



Stories and Fables

Ref: EN_CC_3

Introduction

www.actintegration.eu

	Description	In this English lesson, students develop vocabulary inference skills through the use of contextual cues. Using authentic and adapted texts, learners explore how to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words by identifying definitions, examples, synonyms, and antonyms in context. Through teacher modeling, guided pair work, and independent practice, students apply a four-step strategy to interpret new vocabulary. The lesson promotes metacognitive awareness, reading comprehension, and autonomy in language learning. It fosters collaboration, critical thinking, and confidence in understanding texts without relying solely on dictionaries.		
	Age	13 - 15 years old		Language Area
	Proficiency Level	B1		Authors Maria Martzoukou & Athina Nachopoulou
	Subject	Language		Duration 1 teaching hour (~40minutes)
	Links with Language Curriculum	Vocabulary – Contextual Cues <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary development• Enhanced passage comprehension• Critical thinking• Cultural awareness (especially for idiomatic expressions)• Skill integration (reading, writing, listening, speaking)		
	Rationale	To develop basic skills for understanding, interpreting and engaging with texts. The strategy of using contextual cues enriches language competence and develops critical thinking and independent learning, preparing students for academic success and effective communication in real-life situations.		



Co-funded by
the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

actin

Introduction

	Aims	Through this protocol, students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be able to infer meanings of unfamiliar words• Improve their comprehension of texts• Develop critical thinking• Enrich their vocabulary• Become self-sufficient readers• Improve their overall communication skills• Combine different language skills• Develop cultural awareness (fairy tales from different countries)
	Equipment and Material Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passages prepared in such a way as to contain contextual cues

Instructions Step by step development of the activity (preparation, implementation, summing up, reflection)



01 | Preparation

1. Choose a Suitable Text:

We select a text that matches the learners' level and interests. This could be a short story, a text from their school books, or a news article containing rich vocabulary suitable for learning.

2. Identify Key Vocabulary:

Identify key vocabulary words in the text that may be challenging for the learners.

3. Modify the Text with Contextual Cues:

Adjust the text by adding words or sentences to provide hints or additional information, helping learners predict the meaning of unfamiliar words through contextual cues.

4. Types of Contextual Cues:

- **Definitions / Explanations:** e.g. Eleni is lethargic; she has no energy even to get out of bed!
- **Examples:** e.g. Celestial bodies, including the sun, moon and stars, have fascinated humans throughout the ages.
- **Synonyms:** e.g. This situation is a riddle, a puzzle that is difficult to solve.
- **Antonyms or Contrast:** e.g. George is outgoing, unlike his brother who is quiet and shy.





02 | Strategy Application

According to Graves (2006) and İler (2019), the steps of the strategy are as follows:

1. Introduction of the Strategy:

- Explain to the students that you are going to teach them a strategy in which we use information from the text to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Briefly introduce the steps

Step 1: We read carefully until we encounter an unfamiliar word

Step 2: We stop and reread the last sentence, trying to find information that will help us guess the meaning of the word. We guess the meaning. If we think we understand the meaning of the word, we continue reading. If not, then we move on to the next step.

Step 3: We go back and read the sentences that preceded the unfamiliar word, looking for clues/contextual cues that could help us guess the meaning of the word. If we think we understand the meaning of the word, we move on to the next step.

Step 4: We replace the unknown word with the meaning we think it has, and check if it makes sense in our text. If it does, we continue reading. If not, we repeat the previous steps or continue reading without knowing the meaning of the word and trying to understand the text.

2. Modeling the Four-Step Strategy:

- Use a text that would help you demonstrate the four-step strategy. In the Appendix you will find a suggested text, a story from Libya.
- Adopt the 'thinking aloud' method, expressing metacognitive statements to show how we recognise a difficult word and how we are led to understand its meaning.

3. Guided Practice:

- Practice the strategy together with the students in pairs.
- Provide an expository text and prompt pairs to identify and infer the meanings of difficult words.
- Read the paragraph aloud and highlight challenging words, guiding the pairs to find explicit cues
- Rehearse the four-step strategy until students can fluently recite and apply it.

4. Independent Practice:

- Continue using the four-step strategy with a more advanced expository text. Ask learners to read the paragraph several times, marking unfamiliar words
- Let the students deal with the strategy of contextual cues, with you taking an increasingly less active role.
- Allow students to take increasing responsibility for implementing the strategy. The teacher should provide support and feedback, but not lead the process.

5. Review of Instructional Program:

- Assess what students have learned by having them recap the strategy and complete worksheets with exercises to practice the four-step strategy process.

Useful Tips

01

During the “Modeling the Four-Step Strategy” teachers can use a text in which the unknown words and their contextual cues are marked with different colors

02

ATTENTION!: In the following stages there should be no markers to help students identify the textual clues. Therefore, underlines and bold letters should be erased from the suggested texts if you wish to use them.

03

Create an open environment where students feel comfortable asking questions about words they do not understand and discuss possible meaning with their peers.

04

Select a variety of texts, such as stories, fairytales, newspaper articles, passages from schoolbooks, instructions and online articles. This diversity will help students understand how context operates across various types of writing and see the practical application of the skill.

05

Incorporate various types of contextual cues within the expository texts.

