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# Examining the Effects of Explicit Teaching of Context Clues in Content Area Texts

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EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF EXPLICIT TEACHING OF CONTEXT  
CLUES IN CONTENT AREA TEXTS

by

Jessie Ruth Jensen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Department of Teacher Education

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Jessie Ruth Jensen in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF EXPLICIT TEACHING OF CONTEXT CLUES IN CONTENT AREA TEXTS

Jessie Ruth Jensen

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Master of Education

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of explicitly teaching students how to recognize and use context clues in content-area texts through a six-week instructional program. Quantitative analyses were performed to reveal any difference between a control and treatment group. Results indicated that students in the treatment group abilities to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary words were increased significantly more than students in the control group. Students who received the six weeks of instruction more effectively used context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words than students who did not receive the instruction. Recommendations for further research are discussed.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables .....	viii
Chapter	
1.    Introduction.....	1
Definition and Levels of Vocabulary Knowledge .....	2
Vocabulary and Content-area Texts.....	3
Two Types of Vocabulary Instruction .....	4
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Statement of the Purpose .....	7
Research Question .....	8
Definition of Terms.....	8
2.    Literature Review.....	10
Role of Vocabulary in Academic Success .....	10
Vocabulary Demands In Content-area Texts .....	11
Low-frequency Vocabulary Words and Concepts .....	12
Multiple Meaning Words.....	12
Words that Carry Critical Meaning.....	13
Vocabulary Instruction.....	14
Intentional Vocabulary Instruction .....	15
Incidental Vocabulary Instruction.....	17
Purpose of the Study .....	21

3.	Methods and Procedures .....	22
	Participants.....	22
	Design .....	22
	Procedure .....	24
	Treatment .....	24
	Introduction.....	26
	Modeling.....	26
	Practice.....	26
	Control .....	27
	Fidelity of Treatment .....	28
	Data Source.....	28
	Pre-test .....	28
	Post-test.....	29
	Data Analysis .....	30
	Limitations .....	31
4.	Results.....	33
	Pre-test .....	33
	Post-test.....	33
5.	Discussion.....	36
	Implications.....	38
	Future Research .....	40
	References.....	42



Appendix

A. Pre-test and Post-test .....	47
B. Sample Lessons from Instructional Program .....	71

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Participant Demographics .....	23
2. Pre-Test Mean and Standard Error .....	33
3. Analysis of Covariance Table for Instructional Measures .....	34
4. Analysis of Covariance Table for Transfer Measures .....	35

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of vocabulary knowledge, or the number of words a student knows and uses, has long been recognized in education throughout the United States (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; Marzano & Marzano, 1988; National Reading Panel, 2000). One reason this is true is because of the strong relationship found between vocabulary and academic performance (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). For example, Nagy and Herman (1984) estimate that there is a difference of between 4,500 and 5,400 words in the vocabularies of high verses low achieving students, demonstrating that a student's vocabulary knowledge can be an indicator for student achievement. As such, the importance of vocabulary for success in schools cannot be overestimated (Biemiller, 2005).

While there are many reasons why vocabulary has an influence on children's academic success, one specific reason is because of the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) recognize that since the early days of research on reading, a strong relationship has been acknowledged between vocabulary and comprehension. If students are unable to comprehend the texts they are exposed to in school, they are at a great disadvantage (Jenkins, Matlock, & Slocum, 1989). Reading comprehension requires understanding at the word, sentence and paragraph levels (Aarnoutse & Leeuwe, 2000). If students consistently encounter words within a text that they are unfamiliar with while reading, they are not going to be able to comprehend the passage as a whole (Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1998; Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Not knowing the meaning of just one word may directly affect the student's ability

to comprehend an entire passage, providing evidence that a student's vocabulary knowledge can directly influence a student's ability to comprehend a text.

### *Definition and Levels of Vocabulary Knowledge*

*Vocabulary knowledge* is defined as knowing a word and being able to use it (Nagy & Scott, 2000). However, according to Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), there are varying degrees or levels of knowing a word: (a) having no knowledge, (b) having a general sense, (c) having a narrow knowledge that is context bound and cannot be transferred to a different context (d) having knowledge of a word, but not being able to recall it readily enough to use it in an appropriate situation, and (e) having a rich knowledge, or de-contextualized knowledge of the word and its meaning. The first two levels of knowing a word do not provide the student with enough information to use the word properly. In regards to the third level, when a student has only a narrow, context bound knowledge of a word, he/she may recognize a word and associate it with a particular situation, but lack the ability to generalize its meaning to other situations for which it applies (Cronback, 1943). For example, if a student sees the word *park* he/she may recognize it when used to describe a large area of recreation. However, he/she may not have the ability to generalize its meaning to other situations to which it might apply, such as if someone were to *park* a car. If we compare this to the highest degree of vocabulary knowledge, or someone who has a rich knowledge of a word, he/she would know the meaning of the word and would have the ability to generalize the word to multiple situations for which it might apply. The level of word knowledge required to read certain passages may differ depending on what type of text is being read. Thus, different types of texts have different vocabulary knowledge demands.

### *Vocabulary and Content-area Texts*

Content-area texts, or texts meant for the purpose of informing (Durkin, 1993; Vacca & Vacca, 1993), are often more difficult to understand than narrative texts because of increased vocabulary demands. Content-area texts demand a higher level of word knowledge than narrative texts for several reasons. The first reason is due to the use of *low-frequency words* (Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood, 2005). A low-frequency word is a technical word specific to a particular context, making it a word that is likely unfamiliar to students. The low-frequency words used in content-area text are often central to the topic of the passage, yet they are often words a student has not seen before. In order for students to comprehend content-area texts, it is important for them to know the meaning of the low-frequency words.

Another reason content-area texts can be more difficult to comprehend is due to the use of *multiple-meaning words* (Crawley & Mountain, 1988). Sometimes words have more than one definition, meaning the same word can be used in more than one way. Students with a limited vocabulary might only know and recognize one possible definition of a multiple-meaning word, which in turn can limit their comprehension.

A third reason content-area texts are more difficult to comprehend is due to the nature of the instructional purpose associated with content-area texts. A student's instructional task when reading such texts is most often to learn new information and facts (Durkin, 1993; Lukens, 2003; Vacca & Vacca, 1993). When reading for the purpose of learning new information, there is a greater responsibility to remember and retain the information so the information can be accessed later.

As students enter upper grade classrooms and encounter more content-area texts, they may have a more difficult time with comprehension due to the increased number of words that may exceed their current vocabularies (National Reading Panel, 2000). Knowing that students have a more difficult time comprehending content-area texts due to the value placed on vocabulary, it is important to explore the types of instruction students are given to learn new vocabulary words.

### *Two Types of Vocabulary Instruction*

According to Beck and McKeown (1991), there are two main ways in which students learn words: (a) intentionally and (b) incidentally. They describe *intentional vocabulary instruction* as when the explicit purpose of the instruction is to learn the meaning of a word. Thus, any instruction given that is done specifically for the purpose of a student learning a new word would be an intentional vocabulary learning strategy. Beck and McKeown (1991) continue by describing *incidental vocabulary instruction* as when the explicit purpose of the interaction with the word is not to learn the word's meaning. Rather, the purpose of instruction may focus on something other than learning a word's meaning, but the student learns the word's meaning through the interaction, regardless. Beck and McKeown claim that students learn words incidentally through oral conversations and media, or through written documents such as letters, magazines or books. The two most prominent methods used to learn word definitions in classrooms are the dictionary, or definition, method (intentional) and the context method (incidental) (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Watts, 1995).

The dictionary method, which is the most common type of intentional instruction, centers around dictionary skills or emphasizes the use of the dictionary (Beck &

McKeown, 1991; Carnine, Kameenui, & Coyle, 1984; Jenkins et al., 1989). There are both negative and positive aspects to the dictionary method of intentional instruction. Some negative aspects to the dictionary method are that a dictionary (a) does not always provide enough information (Greenwood, 2002), (b) sometimes uses a different but equally complex word in the definition (Irvin, 1990), and (c) takes time and can be a distraction to the reader (Rickelman & Taylor, 2006). In contrast, the dictionary method has some positive aspects as well. For example, when using the dictionary method many useful words can be taught and students can look up words independently, without the necessity of getting help from another individual.

Students learn up to 3,000 new words in one year through various vocabulary learning methods, both intentional and incidental (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Rickelman & Taylor, 2006). If teachers were to depend on the dictionary method or other types of intentional instruction alone, that would mean teachers would need to teach approximately 20 new words every day (Graves, 2000). Thus, while many words may be taught through intentional methods, it is unrealistic to teach all words this way. For this reason, students also need to be able to learn word meanings incidentally.

The most prominent way students learn words incidentally is through the use of context clues (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck et al., 2002). Context clues are defined as words found around an unknown word that provides clues that reveal the meaning of the unknown word (Beck et al., 2002). The context in which a word is found can often provide clues that can help students determine a word's meaning independent of a dictionary or a teacher. Using context is one strategy students can use that can help them to become independent word learners and it also helps account for the words students

learn outside of intentional instruction. However, students often do not know how to use context to figure out the word's meaning. Additionally, the text does not provide a clue that will lead to the meaning of every word. Moreover, students often do not recognize clues even when they are present. Thus, even though context can be valuable by helping to account for the words students learn outside of direct intentional instruction, students need to know and understand how to use the context in order for it to be a truly useful strategy.

Knowing how to use context is one of the most important skills that can be taught in order to promote vocabulary growth in students (Gambrell & Headley, 2006). In order for students to utilize context as a word learning method, however, instruction needs to be given on how to do so. Teaching students how to use context should include steps that are broken down appropriately to provide efficient scaffolding. The steps should be direct and free from ambiguity. As Dole and her colleagues suggest (1991), "The more explicit an instructional cue, the more likely students are to infer a teacher's intended curricular goals unambiguously" (p. 252). A study done by Buikema and Graves (1993) also suggests that teaching students to use context clues can be effective only if the instruction is explicit, scaffolded, and provides practice and feedback. Explicit instruction can be described as instruction that (a) provides a clear description of the task, (b) encourages students to pay attention, (c) activates prior knowledge, (d) breaks the task into small steps, (e) provides adequate practice throughout each step, and (f) provides teacher feedback (Rand Reading Study Group, 2004). If students are explicitly taught how to use context as a vocabulary learning strategy, their ability to learn words independently may be increased.



### *Statement of the Problem*

Many studies have examined the effects of using context to learn unknown words and have found context to be a successful resource or strategy (Buikema & Graves, 1993; Carnine et al., 1984; Jenkins et al., 1989; Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984; Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). Yet, an issue that many researchers have contemplated is whether students' ability to use printed contexts as a source for vocabulary learning can be improved (Beck & McKeown, 1991). Many previous studies lack the component of teaching students how to use context. A study done by Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987) for example, investigated how well students were able to derive a meaning from a word used in context. The results of their study demonstrated that incidental learning of word meanings through the use of context clues does take place, but no instruction or guidance was given to students in how to do so. Additional research is needed to determine if explicitly teaching context clues in content-area texts can improve children's ability to learn new content-area vocabulary words.

### *Statement of the Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of explicitly teaching students how to recognize and use context clues in content-area texts. Explicit instruction will be given in 18 lessons over a six week time period. The instructors will explicitly teach three different types of context clues (synonyms, antonyms, definitions) that can be used to learn unfamiliar words. For the purposes of this study, the content-area text will be social studies specific.

### *Research Question*

The specific question that this study will answer is: Does explicit instruction of context clues effect third grade students' ability to define unknown social studies vocabulary terms?

### *Definition of Terms*

#### *Content-area Texts*

Content-area texts are texts that are written for the purpose of informing (Durkin, 1993; Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

#### *Content-area Vocabulary*

Content-area vocabulary will be referred to as the language or words of a specific content area or discipline (e.g. social studies, science).

#### *Low-frequency Words*

Low-frequency words are technical words, specific to a particular content, making them words students are likely unfamiliar with.

#### *Multiple Meaning Words*

Multiple meaning words are words that have more than one known definition. One must look at the context of the word in order to know which definition is being used.

#### *Intentional Vocabulary Instruction*

Intentional vocabulary instruction is instruction in which the explicit purpose of the interaction is to learn the meaning of a word. This type of instruction includes both consulting a source, such as a dictionary or more knowledgeable person, and direct instruction on the meanings of specific words (Beck & McKeown, 1991).

### *Incidental Vocabulary Instruction*

Incidental vocabulary instruction is when the overall purpose of the interaction in a given situation is not to learn words. Many sources for incidental learning include conversations, media, and written environments (Beck & McKeown, 1991).

### *Context Clues*

Context clues are defined as the words found around an unknown word that provide clues that reveal the meaning of the unknown word (Beck et al., 2002). For the purpose of this study, the specific clues used and taught will be defined as follows:

*Synonym clue.* A synonym clue is when a synonym is found in the context surrounding an unknown word and it helped the reader determine the meaning of the unknown word.

*Antonym clue.* An antonym clue is when an antonym is found in the context of an unknown word and it helps the reader to determine the meaning of the unknown word.

*Definition clue.* A definition clue is when the definition of an unknown word is directly given within the context of the unknown word.

### *Explicit Instruction*

Explicit instruction can be described as instruction that (a) provides a clear description of the task, (b) encourages students to pay attention, (c) activates prior knowledge, (d) breaks the task into small steps, (e) provides adequate practice throughout each step, and (f) provides teacher feedback (Rand Reading Study Group, 2004).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Role of Vocabulary in Academic Success*

Words are so common in our life and so central to our daily routine in general, that it is easy to overlook the value and power that they hold (Stahl & Nagy, 2006). However, a student's ability to understand and use words without difficulty will, in large part, determine his or her academic success (Stahl & Kapinus, 2001). In fact, there is a wealth of research that documents the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic success or achievement (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Irvin, 1990; Marzano & Marzano, 1988; Scott, 2005; Stahl & Kapinus, 2001; Texas Reading Initiative, 2000). According to Biemiller (2005) the importance of vocabulary knowledge for success in schools cannot be over estimated. In order to be academically successful, a student needs to have a large reading vocabulary (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

One reason vocabulary knowledge and academic success are so closely connected is because of the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension (Baumann & Kameenui, 2003; Irvin, 1990; Yopp & Yopp, 2007). If the reader does not know a sufficient proportion of the words in a text, comprehension is impossible (Stahl & Nagy, 2006; Texas Reading Initiative, 2000). In fact, a reader's general vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of how well that reader can understand text (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). Many children can decode the words on a page, but fail to comprehend what they read due to limited vocabulary (Biemiller, 2005).

While having strong vocabulary knowledge is positive for comprehension, the opposite can also be true; that is, not having a sufficient vocabulary can easily limit a

student's comprehension (Pressley, 2000). Thus, the relationship that exists between comprehension and vocabulary is a reciprocal one (Baumann & Kameenui, 2003; Nagy, 2005; Yopp & Yopp, 2007). If one component improves, so does the other. Yet, if one's vocabulary does not improve, comprehension may also remain stagnant. A student's vocabulary and comprehension grow and improve together. Pressley (2000) stated that knowledge of all sorts, such as background knowledge or schema, can also potentially increase comprehension skills, but the connection between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension seems to be especially strong.

#### *Vocabulary Demands in Content-area Texts*

When at school, students are expected to comprehend many types of texts. However, different types of texts have different vocabulary knowledge demands, making some texts more difficult to comprehend than others. For example, the vocabulary demands associated with content-area text can be especially high because the main goal of content-area text is to communicate information (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991). As students are trying to increase their knowledge through reading content-area texts, it is often necessary for them to expand their vocabulary in order to understand and make sense of the text. Whereas with narrative text, the vocabulary is generally more familiar. So, while some children may be able to read a story with ease, they may struggle if they are confronted with a content-area text about a science or social studies topic (Duke & Kays, 1998). Thus, content-area texts, or texts connected to a specific discipline, such as science or social studies, require a deeper level of vocabulary knowledge to comprehend successfully due to the increased vocabulary demands. Having insufficient vocabulary knowledge makes comprehending content-area text particularly difficult due to (a) low-

frequency vocabulary words and concepts, (b) multiple meaning words, and (c) the instructional purposes associated with content-area texts.

### *Low-frequency Vocabulary Words and Concepts*

One reason content-area texts are more difficult to comprehend than narrative text is because of the use of low-frequency vocabulary words (Harmon et al., 2005). The words used in content-area texts are often very specific to one content area, such as math, science or social studies. This means they are not frequently used outside of their specific content-area and the reader may not have been exposed to the word enough times to take ownership of it (Harmon et al., 2005). The word *tundra*, for example, is not likely used in many contexts except when speaking about different biomes or ecosystems. If a student has not frequently read about biomes and he/she comes across the word *tundra*, there is a high probability that the word will be unfamiliar due to the infrequency with which it is used. If students encounter low-frequency words for which they are unable to determine the meaning, an entire sentence can become meaningless. It may even inhibit comprehension of subsequent sentences within the same text (Marks, Doctorow, & Wittrock, 1974).

### *Multiple Meaning Words*

Content-area texts also use multiple meaning words. The intended meaning of a multiple meaning word is determined by how it is used within the text (Crawley & Mountain, 1988). Sometimes a word a student already knows is used in a specialized way for a particular discipline, causing the word to appear unfamiliar (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). For example, the word *hide* is often used to refer to something a person might do when they do not want to be seen by another person, such as in the game of hide-and-go-

seek. However, the word *hide* when used in a social studies text, may have a different meaning, such as the skin of an animal. When dealing with multiple meaning words, there are several ways a student might become confused. One possibility is that the student may hear a word and associate it with one of its more common meanings. Another possibility is the student may lack the ability to generalize the meaning to other situations where the word might apply (Cronback, 1943). For example, a student may understand that someone can be plain, meaning ordinary or simple, but he/she may not be able to understand that a *plain* can also be used to reference an area of land. This is an example of one of the varying degrees of knowing a word as previously discussed by Beck et al. (2002). In this case, the student has a narrow knowledge of a word that he/she would recognize in context, but not be able to transfer it to a different context.

#### *Words that Carry Critical Meaning*

Since content-area texts convey information, key words are often essential for understanding. This means that readers cannot skip over words in content-area texts without affecting the reader's understanding of the passage. Blackowicz and Fisher (2000) demonstrate and elaborate on this idea with the following example:

...it would be difficult for a student to understand a unit on light without a clear understanding, both receptive and expressive, of the term refraction. Furthermore, in content learning, the terms must be remembered and are often the building blocks of later instruction. (p. 511)

Depending on the complexity of the paragraph, the reader would have a hard time understanding a paragraph about *light* if the word *refraction* was not understood. Plus, there might be subsequent paragraphs at a later date that might also be difficult to

comprehend without that understanding. So, as expressed in the example, in content-area text one word can be crucial for a reader to understand an entire passage (Marks et al., 1974).

### *Vocabulary Instruction*

As students experience difficulty when trying to comprehend content-area texts, they need instruction to help them to come to know the unknown or unfamiliar words they encounter. Educators have the responsibility to provide the maximum opportunity for all students to gain access to knowledge about the academic discourse needed to succeed in schools (Scott, 2005). One possible step for improving a student's vocabulary knowledge is to have teachers teach effective word learning strategies that help students understand and learn specialized vocabulary (Allen, 1999). However, to know if this is a good solution, it is important to look at the vocabulary strategies being taught and determine if the strategies being used are effective or if new strategies need to be taught.

There are two basic types of vocabulary instruction (a) intentional and (b) incidental. Beck and McKeown (1991) define intentional vocabulary instruction as instruction with the explicit purpose to teach the meaning of a word. An example of intentional instruction is when a teacher directly provides one or more resources, such as a dictionary or a more knowledgeable person, with the strict intention of having the student learn the meaning of a word. Beck and McKeown (1991) describe incidental vocabulary instruction as an experience where a student may increase their word knowledge through an initial encounter with a word. This encounter may come through an oral situation, such as conversation and the media, or through written environments, such as letters, magazines and books.



### *Intentional Vocabulary Instruction*

There are many types of intentional vocabulary instruction strategies, such as teaching word parts like prefixes and suffixes (Graves, 2006), semantic mapping, or using mnemonic methods (Baumann & Kameenui, 2003). However, one of the most prominent strategies of intentional vocabulary instruction involves using the dictionary to look up definitions of unknown words (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Carnine et al., 1984; Jenkins et al., 1989). Dictionary instruction generally follows a pattern of receiving a list of words on Monday, looking up words in a dictionary on Tuesday, doing skill work on Wednesday and Thursday and having a test on Friday (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). This type of dictionary activity (look it up, define it, use the word in a sentence) is often discouraged (Nist & Olejnik, 1995), yet it is a daily routine in thousands of classrooms (Greenwood, 2002). Ironically, “asking students to look up words in the dictionary and use them in a sentence is a stereotypical example of what students find uninteresting in school” (Beck et al., 2002, p. 13). Not only do students seem to find this process uninteresting, but Allen (1999) believes that this process has little impact on a student’s vocabulary knowledge.

While there are likely positive and negative aspects to every type of vocabulary instruction, there seem to be a high number of negative criticisms towards intentional dictionary instruction. There are many reasons why the dictionary method of intentional vocabulary instruction should be discouraged. For example, Greenwood (2002) and Irvin (1990) point out two specific problems with looking up definitions as a way to learn new words. The first problem is that definitions do not always have enough information to allow for complete ease of use or complete understanding. “For example, a student

finding ‘*trade*’ as a definition for the word ‘*commerce*’ is likely to write a sentence such as, ‘I will commerce my baseball for your goalie shirt’” (Irvin, 1990, p. 9). This instance is a perfect example of the fourth level of word knowledge described by Beck et al. (2002), in which the student has an understanding of the word, but does not have the ability to use it in an appropriate situation. The second problem presented by Greenwood and Irvin is that often a person must know a different, equally complex, or unfamiliar word in order to understand the definition provided in a dictionary. For example, if one were to look up the word *fiasco* in the dictionary, the definition provided says “a complete and ignominious failure.” Someone looking up the word *fiasco* may not know the word *ignominious* and, therefore, may only have a partial understanding of the word *fiasco*, or a “general sense” of the word (Beck et al., 2002).

Looking up words in a dictionary can also distract the reader. It takes time to walk to the dictionary, look up the word, decide upon a correct meaning and go back to the text to see if it fits (Rickelman & Taylor, 2006). When using a dictionary or glossary to determine the meaning of a word, the reader’s train of thought is interrupted, causing him or her to shift his or her attention from the author’s message to the mechanics of figuring out a word’s meaning (Carnine et al., 1984). By the time this process has taken place and the reader returns to the text, he/she often has forgotten what he/she was reading (Rickelman & Taylor, 2006).

Regardless of the negative criticisms made toward intentional dictionary instruction, Jenkins et al. (1989) claim that the dictionary method can be helpful. They suggest that the dictionary strategy can be effective if (a) an extremely large number of words are taught or (b) the words that are taught are extremely useful words that will

truly help students in understanding content-area texts. However, teaching a large number of words or carefully choosing the words to be taught still does not guarantee success when using dictionary instruction. Graves (2006) claims there are far too many words children need to learn to teach them all directly. We cannot directly teach all 3,000 new words a student learns in a year. Teachers can also put forth great effort to choose vocabulary words carefully. However, regardless of any effort teachers put forth in carefully choosing vocabulary words, the knowledge attained through dictionary instruction will not suffice. The knowledge that students have of words is far more complex than can be attained through dictionary instruction only (Nagy & Scott, 2000) and needs to be gained through other means as well.

#### *Incidental Vocabulary Instruction*

Students need to learn a large number of vocabulary words through activities other than intentional vocabulary instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teachers cannot teach all the words, but they can teach strategies that help students to learn unfamiliar words independently. In fact, massive amounts of vocabulary growth seem to occur without much help from teachers (Allen, 1999; Nagy et al., 1985). Learning word definitions independently or through personal experience is sometimes referred to as incidental word learning. One way of incidentally learning words is through oral conversation (Beck & McKeown, 1991). A person can learn the meaning of a word by listening to how others use it in their speech. Another common form of incidental word learning is known as the context method (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Carnine et al., 1984; Jenkins et al., 1989).

Context refers to the words, sentences, and paragraphs that occur before and after an unknown word in a text (Gambrell & Headley, 2006). More specifically, when referring to vocabulary knowledge, “the term context is used to refer to information in written text that explains the meaning of individual words” (Alvermann, Dillon, & O'Brien, 1987, p. 14). Gambrell and Headley (2006) claim that using context clues as a way to figure out the meaning of unknown words is perhaps one of the most important strategies that a reader can possess. It provides a way to learn an unknown word without the use of another person or resource.

Incidental learning from context has long been assumed to be one of the major causes of vocabulary growth (Nagy et al., 1985). It has been a prevalent and highly recommended strategy (McKeown, 1985). Perhaps this is the case because its most accepted contender strategy (direct dictionary instruction) is not adequate to account for the words children learn, so context becomes prominent by default (Beck & McKeown, 1991). Buikema and Graves (1993) elaborate on this point by recognizing that the number of words children need to learn in a year is extremely large (approximately 3,000, as previously mentioned) and context provides a more realistic way to learn a large number of words.

Other researchers provide different reasoning for viewing the context method as a good word learning strategy. Gambrell and Headley (2006), for example, like the context method for two different reasons. First, using context allows a reader to efficiently figure out the meaning of an unknown word with very little interruption of the comprehension process, making it possible for the reader to figure out the word without having to visit another resource for help. Secondly, context may give a more expanded and richer

understanding of a word than a direct dictionary definition. If nothing else, students can learn at least a partial understanding of a word with just one single encounter of a word used in context (Nist & Olejnik, 1995). For example, a person may gain a general or narrow understanding of the word, yet still not be able to recall it readily or use it in an appropriate situation (Beck et al., 2002). This partial understanding, however, can give students a foundation of the word to draw from when they encounter the same word again.

There are some researchers who question how useful context clues are in learning new words. Baumann and Kameenui (1991), for example, state that context clues are relatively ineffective means for inferring the meaning of specific words. While Allen (1999) holds a similar view point, she provides more information in backing her claim. She states that there is usually not enough information in a single sentence to help students assimilate a word. She continues to say that context appears to be helpful only if the reader already knows the meaning of a word. Another skeptical view claims that context does not usually provide clues to the meanings of low-frequency words (commonly seen in content-area texts) and that context clues actually inhibit the prediction of word meanings just as often as they facilitate them (Schatz & Baldwin, 1986). While these view points demonstrate that incidental instruction may have flaws, it is still an important strategy to account for many of the words a student learns in a year.

After exploring both intentional and incidental vocabulary learning strategies, it seems apparent that intentional dictionary methods cannot account for all the vocabulary learning that takes place at school (Stahl & Nagy, 2006). This knowledge may cause teachers to rely heavily on the context method as a default strategy. However, as

researchers suggest, the context method also has some disadvantages that may inhibit student's abilities to learn words. As such, the question is whether the ability to use context clues can be explicitly taught so that students' ability to use printed context can be improved (Beck & McKeown, 1991).

In order for context to serve the reader well, the reader may need some sort of explicit instruction of how to use and recognize context clues. Explicit instruction can be described and recognized as instruction that (a) provides a clear description of the task, (b) encourages student's full attention, (c) activates prior knowledge, (d) breaks the task into small steps, (e) provides adequate practice throughout each step, and (f) provides teacher feedback (Rand Reading Study Group, 2004). In other words, explicit instruction should include steps that are broken down appropriately to provide efficient scaffolding for a child. For example, synonyms are one type of clue that can help to unlock a word's meaning. Teaching a student how to use synonyms, using the steps provided above, is one way context clues could be explicitly taught. Explicit instruction should also include modeling that can help activate the student's previous knowledge, as well as opportunities to practice with appropriate teacher feedback. "The more explicit an instructional cue, the more likely students are to infer a teacher's intended curricular goals unambiguously" (Dole et al., 1991, p. 252). Ideally, if word learning strategies are explicitly taught, then students can learn the strategies without ambiguity. If students know good strategies for improving their vocabulary, they will have the ability to learn more words, which in turn will improve their comprehension and overall success in school.

### *Purpose of the Study*

A main focus or goal of teachers is to increase student achievement. Having a large vocabulary can improve reading comprehension, which in turn can improve overall student achievement. In order for students to increase their vocabulary knowledge, children may need to know word learning strategies that will help them learn words independently. The use of context clues is one strategy students can use to independently learn words on their own without interrupting the comprehension process. Most students independently use context to a certain degree when reading any text. However, little research has been done to see if students' abilities to use context can be enhanced through instruction that explicitly teaches different ways that context can be used. Deriving word meaning from context is a difficult process that may not come automatically (Goerss, 1995). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine whether or not students will respond to receiving explicit instruction in how to use context clues to learn content-area vocabulary terms.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of instruction designed to teach content-area vocabulary terms through the use of context clues. More specifically, this study examined the effect of using explicit instruction to teach context clues as a strategy to help children learn new vocabulary terms within social studies text.

#### *Participants*

Thirty-seven students from three third-grade classrooms within the same school participated in the study. Each class was relatively small (less than twenty) and two of the classes were taught by an intern, which is a first year teacher who has a full-time mentor. A mentor is a more experienced teacher who acts as an advisor in helping new teachers with curriculum and school culture. The school is located in the Mountain West and is designated as a Title I, with 56 percent of the student body receiving state aid through free or reduced lunch. In terms of demographics, the school population consists of 67% Caucasian, 26% Latino/a, 1% Pacific Islander, 2% Asian, 1% African American, 1% American Indian and 2% other. There were 19 female and 18 male participants. One student received Special Education services. (See Table 1 for the Participant Demographics).

