**USING CONTEXT CLUES, ACTIVITY 2**

Using Cloze Procedure to Predict Word Meaning

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the activity is to demonstrate to students that the context of a sentence can often help you predict the meaning of unfamiliar, challenging words.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Choose a short essay or excerpt from a longer passage that is appropriate in reading difficulty for your students. The selection should include a significant number of unfamiliar words. (sample, page 2-3)

2. Retype the passage leaving blank lines to omit challenging words, or white out words in a passage.

3. Distribute copies of the selection to students and have them replace the blank line with a word that would fit the sentence. If you have ESL students in your class, you can ask them to select a word in their own language to put on the line. This activity can be done individually or in teams of two.

4. When students are finished, work through the selection asking students what words they chose to put on the blank line. List several of their answers on the board. Include words students wrote in their own language and have them tell the class what that word means.

5. When you have gone through all the words, give them another copy of the article with the challenging words includes. After looking at their list of words, have them predict what the new word might mean. Continue this exercise until you have covered all new words.

6. Explain to students that what they have done was use the context of the sentence to figure out a new word. Encourage them to apply this strategy to all their reading rather than always looking up words in a dictionary.

7. Explain that this activity also demonstrates that they can understand a passage without being familiar with every word. When you encounter an unknown word, it is more efficient to continue reading rather than stopping to look words up as many times you are able to get the gist of the paragraph anyway.

**Note:** You can use a current article on line, a newspaper article, a popular essay, or an excerpt from a novel the students are reading. The important thing is that the article must include some challenging words they would not already know.

Excerpt taken from N is for Noose by Sue Grafton (1998)

For the record, my last name is Millhone, first name Kinsey. I’m female, twice divorced, seven weeks shy of thirty-six, and reasonably fit. I’m a licensed private detective, currently residing in Santa Teresa, California, to which I am attached like a tetherball on a short cord. Occasionally, business will swing me out to other parts of the country, but I’m basically a small-town shamus and likely to remain so for life.

Dietz’s surgery, which was scheduled for the first Monday in March, proceeded uneventfully, so we can skip that part. Afterward, I returned to his condominium and toured the premises with interest. I’d been startled by the place when I first laid eyes on it, as it was more lavish and much better appointed than my poor digs back in Santa Teresa. Dietz was a nomad and I’d never pictured his having much in the way of material possessions. While I was closeted in a converted single-car garage (recently remodeled to accommodate a sleeping loft and a second bathroom upstairs), Dietz maintained a three-bedroom penthouse that probably encompassed three thousand square feet of living space, including a roof patio and an honest-to-god greenhouse. Granted, the seven-story building was located in a commercial district, but the views were astounding and the privacy profound.

I’d been too polite to pry while he was right here beside me, but once he was safely ensconced in the orthopedic ward at Carson/Tahoe Hospital, I felt comfortable scrutinizing everything in my immediate range, which necessitated dragging a chair around and standing on it in some cases. I checked closets and files and boxes and papers and drawers, pockets and suitcases, feeling equal parts relief and disappointment that he had nothing in particular to hide. I mean, what’s the point in snooping if you can’t uncover something good? I did have the chance to study the photograph of his ex-wife, Naomi, who was certainly a lot prettier than he had ever indicated. Aside from that, his finances appeared to be in order, his medicine cabinet contained no sinister pharmaceutical revelations, and his private correspondence consisted almost entirely of assorted misspelled letters from his two college-age sons. Lest you think I’m intrusive, I can assure you that Dietz had searched my apartment just as thoroughly during the time he was in residence. I know this because I’d left a few booby traps, one of which he’d missed when he was picking open my locked desk drawers. His license might have lapsed, but (most of) his operating skills were still current. Neither of us had ever mentioned his invasion of my privacy, but I vowed I’d do likewise when the opportunity arose. Between working detectives, this is known as professional courtesy. You toss my place and I’ll toss yours.
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