Contextual clues

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The twelve contextual clues are based on nine previous studies that attempt to classify contextual clues (Ames, 1966; Artley, 1943; Deighton, 1959; Dulin, 1970; Johnson & Pearson, 1984; McCullough, 1945; Seibert, 1945; Spache & Berg, 1955; Walters, 2006).

Here are examples of the clues. **The bold, underlined words** are difficult words to be guessed, **the italicised words** are contextual clues that may help guess the meanings of the bold, underlined words, and **words in a box** are signs that indicate the clues.

1. Direct description
   
   Their **hutch** was big enough for them to live in.

   Note: The subject *hutch* is explained in the predicate (to live in).

2. Indirect description
   
   When it reaches the **zenith** at this age, it begins to go down.

   Note: There is no explicit sign that indicates a contextual clue, but *zenith* may be inferred from the context that follows it.

3. Contrast/comparison
   
   Before she left she had gone into her kitchen, **ostensibly** to lock the back door, **but in fact** to look at her new food-mixer.
Note: Ostensibly must be the opposite of in fact.

4. Synonym
It is natural to feel better if you feel you look good; even in nature, cats preen themselves too.

Note: Preen must be similar in meaning to look good.

5. Appositive
It is likely that the published works themselves are mutable; they might now look different.

Note: The sentence including mutable is explained by the sentence that follows the colon.

6. Modification
The refectory where food was served was still a bit uncomfortable for her.

Note: Refectory is explained by the relative clause that follows it.

7. Restatement
When she heard his words, her head lolled in the chair. She went to sleep immediately.

Note: There is no explicit sign that indicates a contextual clue, but may be inferred from the context that follows it.

8. Cause/effect
The famous trees languished because of the terrible heat.

Note: Terrible heat caused trees to languish.

9. Words in series
The view was really beautiful as the light began to appear on the wide range of the sea; ahead, astern, and on either side of us.

Note: Astern must be related to ahead and on either side of us.

10. Reference
She had bought a new trilby for him. As soon as she gave it to him, he was very happy and put it on his head.

Note: A trilby is something that is put on one’s head.
11. Association

I **averted** my eyes from the sight of it.

Note: The meaning of *averted* may be derived by the phrase that follows it.

12. Example

The show is held about various ways of having **beverages** such as tea and coffee.

Note: *Tea* and *coffee* are examples of **beverages**.

References:


