



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

December 1, 2003

Volume 1 Number 13

Context Clues: Practice...

Which context clues would you point out to help your students understand the meaning of each underlined word?

- The monotony of life on the island led to an ennui so complete that the inhabitants seemed to have lost interest even in keeping themselves alive.

Would you point out the word monotony? Would your students know that mono means one? How would you help the students see the importance of the phrase "lost interest"? What are the implications of the word island?

- Fielding wept to his wife that he had reached the nadir of his career, and she comforted him with the thought that if such were the case, he could go nowhere but up.

How does the word wept help to give a sense of what nadir refers to? What does the phrase go nowhere but up imply?

- We descended from the tortuous road that wound through the mountains to the straight one that stretched across the plain.

How would you deal with the word wound, a word that seems simple but has two pronunciations and two very distinct meanings? How would you help them to see which meaning is suitable? How would you help your students to use the word straight as a clue? How would your students see that straight is in contrast with wound? What if your students misunderstood tortuous for something having to do with torture? Would you help your students by pointing out the meaning of the root tor, meaning to twist?

- The plethora of cars on the road has resulted in almost unmanageable traffic congestion.

How would you help your students to recognize cause-effect relationships? What words should

this relationship? Is the word cars significant—as opposed to the word car? What does traffic tell you? What would you say about congestion? Would you relate it to a person with a cold or the flu (e.g., sinus congestion)? What does unmanageable suggest about the traffic?

- The carefully organized remarks of the second speaker were much easier to follow than the amorphous ramblings of the first.

What kind of organization is at work in this sentence? How would you help your students to see that opposites or contrasts are being used by the writer? What does the word ramblings tell the student? Does the phrase easier to follow tell you anything about the meaning of amorphous? Why is the word easier used instead of easy? Would it help to know that the prefix a means without or not, and that the root morph means shape or form?

CONTEXT CLUES STRATEGY

- Using **CONTEXT CLUES** to figure out new words.
 - ❑ When you come to a word you don't know **READ** until you come to a good stopping place.
 - ❑ Use the context to **FIGURE OUT** the unknown word.
 - ❑ **GUESS** what the word might be.
 - ❑ **TEST** your guess.

• UNLOCKING WORDS

- ❑ Test your guess from context clues.
- ❑ Ask yourself if the word:

1. LOOKS RIGHT
2. SOUNDS RIGHT
3. MAKES SENSE