#### *Design*

A pretest-posttest control-group design was used for this study; however, the treatment and control groups were not randomly assigned. A convenient sample was selected because the researcher was a full-time mentor of two of the three participating classrooms. These two classrooms were designated as the treatment group because this



Table 1. Participant Demographics

Summary of the Control and Treatment Participant Demographics (N=37)

	Control % (n=)	Treatment % (n=)
<b>SES</b>		
Free or Reduced lunch	81% (n=18)	69% (n=27)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	61% (n=8)	42% (n=10)
Female	39% (n=5)	58% (n=14)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian	70% (n=9)	71% (n=17)
Latino/a	23% (n=3)	17% (n=4)
Asian	7% (n=1)	4% (n=1)
Native American	—	8% (n=2)
<b>English Second Language</b>		
ESL	30% (n=4)	13% (n=3)
<b>Special Education</b>		
Special Ed	—	4% (n=1)
Total	13	24

provided the researcher with greater access in supervising the implementation of the instruction and the ability to check for fidelity of treatment.

The pretest-posttest control-group design is one way to assess the effects of an instruction intervention in a natural educational setting. This design consisted of administering a pretest on a dependent variable to both groups of participants. The independent variable was then administered to the treatment group. Following the treatment condition, the treatment and control groups took a post-test on the dependent variable (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The scores from the pre- and post-test were then compared to determine students' response to the treatment. The data showed the differences in students' vocabulary knowledge before starting the treatment compared to after the treatment was complete as well as if the dependent variable produced an effect (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

#### *Procedure*

Three third-grade classrooms participated in the study. Two classrooms, taught by interns, comprised the treatment group and one classroom, taught by a more experienced teacher (9 years experience) was designated as the control group.

#### *Treatment*

The two treatment classrooms received six weeks of instruction (18 lessons) focused on context clues. The target vocabulary words used in the instruction were taken from the social studies content and curriculum, which is part of the Utah State Core Curriculum (Utah State Office of Education, n.d). A pre-test was then administered prior to the start of the six week instructional period and the post-test was administered within 1-2 days of the completion of the instruction. The pre-test was also given prior to the

social studies unit that correlated with the content of the vocabulary lessons. (See Appendix A for the Pre- and Post-test).

The 18 lessons were presented in a small group setting (3-5 students). The lessons were not scripted, but they were outlined in order to ensure that the teachers in both classrooms presented students with the same material. The content of these lessons focused on using three specific types of context clues (synonyms, antonyms, definitions) to understand and determine meaning of new vocabulary words (See Appendix B for Sample Lessons from Instructional Program).

The content of the paragraphs given in the instruction contained information included in the Utah third grade Social Studies State Core (Utah State Office of Education, n.d) more specifically information on the Ute and Inca Indian tribes. The texts found in the instruction were all expository text giving information on one of the two tribes. All texts were tested for readability using the Dale-Chall Readability Scale (Chall & Dale, 1995) to assure they were on a third-grade reading level. Both classes also received instruction on the Utes and Incas during a social studies time block, independent of the 18 vocabulary lessons which were presented in small groups during reading workshop. The pre-test was given before the unit on the Utes was taught and the post-test was given when the Utes unit was completed.

The first of the 18 lessons was an overall introduction to context clues, followed by five lessons focused on synonyms, five lessons on antonyms, and five lessons on definitions. The last two lessons were review days that reviewed all three types of clues. All lessons followed the steps of explicit teaching by (a) providing a clear description of the task, (b) encouraging students to pay attention, (c) activating prior knowledge,

(d) breaking the task into small steps, (e) providing adequate practice and (f) providing teacher feedback (Rand Reading Study Group, 2004). Each lesson, excluding day one, contained three distinct sections. These three sections were (a) introduction, (b) modeling and (c) practice. These three parts will be described in the following sections.

*Introduction.* The introduction was found at the beginning of each lesson (excluding day one) and reviewed the words and/or objective from the previous day. The review words were individually discussed through questioning by the teacher. This was done to check their recall of the definition and to provide students with more than just one exposure to the words.

*Modeling.* Following the introduction, the teacher modeled the strategy. A word the students likely did not know was presented in a sentence. The teacher modeled a series of steps that helped students use context clues to learn an unknown word. The same steps were used for all three types of clues (synonyms, antonyms and definitions) except for step four. Step four varied according to which type of clue was being taught. When synonym clues were the type of clue being explicitly taught, for example, the five steps were (a) underline the unknown word, (b) re-read the sentence before and after the unknown word, (c) circle the word clue or phrase that acts as the clue, (d) replace the unknown word with the synonym clue, and (e) check for understanding. When teaching the antonym clues however, rather than replacing the unknown word with the clue, the student had to think of a word with the opposite meaning of the antonym clue and then replace the word.

*Practice.* In the practice section, more responsibility was given to the students. One or two new words were presented to the students and they predicted the meaning of

the words before seeing either word in context. The children alternated between reading the text individually and reading it as a shared read with their teacher. This helped to provide a gradual release of responsibility and prepared the student to use the strategy when reading independently. The child then practiced following the same five steps used in the modeling section.

The definitions of the target vocabulary words were then refined as the clues given in the text were discussed. Also as practice, a graphic organizer was completed each day providing a more concrete understanding of the new vocabulary terms. One of the reasons the organizers were used is because children “need to manipulate words mentally, to see similarities and differences among them and to consider multiple definitions and shades of meaning” (Greenwood, 2002, p. 259). The ten lessons on synonyms and antonyms used the same graphic organizer. However, the days in which the definition clues were discussed, a different organizer was used due to the nature of the type of clue. (See Appendix B to see the differences in graphic organizers). At the completion of each lesson, students reviewed the content of the text by doing an oral, group retelling.

### *Control*

The third participating class (control group) received the same social studies unit as the treatment classrooms and were administered the pre-test prior to receiving any instruction on that unit. However, the students in this classroom (control group) did not receive the six-week vocabulary instructional program. The post-test was administered at the completion of the unit.

### *Fidelity of Treatment*

To ensure fidelity of treatment, both treatment group teachers participating in the study were observed 6-7 times through the six weeks of instruction. A checklist was composed that had all of the components of the lesson plan to insure that the teachers were following the given set of guidelines. The control classroom teacher was not observed since the students in the control group did not receive the six-week vocabulary instructional program.

### *Data Sources*

The primary data sources for this research were the pre- and post-test that were designed specifically to match the instruction used in this study. (Copies of the pre- and post-test can be found in Appendix A). All text used on the pre- and post-test was tested for readability using the Dale-Chall Readability Scale (Chall & Dale, 1995).

#### *Pre-test*

The pre-test examined students' knowledge of context clues and vocabulary terms. The data from the pre-test assessed students' understanding of the social studies key vocabulary terms that was used during the 6 weeks of instruction. The key vocabulary words found in the instruction were a combination of social studies terms listed in the *Utah State Core Curriculum* (USOE, n.d) for grade three, as well as some additional words chosen by the researcher. The extra words chosen connect to the content being taught (the Ute Indians), yet were assumed to be words the students would not previously know. The researcher chose extra words so students could be exposed to a larger amount of words beyond the words found in the State Core. Secondly, the pre-test

assessed student's ability to use context clues to figure out word meanings in content-area text.

### *Post-test*

The post-test had the same items as the pre-test for the purpose of assessing students' knowledge of the key vocabulary words and their ability to use context clues to learn the meaning of unknown words. The post-test also helped to determine if the knowledge they received could be generalized to be true to all kinds of texts rather than text containing only familiar content (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005).

To assess students' ability to use context clues, six different measures (three instructional measures and three transfer measures) were used. The instructional measures assessed vocabulary words students had seen in their instruction previously. They were asked to define target word when seen in isolation (*instruction definition measure*), use the target words in a sentence (*instruction sentence measure*) and define the target words when used in context (*instruction context measure*). The three transfer measures on the other hand, used words from a regular trade book text that had not been seen at any time during the instructional program. As such, the transfer measures included the same tasks as the instructional measures (*transfer definition, transfer sentence, and transfer context*) but were considered transfer measured because they were completed with novel words and content.

The *instruction definition measure* and the *transfer definition measure* were used as a way to determine a student's level of word knowledge when referencing the varying degrees described by Beck et al. (2002). Beck et al. levels of word knowledge as described in chapter one are (a) having no knowledge, (b) having a general sense, (c)

having a narrow knowledge that is context bound and cannot be transferred to a different context, (d) having knowledge of a word, but not being able to recall it readily enough to use it in an appropriate situation, and (e) having a rich knowledge, or de-contextualized knowledge of the word and its meaning.

The *instruction sentence measure* and *transfer sentence measure* were used as a way to allow the researcher to see if the student's knowledge of the word was solidified enough that they could use the word readily in an appropriate situation. The *instruction context measure* and the *transfer context measure* allowed the researcher to determine if the student's knowledge of the word was context bound. For example, a student may not have been able to provide the definition of a word when seeing it in isolation (the definition measure), but when he/she saw the word in context were able to pick out clues that helped to figure out the meaning of the word.

#### *Data Analysis*

Scoring of each item on the pre- and post-test was completed by two independent scorers. Ten tests (five pre-tests and five post-tests) were randomly selected and independently scored by two different scorers to check for inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability on the ten tests was 90 percent. On the ten percent of the scores in which the two scorers did not agree, the score was discussed and a consensus was made as to what the proper score should be. In the instances in which it was difficult to determine where the student ranked on the sentence measure, the definition measure was looked at in helping to score them most accurately. Once it was shown there was an adequate degree of consistency between scorers, the remainder of the tests were scored by one scorer only.



After all scoring and inter-rater reliability was completed, pre- and post-test scores were compared using a series of ANOVAs and ANCOVAs. ANOVAs were used to determine if there were any significant differences between the groups at the outset of the study (pretest). ANCOVAs were used on the post-test analyses, with the pre-test as the covariate, to account for the differences on the pre-test (using the pre-test as the covariate) and to measure the effect of the information presented in the instructional program as well as the transfer of the instruction. All analyses were completed with the individual as the unit of analysis.

