



Lesson 24 Using Reading Skills

Learning from Context: Contrasts

A sentence that contains an unfamiliar word may also include a word or phrase that is opposite in meaning to the unfamiliar word. This built-in clue is a context clue called contrast or opposition, and it can take one of three forms: an antonym; the words *not*, *no*, *no one*, *nobody*, or *nothing*; or transitional expressions used to signal contrast, such as *although*, *but*, *however*, *nevertheless*, *rather*, *in contrast*, *still*, *unless*, *despite*, or *rather than*.

Antonym Diffident as a child, Diane is now self-confident and outgoing.

Diffident, *self-confident*, and *outgoing* are all adjectives modifying Diane. The opposite of *outgoing* and *self-confident* is *shy*. *Diffident* is defined as “shy and timid; lacking in self-confidence.”

Opposite Words Ralph’s attempts to calm union members were misunderstood as escalation, not mitigation.

The word *not* and the sentence structure tell you that *mitigation* contrasts with *escalation*. If Ralph attempted to calm or to mitigate the situation, then escalation must be the opposite. Escalation is defined as “the action of increasing or intensifying.”

Transitional Expressions In spite of agreeing not to censure their colleague, the committee could not endorse his behavior.

The clues tell you that *censure* and *endorse* are opposites, meaning “to criticize severely; express official disapproval” and “to give approval or support to.”

EXERCISE

Use context clues to write your own definition of the boldfaced word. Then, check it against the dictionary definition.

- Michelle’s management style made her firm and decisive, rather than **equivocal**.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

- Unwilling to confront the rumors, J.D. seemed more **disposed** to pretend that they did not exist.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

- No one could say that Liam was humble, for his actions and attitudes were often **pretentious**.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

- Although they had once been financially comfortable, when the store closed, the owner’s family became **destitute**.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

- Emboldened** by the success of her short stories, Lydia worked feverishly on her first novel.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____



Vocabulary Power



Review: Unit 6

EXERCISE

Circle the letter of the word or phrase that best explains the boldfaced word.

- If someone's communication style is to use **circumlocutions**, you might expect _____.
 - few direct expressions
 - many foreign and technical words
 - arguments and accusations
 - word images and figures of speech
- If you try to regain your **equilibrium** after an embarrassing situation, you are trying to recover your _____.
 - sense of humor
 - reputation
 - sense of values
 - balance or poise
- When someone speaks about the **torrid** days of summer, he or she is referring to _____ days.
 - final
 - intensely hot
 - first
 - rainy and humid
- An **agenda** is a useful tool because it _____.
 - keeps people organized and on task
 - guarantees freedom
 - keeps people honest
 - encourages firm decisions
- A **frivolous** remark is most likely to be _____.
 - hurtful
 - sympathetic
 - inappropriately silly
 - awkward and hypocritical
- If something is **interspersed**, it is _____.
 - arranged in an orderly manner
 - distributed at intervals
 - lined up in a row
 - placed in large clumps
- A **submerged** rock could be dangerous because it is _____.
 - sharp and pointed
 - deep
 - slippery
 - covered from view
- A **fortuitous** event is _____.
 - planned in advance
 - accidental
 - scheduled randomly
 - a bad omen
- A roller coaster with **momentum** will _____.
 - make it easily over the next hill
 - swerve off the track
 - stop before the top of the hill
 - sit at the station
- A **vigilant** person would be trusted to _____.
 - disrupt others
 - watch over someone
 - entertain others
 - teach someone