06

In the worksheets you can use for each word a different kind of contextual cue from the one in the text. This approach provides students with multiple opportunities to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.

07

In the suggested fairy tales you can also have a discussion about their moral lesson (The King and the Salt: Simple things matter a lot in life, The Lion and the Mouse: We should never underestimate one's abilities or usefulness, for everyone has abilities and all people are useful in society, even the smallest and weakest, as was the mouse, compared to the mighty lion/ When we do good deeds, in time our goodness is rewarded/ When someone benefits us, we should never forget it).

01 | Texts

For the stages "Modelling the four-step strategy" and "Guided practice" you can use paragraphs from the following Libyan fairy tale:

The King and the Salt

Once upon a time, there was a **mighty** king who had great power and wealth. The king had three sons whom he **adored**. One day he decided to see how much they loved him too. So he called each of them individually and asked them how much he loved them. The first son said he loved him as much as gold and jewels and the king was very pleased, the second son said he loved him as much as he loved money and the king was pleased again and the third son said: "I love you as much as I love salt." The king **was** then **enraged** at the answer and in his great anger drove the third son out of the palace.

The third son **wandered** around towns and villages, did many jobs and managed to become king in another state with his **acumen** and wit. Years passed, his father was now very old and had almost forgotten his third son. But he, however many towns and villages he passed through, always remembered his father and his unjust **persecution**, but held no grudge against him for not letting him stay in the palace.

One day, he decided to host a **celebratory** feast so that everyone could celebrate Spring together. He invited kings from both near and far. Among them was his father. The table was **lavish!** It had all kinds of food, fruits, and sweets. However, all the food was **unsalted**. The third son had arranged with the cook not to add any salt at all!

When everyone was seated at the table, the king's father took his fork and began to eat. But with the first few forks he became **dissatisfied** with the food. He was annoyed because there was no salt, so he stopped eating.

Then his third son, who was standing beside him, but the old king had not recognized him, turned to him and said:

"'Father, when I told you many years ago that I love you as much as salt, you banished me from your palace. Now, why are you so upset that you can't eat your unsalted food?'

The old king then recognized his son and realized his mistake. 'I'm sorry, my son, I was so unfair to you! Even simple things have great importance in life!' he said to him.

The son hugged his father, and they lived happily ever after.

01 | Texts

For the "Independent practice" stage you can use the following Aesop's fable:

The Lion and the Mouse

Once upon a time, there was a lion living in the forest, proud and strong. Every time he came out of his cave and **roared**, all the animals of the forest, upon hearing his loud roar, would become frightened and run away.

One day, the lion was sleeping peacefully in his cave. Suddenly, he felt something tickling his tail. It was a small mouse. The lion opened his eyes in anger and in one movement, caught the **intruder** who had entered his cave without his permission and had disturbed his peace.

- "Don't eat me, my king," the little mouse **begged** him, frightened. "Please don't hurt me. I didn't mean to disturb you. I was just looking for something to eat because I'm hungry. Someday, I will **return** the favor and do something for you too."

The lion laughed sarcastically. What could this small and insignificant little mouse do to the mighty lion, the ruler of the forest! However, he let it go without harming it.

One day, while the lion was wandering hungry in the forest searching for food, he fell into a trap set by **hunters**. The hunters captured and tightly bound the lion with thick ropes and left to fetch help to carry him away. Suddenly, the little mouse appeared and began **gnawing** and chewing through the thick, heavy ropes with its teeth. It worked **tirelessly**, without stopping at all, and after several hours of hard work, it managed to free the lion

Thank you very much,' **murmured** the lion in a low voice, moved.

The mouse replied to him:

- "I promised I would repay the kindness you showed me, and I kept my promise. Back then, you laughed at me because you didn't believe that I, an **insignificant** little mouse, could ever help you, the king of the beasts. But you should know that even the weakest can sometimes help those who are stronger. And I never forgot what you did for me." From then on, the two became inseparable friends.

Answers

The King and the Salt

Unfamiliar Word	Contextual Cue	Type
mighty	<u>who had great power and wealth</u>	Definition/Explanation
adored	<u>how much they loved him</u>	Definition/Explanation
was enraged	<u>in his great anger</u>	Synonym
wandered	<u>however many towns and villages he passed through</u>	Examples
acumen	<u>wit</u>	Synonym
persecution	<u>for not letting him stay in the palace</u>	Examples
celebratory	<u>celebrate</u>	Synonym
lavish	<u>It had all kinds of food, fruits, and sweets</u>	Examples
unsalted	<u>any salt at all</u>	Definition/Explanation
dissatisfied	<u>He was annoyed</u>	Synonym

Answers

The Lion and the Mouse

Unfamiliar Word	Contextual Cue	Type
roared	<u>his loud roar</u>	Definition/Explanation
intruder	<u>who had entered his cave without his permission</u>	Definition/Explanation
begged	<u>Please</u>	Synonym
return	<u>do something for you too</u>	Definition/Explanation
hunters	<u>captured and tightly bound the lion</u>	Definition/Explanation
gnawing	<u>chewing through the thick, heavy ropes with its teeth</u>	Examples
tirelessly	<u>without stopping at all</u>	Definition/Explanation
murmured	<u>in a low voice, moved</u>	Definition/Explanation
insignificant	<u>little</u>	Synonym



Notes