### *Limitations*

A limitation of using the pretest-posttest control-group design is that many potentially confounding extraneous variables can influence the post-test results (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). This questions the validity of the study. Did the assessment test what it was intended to test, or are the extraneous variables affecting the results? However, it does provide some good information in letting the researcher know if a change occurred between pre-testing and post-testing. The cause of the change, however, cannot be directly interpreted (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Thus, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

A limitation previously mentioned is that individual students were used as the unit of analysis, but they were not randomly assigned to their classes. Classrooms as a whole were assigned to be a treatment or control group, but individuals within that classroom were already structured prior to this study and they were not randomly assigned.

Another limitation to the study is the small sampling size. If this study were to be conducted with a larger number of students, the findings might yield different results.

Different findings might also result if there was a longer instructional period. The students only received explicit instruction over a six week period, consisting of 18 lessons, only 15-20 minutes in length. Due to the given limitations, the findings cannot be generalized to a different or larger population.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This study explored the effectiveness of an instructional program designed to teach third grade students how to use context to learn unknown vocabulary words in social studies text. A series of ANOVAs and ANCOVAs were conducted to determine differences between the two groups (treatment and control) on pre- and post-test measures.

#### *Pre-test*

A series of ANOVAs were conducted on three pre-test measures (definition, sentence, and context) to determine if there were any significant differences between the groups at the outset of the study (see Table 1). Results indicate that there were no significant differences between the two groups on both the definition measure,  $F_{1,35} = 1.19, p = .283$  and the sentence measure,  $F_{1,35} = 1.62, p = .212$ . However, there was a significant difference on the context measure,  $F_{1,35} = 4.35, p = .044$ .

Table 1. Pre-Test- Mean and Standard Error

Dependent Variable	Control Mean (Standard Error)	Treatment Mean (Standard Error)	F	p
Definition	1.92 (0.86)	3.08 (0.63)	1.19	.283
Sentence	1.53 (1.01)	3.12 (0.73)	1.62	.212
Context	1.79 (0.93)	4.16 (0.68)	4.35	.044*

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

#### *Post-test*

A series of ANCOVAs (Analysis of Covariance) were then conducted on six post-test measures. Three of the measures were analyzing the information presented in the

instructional program (instructional measures) and the other three measures were analyzing transfer of the instruction to new words and content (transfer measures). The pre-test score was used as a covariate in each of the analysis, which provided a way to equalize initial differences between the individuals in the treatment and control group.

On the three instructional measures (See Table 2), results showed there was a significant difference on the *instruction definition measure*,  $F_{1,34} = 9.11$ ,  $p=0.0048$  and the *instruction context measure*  $F_{1,34} = 15.65$ ,  $p=0.0004$ . However, there was not a significant difference between the groups on the *instruction sentence measure*,  $F_{1,34} = 2.89$ ,  $p=0.098$ .

Table 2. Analysis of Covariance Table for Instructional Measures

Dependent Variable	Control Mean (Standard Error)	Treatment Mean (Standard Error)	F	p
Instruction Definition	4.87 (1.42)	10.23 (1.04)	9.11	.005**
Instruction Sentence	4.71 (1.10)	7.06 (0.80)	2.89	.099
Instruction Context	3.48 (1.47)	10.86 (1.06)	15.65	.000***

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

On the transfer measures (See Table 3), it was found that there was a significant difference on the *transfer definition measure*,  $F_{1,34} = 4.16$ ,  $p= .049$  and the *transfer context measure*,  $F_{1,34} = 7.94$ ,  $p= .008$ . Results of this analysis however, indicated there was not a significant differences between the two groups on the *transfer sentence measure*,  $F_{1,34} = .32$ ,  $p= .578$ .

Table 3. Analysis of Covariance Table for Transfer Measures

Dependent Variable	Control Mean (Standard Error)	Treatment Mean (Standard Error)	F	p
Transfer Definition	0.56 (0.21)	1.11 (0.15)	4.16	.049*
Transfer Sentence	0.83 (0.23)	1.00 (0.17)	0.32	.578
Transfer Context	1.43 (0.61)	3.63 (0.44)	7.94	.008**

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that explicit context clue instruction is effective in improving third graders' abilities to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary words. Students who received the six weeks of instruction were able to more effectively use context clues to determine the meaning of an unknown word than the students who did not receive the instruction. Additionally, results demonstrated that students who received the six weeks of instruction not only improved their vocabulary knowledge through the use of context, but they were able to demonstrate transfer of the context instruction to new text and words that they did not see during the instructional program.

Three instructional measures (definition, sentence, context) were used to assess the information presented to students in the instructional program and three transfer measures (definition, sentence, context) were used to see if students could transfer the information from the instructional program to new and unfamiliar words they had not seen before. It would seem natural that the treatment group would score significantly higher than the control group on the *instruction definition measure* and the *instruction context measure* because these words were introduced and practiced during the instructional program. However, to see if the instructional program really improved a student's ability to learn unknown words from context, it is important to look at the *transfer definition measure* and the *transfer context measure*. These measures allowed the researcher to see if the treatment group also scored significantly higher when they were presented with words for which they had not received instruction.

The *transfer definition measure* allowed the researcher to see what a student's word knowledge was prior to seeing a word in context. This measure also allowed the researcher to look at the difference between the treatment and control group before students saw words in context ( $p = .049$ ). When looking at it in context, (*transfer context measure*), results showed a strong significant difference ( $p = .008$ ) between the treatment and control group. The transfer words were never given or discussed in the instruction and should have potentially been new to all students. (Example word: herpetologist.) The words used for the transfer measures were taken directly from trade books and were not derived by the researcher. This indicates students in the treatment group were able to derive much more from context than the control group, demonstrating that the students in the treatment group increased their ability to use context as a way to learn the definitions of unknown words, thus increasing their level of word knowledge.

The *instruction sentence measure* and *transfer sentence measure*, on the other hand, were not used merely to see if students could increase their word knowledge, but they were used to see if the student's knowledge of the word was solidified enough that they could use the word readily in an appropriate situation. When analyzing the *instructional sentence measure* ( $p = .099$ ) and *transfer sentence measure* ( $p = .578$ ), the treatment group was unable to perform better than the control group. This was not surprising in regards to the *transfer sentence measure* because all of the words were potentially new to both groups. The *instructional sentence measure* however, used words that students had previously seen and had practice with. Regardless, students in the treatment group were still unable to put the words in a sentence any better than those in the control group. There are two reasons this may be the case. First, in the attempt to use

the word in a sentence, students would sometime include the definition as part of the sentence, but not use the actual word. For example, when asked to use the word *hide* in a sentence, one student wrote “*People use animal skin to make some coats.*” In this particular example, it is clear that the student does have an understanding of the word, but he/she was not able to use the word properly in a sentence. Secondly, one can refer back to Beck et al. (2002) varying degrees of word knowledge and can conclude that the student’s knowledge of the words was narrow and context bound. They may have understood the meaning of the word, but were unable to recall the word readily enough to use it in an appropriate situation.

There has been debate among some researchers as to the effectiveness of context as a word learning strategy (Allen, 1999; Baumann & Kameenui, 2003; Schatz & Baldwin, 1986). However, this study adds to the literature suggesting that context is an effective word learning strategy if students are explicitly taught how to utilize the context clues found within a text.

### *Implications*

These findings have at least two important implications. First, this study can be added to the list of those that claim that there is a role for instruction in the use of contextual clues in the classroom (Buikema & Graves, 1993; Carnine, Kameenui, & Coyle, 1984; Greenwood, 2002; Nagy & Scott, 2000). However, this study also adds to the literature by helping to determine the role of this type of instruction. For example, this study demonstrates that the role of context clue instruction is to help students become independent word learners and to increase student’s level of word knowledge. After receiving context clue instruction student’s ability to use context to learn unknown words



was improved. Students also increased their level of word knowledge. According to Carnine et al. (1984), in order for students to use context clue to their advantage, they need to be experienced in using them. Explicit teaching of context clues was needed to help students make the substantial gains that were made. When given explicit instruction and experience in using context clues, student's word knowledge progressed from having no knowledge or a general sense of the word, to having a narrow context bound knowledge or having a knowledge of the word but not be able to recall it readily enough to use it in an appropriate situation (Beck et al., 2002). The students in this study were given explicit steps on how to recognize a context clue and then they were provided with practice in recognizing them. With this scaffolding and structure, in a remarkably short period of time, these young students made substantial gains in their knowledge of how to recognize and utilize context clues to determine the meaning of a word, which in turn increased their word knowledge. However, explicit steps were needed in order for students to make the substantial gains attained.

Secondly, teachers who integrate context clue instruction into their daily lesson plans will help strengthen students' ability to determine word definitions of unknown words found in text and may thereby help students to improve their ability to comprehend passages. Knowing that vocabulary and comprehension have such a strong relationship (Baumann & Kameenui, 2003; Irvin, 1990; Yopp & Yopp, 2007), it can be concluded that the use of context can potentially help comprehension in all subject areas at school and not just social studies.

### *Future Research*

This study could be extended in several ways. The data from this study indicated that when students in the treatment group learned words in context, their word knowledge was improved, but it was narrow and often remained context bound. Students were able to give the definition when seen in context, but had a harder time providing a definition when seeing the word in isolation even if they had been given instruction on the word's meaning previously. Future research could examine if the level of word knowledge a student obtains when seeing a word in context could be improved to a richer knowledge of the word and its meaning. Could the instruction be altered in a way that would provide students with a deeper level of understanding that is not so specifically context bound?

In addition, the data from this study also elicited many questions in regards to the sentence measure and how it was used or could be used in future research. In order to expand further knowledge in this area, researchers need to investigate if (a) the student's ability to use words correctly in a sentence can be improved and (b) instruction on using words properly in a sentence will improve a student's level of understanding on that particular word. Having more information in these areas could extend this research beyond just how context can help with student's reading abilities, but look to see how it could effect a student's writing as well. According to Nagy and Scott (2000), definitions provide explicit information about word meanings, while context only provides implicit information. However, they continue to say that one of the main weaknesses of definitions is their failure to provide information about usage that is accessible to school children. How does knowledge of context clues in regards to reading impact a child's oral

or written language? Future research could explore the idea of teaching context clues as a way to improve writing as well as reading.

