

Vocabulary Power

Lesson 21 Using Context Clues

By their very nature, human beings strive to push back boundaries and to stretch their minds and bodies into the unknown. Quests and encounters are opportunities to reach, strive, seek, succeed, and even fail. The words in this lesson will help you to share your ideas about different kinds of challenges.

Word List

abyss

equilibrium

grapple

palpable

agenda

expend

ideology

transient

ephemeral

fortuitous

EXERCISE A Context Clues

For each sentence below, use context clues, or clues from the surrounding text, to determine the meaning of the boldfaced vocabulary word. Write your definition of the word. Then, look up the word in a dictionary and write its definition.

1. To early explorers, the Grand Canyon was a frightening **abyss** that seemed to continue forever.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. The committee miscalculated the number of tasks on their **agenda**; instead of needing only an afternoon, they really should have set aside an entire day to cover all of them.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. Summer flowers like day lilies and morning glories are surprisingly delicate and **ephemeral**; even when the weather is cool, they do not last long.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. People who have been on a boat for an extended period often experience difficulty regaining their **equilibrium** once they return to the land.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. After working for hours on her project, Ellie did not have energy to **expend** on her other homework.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____



Vocabulary Power *continued*

6. Although we had been separated in traffic, it was **fortuitous** that we reconnected with the Allens at the county fair.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. Midge is finding her part-time job difficult to **grapple** with because of homework, cross-country running, and volunteering at the hospital.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. Political **ideology** has led many groups to leave their homes seeking peace and freedom in foreign lands.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

9. The child's fear was **palpable** in his wide eyes, shaking limbs, and trembling mouth.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

10. Very few young people understand how **transient** their youth and energy really are.

Your definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

EXERCISE B Usage

Draw a line through the italicized phrase and, above it, write the vocabulary word that can replace the phrase.

1. The discovery of penicillin was *happening by chance*; the staphylococcus germ Dr. Alexander Fleming was cultivating accidentally became contaminated with mold that stopped the growth of bacteria.
2. Denise was relieved to discover that her boredom and listlessness were *only temporary*.
3. As the polls closed, the tension at the senator's campaign center became *obvious*.
4. Tulip magnolias are *lasting for a markedly brief time*; one spring rain scatters the delicate petals.
5. In spite of our efforts to get our recycling drive on the town council's *program of things* to be considered, it may be months before any discussion or voting can take place.