

Clue or Consult?

Decide when context is enough and when a reference is needed.

9-10L4 "Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies."

NAME _____

DATE _____

CONTEXT IS ENOUGH

Use context when nearby words clearly show what an unfamiliar word means. Look for a definition, example, contrast, or result.

When the puppy was *timid*, it hid behind the chair instead of greeting visitors.

USE A REFERENCE

Use a reference when nearby words do not reveal a word's meaning clearly enough. A dictionary, glossary, or reliable subject source can help.

The speaker used the word *set*.

1 SORT 8 items

For Part 1, circle CONTEXT or REFERENCE for each item, then for Part 2, choose two items and explain which words gave enough information or why you would use a reference.

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | After hiking all day without water, Nia was <i>parched</i> , or extremely thirsty. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 2. | The artist's <i>composition</i> impressed the judges. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 3. | The abandoned building was <i>derelict</i> , with broken windows and a roof that had collapsed. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 4. | The judge's ruling was <i>unanimous</i> : every juror agreed. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 5. | Jordan made a <i>novel</i> proposal. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 6. | Mira wore a <i>plain</i> dress. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 7. | The mayor's <i>frugal</i> budget avoided unnecessary spending. | ☐ CONTEXT | ☐ REFERENCE |
| 8. | The loud alarm <i>pierced</i> the silence, breaking it suddenly. | ☐ 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

For Part 3, write one new sentence in which context clearly explains an unfamiliar word, then write one new sentence in which a reference would be needed.

CONTEXT

REFERENCE

CHALLENGE

Write a sentence in which an unfamiliar word has a specialized meaning, then name the reference source you would use to clarify it.

PART 1 • SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	After hiking all day without water, Nia was <i>parched</i> , or extremely thirsty.	CONTEXT	The phrase “or extremely thirsty” directly defines parched.
2	The artist's <i>composition</i> impressed the judges.	REFERENCE	The sentence does not explain the precise meaning of composition.
3	The abandoned building was <i>derelict</i> , with broken windows and a roof that had collapsed.	CONTEXT	The details describe a neglected, ruined building.
4	The judge's ruling was <i>unanimous</i> : every juror agreed.	CONTEXT	The phrase “every juror agreed” defines unanimous.
5	Jordan made a <i>novel</i> proposal.	REFERENCE	The context does not provide enough information to determine the precise meaning of novel.
6	Mira wore a <i>plain</i> dress.	REFERENCE	The sentence does not clarify whether plain means simple, unpatterned, or another meaning.
7	The mayor's <i>frugal</i> budget avoided unnecessary spending.	CONTEXT	Avoiding unnecessary spending shows that frugal means careful with money.
8	The loud alarm <i>pierced</i> the silence, breaking it suddenly.	CONTEXT	“Breaking it suddenly” shows how the alarm affected the silence.

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:** Because the trail was *treacherous*, with loose rocks and icy ledges, we moved slowly.
- **REFERENCE:** Ava's *charge* changed after the meeting.

Challenge: In the biology article, the researcher described the cells' *culture*. I would use a biology glossary because *culture* has a specialized meaning in this context.

Items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 are CONTEXT. Items 2, 5, and 6 are REFERENCE. In Part 2, accept explanations that identify a defining clue or explain why the available context is insufficient and name an appropriate reference.