Knowing that teaching context clues improves a student's ability to figure out the meaning of an unknown word, future research could also examine other ways that context and/or vocabulary can be taught. According to Buikema and Graves (1993), teaching students to use context clues can be effective if the following three factors are in place: (a) instruction is explicit, (b) instruction is scaffolded, and (c) instruction provides practice and feedback. These guidelines leave a lot of room for interpretation. This study demonstrated only one way context clues can be taught and it focused on only three specific types of clues. Is there a different format for teaching context that is more effective and yields even better results? In addition, it is known that the meaning of every word cannot be found within the text's context. Are there other forms of instruction that can better help students determine the meaning of an unknown word within expository text?

At the conclusion of this study, it seems apparent that it is important for students to know many strategies for how to learn the meanings of unknown words encountered in text. When students struggle to figure out the meanings of unknown words, it effects their comprehension and overall success in school (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Irvin, 1990; Marzano & Marzano, 1988; Stahl & Kapinus, 2001). This study opens up many ideas for further study. Future research should continually strive to help determine the most effective way to help students become word learners through the use of context.

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Appendix A

Pre-test and Post-test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-test

Day 1: Part 1

Directions: Find the bold word in the set of boxes. Put an X in the box that best describes your understanding of the word. Look at example #1. If I didn't know what the word immigrant means, then I would put an X in the first box labeled *I have no idea what this word means*. However, if I did know what the word meant, then I would mark one of the last two boxes. See example #2. I would then write down what I think the word means and put the word into a sentence. The definition and sentence sections only need to be filled out if box four or five is marked. If you see a word that you think has more than one meaning, put down both definitions.

Example #1:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>immigrant</b>					

Example #2:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>immigrant</b>					

Immigrant means: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #1:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>dwelling</b>					

1a. Dwelling means: \_\_\_\_\_

1b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #2:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>hide</b>					

2a. Hide means: \_\_\_\_\_

2b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #3:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>garb</b>					

3a. Garb means: \_\_\_\_\_

3b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #4:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>emergence</b>					

4a. Emergence means: \_\_\_\_\_

4b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #5:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>inhabited</b>					

5a. Inhabited means: \_\_\_\_\_

5b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #6:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>chiseled</b>					

6a. Chiseled means: \_\_\_\_\_

6b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #7:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>tropical</b>					

7a. Tropical means: \_\_\_\_\_

7b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #8:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>community</b>					

8a. Community means: \_\_\_\_\_

8b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #9

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>ailing</b>					

9a. Ailing means: \_\_\_\_\_

9b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-test  
Day 1: Part 2

Directions: Read the given sentence or phrase. By looking at the way the underlined word is used in the sentence, write down what you think the words means.

1. The every day garb for the Utes was made from the skins of buffalo, deer and elk. This clothing made from animal skins consisted of shirts and leggings for the men and long dresses with belts for the women.

The word garb means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The Inca Indians once inhabited areas of Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, and most of Chile and Peru. Even though they lived in all 5 of these countries, their main area of living was Peru.

The word inhabited means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The Incas lived in a type of forest, or jungle. In fact, the forests that some of the Incas lived in were known as tropical forests because they are hot and steamy.

The word tropical means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. While the Europeans remained healthy, the Utes were found ailing after being exposed to the new diseases

The word ailing means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-test  
Day 2: Part 1

Directions: Find the bold word in the set of boxes. Put an X in the box that best describes your understanding of the word. Look at example #1. If I didn't know what the word continent means, then I would put an X in the first box labeled *I have no idea what this word means*. However, if I did know what the word meant, then I would mark one of the last two boxes. See example #2. I would then write down what I think the word means and put the word into a sentence. The definition and sentence sections only need to be filled out if box four or five is marked.

Example #1:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>continent</b>					

Example #2:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word Means...
<b>continent</b>					

Continent means: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #10:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>recreation</b>					

10a. Recreation means: \_\_\_\_\_

10b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #11

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>humid</b>					

11a. Humid means: \_\_\_\_\_

11b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #12:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>aesthetic</b>					

12a. Aesthetic means: \_\_\_\_\_

12b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #13:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>indigenous</b>					

13a. Indigenous means: \_\_\_\_\_

13b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #14

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>succulent</b>					

14a. Succulent means: \_\_\_\_\_

14b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #15

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>settlers</b>					

15a. Settlers means: \_\_\_\_\_

15b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_



Word #16:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>predator</b>					

16a. Predator means: \_\_\_\_\_

16b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #17

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>species</b>					

17a. Species means: \_\_\_\_\_

17b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #18

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>nomadic</b>					

18a. Nomadic means: \_\_\_\_\_

18b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-test  
Day 2: Part 2

Directions: Read the given sentence or phrase. By looking at the way the underlined word is used in the sentence, write down what you think the words means.

5. While their days were filled with hard work, the pioneers always found a way to balance their work time with recreation.

The word recreation means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. The main jungle found in Peru is known as the Amazon Rain forest. It is very humid, which is very different from to the dry Utah climate.

The word humid means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. The indigenous people of Salt Lake and Utah Counties were the Ute Indians. This means that they were born there and naturally belonged in that area.

The word indigenous means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. There are many species of animals that life in the rainforest. This means that there are many different kinds or types of animals that live there.

The word species means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Post-test  
Day 1: Part 1

Directions: Find the bold word in the set of boxes. Put an X in the box that best describes your understanding of the word. Look at example #1. If I didn't know what the word hemisphere means, then I would put an X in the first box labeled *I have no idea what this word means*. However, if I did know what the word meant, then I would mark one of the last two boxes. See example #2. I would then write down what I think the word means and put the word into a sentence. The definition and sentence sections only need to be filled out if box four or five is marked. If you see a word that you think has more than one meaning, put down both definitions.

Example #1:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>hemisphere</b>					

Example #2:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word Means...
<b>hemisphere</b>					

Hemisphere means: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #1:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>dwelling</b>					

1a. Dwelling means: \_\_\_\_\_

1b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #2:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>hide</b>					

2a. Hide means: \_\_\_\_\_

2b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #3:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>garb</b>					

3a. Garb means: \_\_\_\_\_

3b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #4:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>emergence</b>					

4a. Emergence means: \_\_\_\_\_

4b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #5:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>inhabited</b>					

5a. Inhabited means: \_\_\_\_\_

5b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #6:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>chiseled</b>					

6a. Chiseled means: \_\_\_\_\_

6b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #7:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>tropical</b>					

7a. Tropical means: \_\_\_\_\_

7b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #8:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>community</b>					

8a. Community means: \_\_\_\_\_

8b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #9

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>ailing</b>					

9a. Ailing means: \_\_\_\_\_

9b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #10:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>recreation</b>					

10a. Recreation means: \_\_\_\_\_

10b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #11:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>homely</b>					

11a. Homely means: \_\_\_\_\_

11b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #12:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>glimpse</b>					

12a. Glimpse means: \_\_\_\_\_

12b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #13:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>elated</b>					

13a. Elated means: \_\_\_\_\_

13b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #14:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>succulent</b>					

14a. Succulent means: \_\_\_\_\_

14b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Post-test  
Day 1: Part 2

Directions: Read the given sentence or phrase. By looking at the way the underlined word is used in the sentence, write down what you think the words means.

1. Jenny's mom was very homely when she was a little girl. Like her mother, Jenny too considered herself to be very unattractive.

The word homely means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Even though I tried very hard to see the race car as it sped past me, I was only able to catch a glimpse of it because it was going so fast. I only got a momentary and partial view of it.

The word glimpse means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Jordan was elated when he saw that Santa brought him a new bike for Christmas. Jessie on the other hand was very sad to see that she had only some new socks in her stocking.

The word elated means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Ben had never been in a tropical rainforest before. This hot and steamy environment caused sweat to role down his face.

The word tropical means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. John liked to fill his summer days full of recreation, but his mother on the other hand thought his time was better spent doing hard work.

The word recreation means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Post-test  
Day 1: Part 1

Directions: Find the bold word in the set of boxes. Put an X in the box that best describes your understanding of the word. Then write down what you think the word means and put the word into a sentence. The definition and sentence sections only need to be filled out if box four or five is marked. If you see a word that you think has more than one meaning, put down both definitions.

Word #15

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>humid</b>					

15a. Humid means: \_\_\_\_\_

15b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #16:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>aesthetic</b>					

16a. Aesthetic means: \_\_\_\_\_

16b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #17:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>indigenous</b>					

17a. Indigenous means: \_\_\_\_\_

17b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #18

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>settlers</b>					

18a. Settlers means: \_\_\_\_\_

18b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #19:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>predator</b>					

19a. Predator means: \_\_\_\_\_

19b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #20

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>species</b>					

20a. Species means: \_\_\_\_\_

20b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #21

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>nomadic</b>					

21a. Nomadic means: \_\_\_\_\_

21b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #22:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>wound</b>					

22a. Wound means: \_\_\_\_\_

22b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #23:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>slums</b>					

23a. Slums means: \_\_\_\_\_

23b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #24

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>herpetologist</b>					

24a. Herpetologist means: \_\_\_\_\_

24b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #25:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>clan</b>					

25a. Clan means: \_\_\_\_\_

25b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #26

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>peaceful</b>					

26a. Peaceful means: \_\_\_\_\_

26b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Word #27:

Word	I have no idea what this word means	I have heard of this word before	I have seen this word before	I know this word, but can't explain it to someone else	This word means...
<b>herbalist</b>					

27a. Herbalist means: \_\_\_\_\_

27b. Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Post-test  
Day 2: Part 2

Directions: Read the given sentence or phrase. By looking at the way the underlined word is used in the sentence, write down what you think the words means.

6. Succulents, plants that store water in its leaves, stem or roots, can survive in places that are way too dry for most other plants. A cactus is one of the most common types of succulents.

The word succulent means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. The land of the Amazon rainforest is very different from the land of the desert. The aesthetic surroundings of the rainforest show great contrast to the dry, brown, sometimes unattractive surroundings of the desert.

