meaning make sense in THIS sentence? If not, there's another meaning hiding."

### We Do — Two Passages:

Teacher reads aloud. Student highlights, fills the organizer, and explains which meaning fits.

Passage 1: "The baseball game was so close that the fans in the stands jumped to their feet and cheered when the last batter stepped up to the **plate**."

(The word is "plate." Most students know plate = a dish you eat dinner on. Clue words: "baseball game," "batter," "stepped up to." Plate here means home plate — the flat white base the batter stands next to in baseball. Plug in: "The last batter stepped up to home base." Makes sense. A dinner plate doesn't belong on a baseball field.)

Passage 2: "Mia's puppy kept running in circles around the yard, so she decided to **train** it to sit and stay by giving it a treat every time it listened."

(The word is "train." Most students know train = the long vehicle that rides on tracks. Clue words: "sit and stay," "giving it a treat," "every time it listened." Train here means to teach something to follow directions by practicing over and over. Plug in: "She decided to teach it to sit and stay." Makes sense. A vehicle on tracks has nothing to do with a puppy learning to sit.)

|                               |                                                   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| The Word                      | <i>plate</i>                                      |
| The Meaning I Know            | <i>dish, something you eat on</i>                 |
| Another Meaning It Could Have | <i>what you stand on to bat in baseball, base</i> |
| Clue Words From Around It     | <i>baseball game, batter</i>                      |
| Which Meaning Fits? Why?      | <i>what you stand on to bat in baseball, base</i> |
| Plug It In                    | <i>...last batter stepped up to the base.</i>     |

|                                      |                                                       |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Word</b>                      | <i>train</i>                                          |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            | <i>long vehicle that you can ride on tracks</i>       |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> | <i>teaching a dog or pet</i>                          |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     | <i>puppy, sit and stay</i>                            |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      | <i>teaching a dog or pet</i>                          |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    | <i>...so she decided to teach her puppy to sit...</i> |

### **You Do — Two Passages:**

Teacher reads aloud. Student highlights, fills the organizer, and writes which meaning fits on their own.

Passage: "The old wooden shelf **buckled** under the weight of all the heavy books, and everything came crashing down to the floor."

(The word is "buckled." Students know buckled = to fasten something, like buckling a seatbelt. Clue words: "under the weight," "heavy books," "came crashing down." Buckled here means bent and collapsed because something was too heavy. Plug in: "The old wooden shelf bent and collapsed under the weight of all the heavy books." Makes sense. Fastening a seatbelt has nothing to do with books crashing to the floor.)

Passage: "The twins were making such a **racket** in the playroom that Grandpa couldn't hear the TV, even with the volume turned all the way up."

(The word is "racket." Students may know racket = the thing you hit a tennis ball with. Clue words: "couldn't hear the TV," "volume turned all the way up," "making such a." Racket here means a loud, annoying noise. Plug in: "The twins were making such a loud noise that Grandpa couldn't hear the TV." Makes sense. A tennis racket doesn't explain why Grandpa can't hear the television.)

### **Session 2 Exit Ticket:**

Read the passage (teacher reads aloud). Fill in the organizer. Write which meaning fits and why.

"The farmer drove a **stake** into the ground to hold up the fence, hammering it deep so it wouldn't fall over in the wind."

(The word is "stake." Students may know stake = a piece of meat (steak, different spelling, but sounds the same and may confuse them) or "what's at stake" = what you could lose. Clue words: "drove into the ground," "hold up the fence," "hammering." Stake here means a pointed stick or pole driven into the ground. Plug in: "The farmer drove a pointed pole into the ground to hold up the fence." Makes sense.)

**Mastery check:** Did the student consider more than one meaning, use the clue words to choose which meaning fits THIS passage, and check by plugging it in?

### **Next Steps:**

Re-assign a passage in EDMazing Learning that tests TEKS 4.3(B) to determine if students have shown growth for this TEKS.

# Context Clues - Session 1



## WE DO

- 1** The squirrel was so nimble that it leaped quickly from branch to branch without slipping or falling.

|                                                           |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | Does it make sense? |

- 2 The other kids were chatty and loud at lunch, but Sam was very reserved and sat quietly eating his sandwich without saying a word.

|                                                           |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | Does it make sense? |

# Context Clues - Session 1



## YOU DO

- 1** The lemonade was so tart that Jayden's face scrunched up and he quickly reached for his water to wash the sour taste away.

|                                                           |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | Does it make sense? |

- 2** Maya was elated when she found out she made the soccer team. She jumped up and down, hugged her mom, and couldn't stop smiling the rest of the day.

|                                                           |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                         |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight) |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words)     |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)              | Does it make sense? |

# Context Clues - Session 2



## WE DO

- 1** The baseball game was so close that the fans in the stands jumped to their feet and cheered when the last batter stepped up to the **plate**.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| The Word                      |  |
| The Meaning I Know            |  |
| Another Meaning It Could Have |  |
| Clue Words From Around It     |  |
| Which Meaning Fits? Why?      |  |
| Plug It In                    |  |

- 2** Mia's puppy kept running in circles around the yard, so she decided to **train** it to sit and stay by giving it a treat every time it listened.

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Word</b>                      |  |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            |  |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> |  |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     |  |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      |  |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    |  |

# Context Clues - Session 2



## YOU DO

- 1** The old wooden shelf buckled under the weight of all the heavy books, and everything came crashing down to the floor.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| The Word                      |  |
| The Meaning I Know            |  |
| Another Meaning It Could Have |  |
| Clue Words From Around It     |  |
| Which Meaning Fits? Why?      |  |
| Plug It In                    |  |

- 2** The twins were making such a **racket** in the playroom that Grandpa couldn't hear the TV, even with the volume turned all the way up.

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Word</b>                      |  |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            |  |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> |  |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     |  |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      |  |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    |  |

|                                                                  |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The Word</b><br>(underline it)                                |                     |
| <b>Clue Words</b><br>(look around<br>it and<br>highlight)        |                     |
| <b>What I Think<br/>           It Means</b><br>(my own<br>words) |                     |
| <b>Plug It In</b><br>(replace and<br>reread)                     | Does it make sense? |

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Word</b>                      |  |
| <b>The Meaning I Know</b>            |  |
| <b>Another Meaning It Could Have</b> |  |
| <b>Clue Words From Around It</b>     |  |
| <b>Which Meaning Fits? Why?</b>      |  |
| <b>Plug It In</b>                    |  |