# Clue or Reference

Choose the best strategy for figuring out a word.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4** "Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

### CONTEXT IS ENOUGH

The nearby words give a definition, synonym, contrast, or example that helps you figure out the bracketed word.

The glacier's [crevasse], a deep crack in the ice, made crossing dangerous.

### USE A REFERENCE

The nearby words do not give enough information to know the bracketed word precisely. Check a dictionary or glossary.

The hikers studied the [terrain] before choosing a route.

## 1 SORT

8 items

For Part 1, circle CONTEXT or REFERENCE for each bracketed word; for Part 2, choose two items and explain what clues helped you or why you would need a reference.

**1.** Because the liquid was [viscous], it poured slowly like syrup. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**2.** Unlike the [fragile] vase, the metal bowl could survive a fall. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**3.** The researcher recorded each [variable] in her notebook. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**4.** The witness gave a [vivid], detailed account of the storm. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**5.** The council debated the [ordinance] late into the evening. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**6.** The novel's [protagonist] makes a difficult choice. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**7.** The path was [obscured] by thick fog, so we could not see it. CONTEXT REFERENCE

**8.** The scientist described the [phenomenon] in her report. CONTEXT REFERENCE

## 2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

**ITEM #** _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

**ITEM #** _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

## 3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one sentence in which context gives enough clues to figure out a bracketed word, and write one sentence in which a reader would need a reference to define a bracketed word.

**CONTEXT** _____

**REFERENCE** _____

**CHALLENGE**

Write two sentences that use the same multiple-meaning word in two different ways, and include a context clue for each meaning.

# Clue or Reference



## PART 1 · SORT

| # | ITEM | CATEGORY | WHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Because the liquid was [viscous], it poured slowly like syrup. | **CONTEXT** | "Poured slowly like syrup" reveals that viscous means thick and slow-flowing. |
| 2 | Unlike the [fragile] vase, the metal bowl could survive a fall. | **CONTEXT** | The contrast with a metal bowl surviving a fall shows that fragile means easily broken. |
| 3 | The researcher recorded each [variable] in her notebook. | **REFERENCE** | The sentence does not explain what variable means. |
| 4 | The witness gave a [vivid], detailed account of the storm. | **CONTEXT** | "Detailed" gives a synonym-like clue for vivid. |
| 5 | The council debated the [ordinance] late into the evening. | **REFERENCE** | The sentence gives no precise clue to the meaning of ordinance. |
| 6 | The novel's [protagonist] makes a difficult choice. | **REFERENCE** | The sentence does not define protagonist or provide enough context to infer it precisely. |
| 7 | The path was [obscured] by thick fog, so we could not see it. | **CONTEXT** | "We could not see it" shows that obscured means hidden from view. |
| 8 | The scientist described the [phenomenon] in her report. | **REFERENCE** | The sentence does not explain what phenomenon means. |

## PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

## PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **CONTEXT**: The drought made the soil [arid], or very dry.
- **REFERENCE**: The curator examined the [artifact].

**Challenge:** A cold [draft] slipped under the door, so Maya shut the window. Before publishing the article, the editor revised the first [draft], or early version.

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item. Assess whether students classify each item based on the clues in the sentence, not on whether they already know the word. For Part 2, accept explanations that point to a definition, synonym, contrast, or missing information.