The word aesthetic means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. There are some types of rainforest animals, such as a parrot or an iguana that people try to keep as pets. However, there are certain risks to having these types of animals as pets. For example, parrots have very sharp beaks that they use to crack open nuts in the rainforest. If they were to bite you, it could create a serious wound, or gash!

The word wound means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. The luxurious homes of the wealthy are a sharp contrast to the cardboard or metal houses in the favelas, or slums, just outside the cities. In many favelas, poor people live with no running water or electricity, and they lack basic sanitation.

The word slums means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Mark Rosenkrants is a college student in Illinois. He bought a pair of green iguanas two years ago after doing a lot of research, which included talks with herpetologists, scientists who are experts on reptiles.

The word herpetologist means: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B

### Sample Lessons from Instructional Program

#### Synonyms

#### Day 3: Synonym Practice (Utes- Teacher Directed)

#### **Preparation:**

- Read through lesson plan and be familiar with teacher dialogue
- Make copies of *Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Practice Paragraph* (1 copy for each student)
- Make copies of *Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Student Worksheet* (1 copy for each student)

#### **Materials:**

- Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Example #1 (provided)
- Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Practice Paragraph (provided)
- Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Practice Paragraph Retelling (provided)
- Day 3 Practice with Synonyms: Student Worksheet
- Poster (Steps to finding Context Clues)
- Pencil for each student

#### **Information for Teacher:**

##### DEFINITIONS

- Context Clue: A context clue is a clue that reveals the meaning of an unknown word and is found in the words surrounding the unknown word.
- Synonym: A word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another word

##### FOCUS WORDS

- Dwelling: A building or place of structure to live in; a home
- Hides: The skin of an animal, especially the thick tough skin or pelt of a large animal.

Day 3

#### **I. Introduction:**

Step 1: Review the definitions of synonym and context clue through questioning about the previous 2 lessons.

Example Questions: Who remembers what a context clue is?  
How can context clues help us learn new words?  
Can anyone tell me an example of a pair of synonyms?

Step 2: Have students see if they can re-name some synonyms that were used in the previous lesson.

Examples: pitch / throw  
grasp / know

## II. Model:

Teacher: Today we are going to see how synonyms can be used as a context clue. When you read a passage and you find an unknown word, there are some specific steps we are going to follow in order to see if there is a synonym clue that can help you figure out the words meaning. The first step is to... (Show Poster)

- 1- Underline the unknown word
- 2- Re-read the sentence before and after the unknown word
- 3- Circle the word clue or phrase that is the clue
- 4- Replace the unknown word with the synonym or clue
- 5- Check for understanding

Over the next few days we are going to find synonym clues as we practice these steps. However, every unknown word you come across is not always going to have a synonym clue. Some words might have a different type of clue that we will learn about later and sometimes there won't be a clue at all. However, as you get in the habit of following these steps, you will learn how to recognize clues when they are in the text.

If you are given an example word during our practice time that you already know, that's okay. I still want you to follow the steps so you can practice how to find a synonym clue. Please don't say the words meaning out loud if you already know what it means, so that other students can have the chance to figure out the words meaning for themselves.

We will do an example together so you can see how the steps work.

Step 3: Provide an example (see below) of using a synonym as a context clue to figure out the meaning of an unknown word. Follow steps A-E below.

Example #1: "Do you like to go to the circus?" Joe **queried**. When Bob did not answer, Joe **asked** again.

- A. Read the first sentence from the example. (Use the enlarged example sentence so students can see the words while you read. Cover everything but the first sentence.) **"Do you like to go to the circus?" Joe queried.**
- B. Underline the unknown word (Step 1 on the poster) **queried**
- C. Read the entire example. (Step 2 on the poster) See if they are able to figure out what the synonym is that is being used. Circle the word or phrase that is the clue. (Step 3 on the poster) **asked**
- D. Try replacing the word clue with the original word. (Step 4...) **"Do you like to go to the circus?" Joe asked.**
- E. Check for Understanding (Step 5...) Does the new sentence make sense?

## III. Practice:

Teacher: Now that you have seen an example of how a synonym can be used as a word clue to understand the meaning of an unknown word, you are going to have a chance to practice. Today we are going to read about the Ute Indians. The Utes Indians were the first people to live in the Orem area. They lived here before Orem looked like it does

**today. There are two words that you are going to come across in this paragraph that you might be unfamiliar with. These two words are ...**

- a. New Words:           (1) dwelling  
                                  (2) hides

Step 4: Have the students make a prediction as to what they think the two terms could mean before reading the text.

Step 5: Read the text (see below) out loud to the students while letting them look at a copy of their own as you read.

The Ute Indians live in the northwestern part of the United States. The area where they live is known as the Four Corners area. The Utes had two types of **dwelling**s that they lived in. Their first type of dwelling was made of long poles. These homes made of poles were known as tepees. Tepees were sometimes covered with the **hides** of buffalo. The buffalo skins that covered the poles would often have hand painted pictures on them. Their other type of home was known as a wicki-up. This type of home was made out of grasses, mud and sticks.

Step 6: Have students look at the paragraph again and underline the unknown words and read the sentence before and after the sentence with the unknown word. (Step 1 and 2)

Step 7: After you have recognized the unknown word, go back to the text with them and directly point out the synonym clue that is given for each unknown word. (They are highlighted in red) Circle the synonym word clue. (Step 3) Record the synonyms on Day 3's worksheet.

Step 8: Replace the unknown word with the synonym or clue and check for understanding. (Steps 4 and 5)

WORD 1 (dwelling): The Utes had two types of homes that they lived in. (dwelling exchanged with homes)

WORD 2 (hides): Tepees were sometimes covered with the skins of buffalo. (hides exchanged with skins)

Step 9: Give the students the actual definitions for the two words and students write them down on their Day 3 Worksheet.

- Dwelling: A building or place of structure to live in; a home
- Hides: The skin of an animal, especially the thick tough skin or pelt of a large animal.

Step 10: Students fill out the graphic organizer (analogy) with the new words and their synonyms. (See the key for examples of how to fill out the analogy.)

Step 11: Have the students retell what they learned in the passage. This is a group re-telling. Decide how you want to structure it so that one or two kids aren't the only ones who do the retelling. Everyone should participate. Use the teacher re-telling worksheet to take notes on the students retelling.

**Teacher: Now that we have all read through the paragraph, I want you to work together to retell the information you read. Retelling means that you are going to tell me all of the main points and important ideas from the paragraph that you read. However, rather than just reading it back to me, you put the ideas into your own words and tell me the things you can remember.**

Retelling: Underline everything that is repeated by the group. Record any extra details.

The Ute Indian Tribes live in the Northwest part of the United States (Colorado and Utah), known as the four corners area. \_\_\_\_\_  
They lived in homes named tepees and wicki-ups. \_\_\_\_\_  
Tepees were made out of long poles and buffalo skins. \_\_\_\_\_  
The tepees would sometimes have pictures drawn on them \_\_\_\_\_  
Wicki-ups were made of grasses, mud and reeds. \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Day 3 (Key)

**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

dwelling: a dwelling is a building or a place that someone lives.

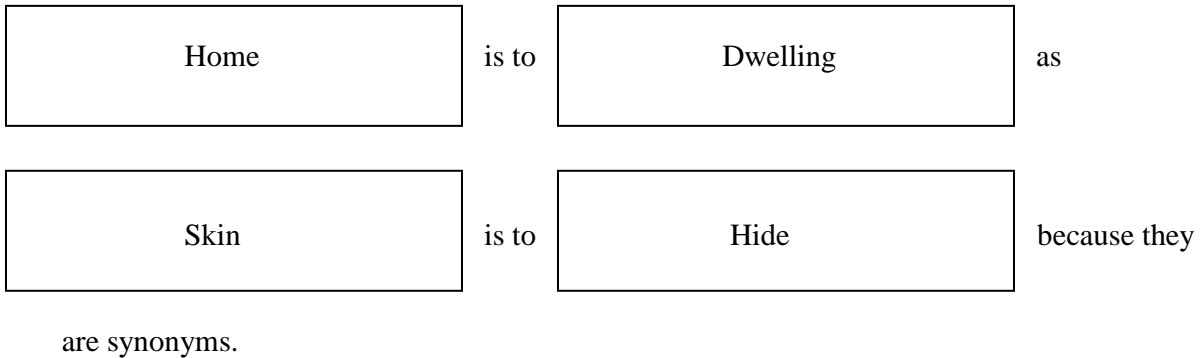
Synonym for dwelling: Home

hides: A hide is the skin of an animal.

Synonym for hides: Skins

\*\* These are examples: Student answers may vary

### Graphic Organizer



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Day 3

**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

dwelling: \_\_\_\_\_

Synonym for dwelling: \_\_\_\_\_

hides: \_\_\_\_\_

Synonym for hides: \_\_\_\_\_

### Graphic Organizer

is to

as

is to

because they

are synonyms.

Antonyms  
Day 8: Antonym Practice  
(Uses: Teacher Directed)

**Preparation:**

- Read through lesson plan and be familiar with teacher dialogue
- Make copies of *Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Practice Paragraph*  
(1 copy for each student)
- Make copies of *Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Student worksheet*  
(1 copy for each student)

**Materials:**

- Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Example #1 (provided)
- Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Practice Paragraph (provided)
- Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Practice Paragraph Retelling (provided)
- Day 8 Practice with Antonyms: Student Worksheet (provided)
- Poster (Steps to finding Context Clues)
- Pencil for each student

**Information for Teacher:**

DEFINITIONS

- Context Clue: A context clue is a clue that reveals the meaning of an unknown word and is found in the words surrounding the unknown word.
- Antonym: two words that are opposite in meaning

FOCUS WORDS

- Ailing: To feel ill or have pain

**I. Introduction:**

Step 1: Review the definitions of antonym and context clue through questioning about the previous lesson.

Example Questions: Who remembers what a context clue is?  
How can context clues help us learn new words?  
Can anyone tell me an example of a pair of antonyms?

