

Use of Language

Interpreting Word Meaning

NAME: _____

CLASS: _____

What do you do if you are reading a text and you come across a word you do not know? You might think it is okay to skip over that word and forget about it. That is not a good idea.

The texts you read are like a jigsaw puzzle. Each word in the text is a piece of the puzzle. You need to see how all the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle work together to make a picture. You need to see how all the words in a text work together to explain the text's main idea.

Good readers know that if you skip a word, you might miss an important idea, description, or fact in a text. But there will always be at least some words in the texts you read that you do not know. What are some ways that good readers figure out the meaning of new or unknown words?

WHAT DOES A GOOD READER DO TO FIGURE THE MEANING OF AN UNKNOWN WORD?	HOW DOES THIS HELP A READER?
Use a dictionary, or use the glossary of the text if one is available.	A dictionary is a book or online resource that gives the meanings of words, along with other information such as spelling and parts of speech. A glossary is an alphabetical list of words found at the end of some books (for example, science textbooks) that gives definitions for words in the text.
Reread the sentence that has the word you do not know in it.	Reading a sentence for a second (or third) time may help you find context clues in the sentence that let you know the word's meaning. Context clues are hints an author uses in a text to let you know what new or unknown words mean.
Try to connect the word you do not know to one that you do know.	If you look closely at a new or unknown word, you may see that you already know part of the word.
Look at any photos, maps, or visual features in the text.	Sometimes visual features such as photos and maps can give you important clues that can help you understand the meaning of new or unknown words.

We can all expect to come across unfamiliar words as we read. Good readers know that it's important to figure out what those new or unknown words mean. Without them, we might miss an important idea in a text.

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► Read the sentences and follow the steps below to find out the meaning of the underlined words.



Plants use sunlight to create energy through a process called photosynthesis.

1. Look up “photosynthesis” in the dictionary. What is the meaning of the word “photosynthesis”?



Andre agreed to do many projects at once, so his work schedule was usually very hectic.

2. Look up “hectic” in the dictionary. What is the meaning of the word “hectic”?



Since both teams had the same score at the end of the match, the coaches told their players that the game was a draw.

3. Look for context clues in the sentence. What does the word “draw” mean?



Students could ask the history expert any question about an event in the past, and he would always have an answer.

4. Look for context clues in the sentence. What does the word “expert” mean?



As they walked through the jungle, the visitors couldn't help but notice the interesting and unfamiliar vegetation.

5. Think about how the word “vegetation” is like the word “vegetable.” Based on what you know about this word, what do you think “vegetation” means?



Brandi and her friends thought Steve's robotic moves were silly at first, but soon everyone was dancing like him.

6. Think about how the word “robotic” is like the word “robot.” Based on what you know about this word, what do you think the word “robotic” means?



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► Read these sentences, look at the images under them, and answer the questions that follow.



Image Source: NASA World Wind



If you are traveling by boat, you can get to the Atlantic Ocean from the Mediterranean Sea by going through the Strait of Gibraltar.

7. Based on the sentence and the clues in the map above, what is the meaning of the word “strait”?

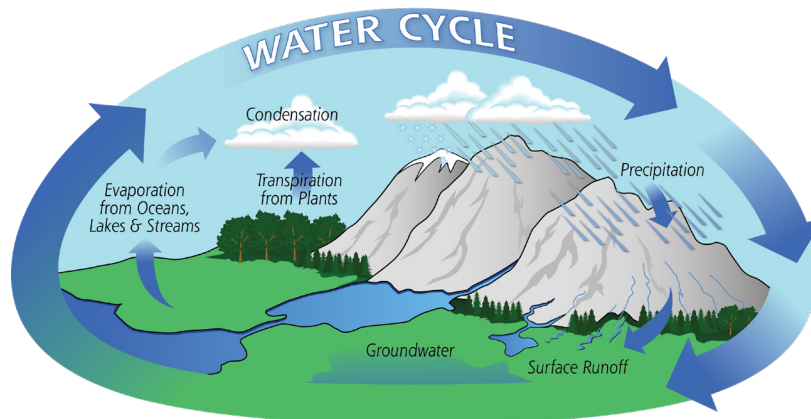


Image Source: NASA Website



During the summer in California, the ground gets very dry because of many weeks with no precipitation.

8. Based on the sentence and the clues in the image above, what is the meaning of the word “precipitation”?