Step 2: Have students see if they can re-name some sets of antonyms that were given or used in the previous lesson

Examples: hot/cold  
high/low

## II. Model:

Teacher: Today we are going to see how antonyms can be used as a context clue. When you read a passage and you find an unknown word, there are some specific steps we are going to follow in order to see if there is an antonym clue that can help us figure out the words meaning. The first step is to... (Show Poster)

- 1- Underline the unknown word
- 2- Re-read the sentence before and after the unknown word
- 3- Circle the word clue or phrase that is the clue
- 4- Choose a word that is the opposite of the antonym clue. Replace the original word with the antonym you chose.
- 5- Check for understanding

Over the next few days we are going to find antonym clues as we practice these steps. However, every unknown word you come across is not always going to have an antonym clue. Some words might have a different type of clue that we will learn about later and sometimes there won't be a clue at all. However, as you get in the habit of following these steps, you will learn how to recognize clues when they are in the text.

If you are given an example word during our practice time that you already know, that's okay. I still want you to follow the steps so you can practice how to find an antonym clue. Please don't say the words meaning out loud if you already know what it means, so that other students can have the change to figure out the words meaning for themselves.

We will do an example together so you can see how the steps work.

Step 3: Provide an example (See below) of using a synonym as a context clue to figure out the meaning of an unknown word. Follow steps A-E below.

Example: Unlike Jenny who was **beautiful**, Molly was rather **homely**.

- A. Read the second half of the sentence. (Use the enlarged example sentence so students can see the words while you read. Cover everything but the second half of the sentence.) **Molly was rather homely**
- B. Underline the unknown word (Step 1 on the poster) **homely**
- C. Read the entire example (Step 2 on the poster). See if they are able to figure out what the antonym is that is being used. Circle the word or phrase that is the clue (Step 3 on the poster) **beautiful**
- D. Think of a word that has an opposite meaning then the antonym clue. (Example: ugly). Replace the original word with the antonym. (Step 4) **Unlike Jenny who was beautiful, molly was rather ugly.**
- E. Check for understanding (Step 5) Does the new sentence make sense?

Step 4: Using the given sentence, point out the key word or phrase that helped you to know that an antonym was used. (Key phrases are in red. The antonym is highlighted in yellow). In discussion, talk about how there are key words or phrases that go along with the antonym that help us to figure out the meaning. For example, the word unlike in the example, gives us a feeling of something being compared.



### III. Practice:

Teacher: Now that you have seen an example of how to use an antonym word clue to understand the meaning of an unknown word, you are going to have a chance to practice. Today you are going to read a paragraph about a group of people who moved into the Orem area after the Utes. They were known as the Pioneers. There is a word that you are going to come across in this paragraph that you might be unfamiliar with. This word is...

- a. New Word: (1) ailing

Step 5: Have the students make a prediction as to what they think the term could mean before reading the text.

Step 6: Read the text (see below) out loud to the students while letting them look at a copy of their own as you read.

When the pioneers started to move into the Utah Valley, many problems surfaced. One major problem was that the pioneers brought many diseases with them. While the pioneers remained healthy, the Utes were found **ailing** after being exposed to the new diseases. Many Ute Indians died because of diseases that were brought over by the pioneers.

The second problem was that the pioneers both needed and wanted the land that the Utes had. This caused problems between the Utes and the Pioneers. The Utes no longer enjoyed peace. Many wars were fought between the Utes and the pioneers. The Walker War was one of these well known wars. Many of the Utes ended up being forced to move to a Reservation.

Step 7: Have students look at the paragraph again and underline the unknown words and read the sentence before and after the sentence with the unknown word. (Step 1 and 2)

Step 8: After you have discussed the definition, go back to the text with them and directly point out the antonym clue that is given for each unknown word. (They are highlighted in red) Circle the antonym word clue. (Step 3) Record the antonyms on Day 8's worksheet.

Step 9: Choose a word that is the opposite of the antonym clue. Replace the original word with this word and check for understanding. (Steps 4 and 5) Do you have a good idea of the definition of the new word?

Antonym clue: healthy Possible opposite: sick

WORD 1: While the Europeans remained healthy, the Utes were found sick after being exposed to the new diseases.

Step 10: Give the students the actual definitions for the two words and students write them down on their Day 8 Worksheet.

- Ailing: to feel ill or have pain

Step 11: Students fill out the graphic organizer (analogy) with the new words and their antonyms. (See the key for examples of how to fill out the analogy.)

Step 12: Have the students retell what they learned in the passage. This is a group re-telling. Decide how you want to structure it so that one or two kids aren't the only ones who do the retelling. Everyone should participate. Use the teacher re-telling worksheet to take notes on the students retelling.

**Teacher: Now that we have all read through the paragraph, I want you to work together to retell the information you have read. Remember, retelling means that you are going to tell me all of the main points and important ideas from the paragraph that you read. Tell me in your own words, what you learned about in the paragraph. What can you remember from the reading?**

Retelling: Underline everything that is repeated by the group. Record any extra details.

Pioneers had problems when they came to Utah. \_\_\_\_\_  
The first problem was that the pioneers brought diseases from Europe. \_\_\_\_\_  
The Utes died from the diseases \_\_\_\_\_  
The second problem was that the pioneers and the Utes wanted the same land. \_\_\_\_\_  
They fought many wars. (The Walker War) \_\_\_\_\_  
Many Utes were forced to move. (Reservations) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Day 8 (Key)**

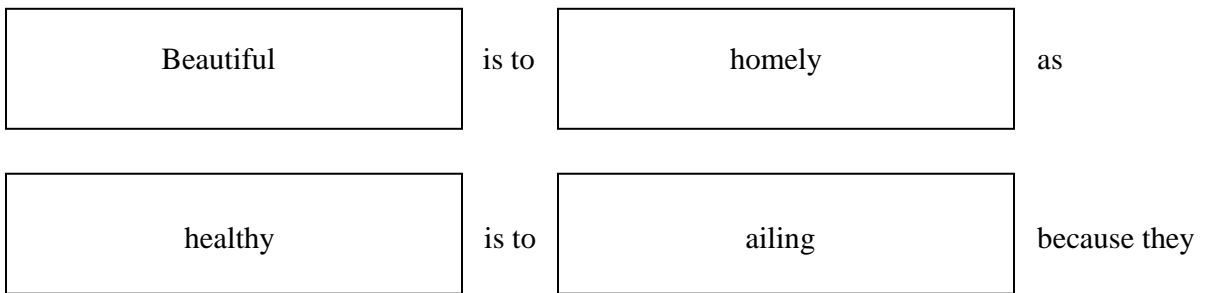
**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

New Words

ailing: to feel ill or have pain\_\_\_\_\_

Antonym for ailing: healthy\_\_\_\_\_

**Graphic Organizer**



are antonyms.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Day 8

**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

#### New Words

ailing: \_\_\_\_\_

Antonym for ailing: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Graphic Organizer

is to

as

is to

because they

are antonyms.

Definitions  
Day 13: Definition Practice  
(Utes: Teacher Directed)

**Preparation:**

- Read through lesson plan and be familiar with teacher dialogue
- Make copies of *Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Practice Paragraph* (1 copy for each student)
- Make copies of *Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Student worksheet* (1 copy for each student)

**Materials:**

- Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Example #1 (provided)
- Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Practice Paragraph (provided)
- Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Practice Paragraph Retelling (provided)
- Day 13 Practice with Definitions: Student Worksheet (provided)
- Poster (Steps to finding context clues)
- Pencil for each student

**Information for Teacher**

DEFINITIONS

- Context Clue: A context clue is a clue that reveals the meaning of an unknown word and is found in the words surrounding the unknown word.
- Definition: the formal statement of the meaning or significance of a word
- Definition Clue: When the author directly states the definition of an unknown word.

FOCUS WORDS

- Indigenous: originating in a particular region or country; native
- Succulent: a plant that stores water in its leaves, stem or roots.

Day 13

**I. Introduction:**

Step 1: Review what a definition clue is.

- Definition: the formal statement of the meaning or significance of a word

Step 2: See if the students can remember the difference between a synonym clue and a definition clue. (A synonym clue is only 1-2 words. A definition clue is a longer phrase or sentence)

## II. Model:

Teacher: Today we are going to see how definitions can be used as a context clue. When you read a passage and you find an unknown word, there are some specific steps we are going to follow in order to see if there is a definition clue that can help us figure out the words meaning. The first step is to... (Show Poster)

- 1- Underline the unknown word
- 2- Re-read the sentence before and after the unknown word
- 3- Circle the word clue or phrase that is the clue
- 4- Replace the unknown word with the definition
- 5- Check for understanding

Over the next few days we are going to find definition clues as we practice these steps. However, every unknown word you come across is not always going to have a definition clue. Some words might have a different type of clue that we will learn about later and sometimes there won't be a clue at all. However, as you get in the habit of following these steps, you will learn how to recognize clues when they are in the text.

If you are given an example word during our practice time that you already know, that's okay. I still want you to follow the steps so you can practice how to find definition clue. Please don't say the words meaning out loud if you already know what it means, so that other students can have the change to figure out the words meaning for themselves.

We will do an example together so you can see how the steps work.

Step 3: Provide an example (See below) of using a definition as a context clue to figure out the meaning of an unknown word. Follow steps A-E below.

Example: Cinderella was very **elegant**—**graceful in appearance and manner**—causing her step-sisters to be jealous.

- A. Read the first part (or clause) from the example. (Use the enlarged example sentence so students can see the words while you read. Cover everything but the first part of the sentence.) **Cinderella was very elegant**
- B. Underline the unknown word (Step 1 on the poster) **elegant**
- C. Read the entire example. (Step 2 on the poster) See if they are able to figure out what the definition is that is being used. Circle the definition that is acting as a clue. (Step 3 on the poster) **graceful in appearance and manner**
- D. Try replacing the word clue with the original word. (Step 4...) **Cinderella was very graceful in appearance and manner causing her step-sisters to be jealous.**
- E. Check for Understanding (Step 5...) Does the sentence still make sense?

Step 4: Using the practice sentence, point out the definition that was given. Discuss the way the definition was included. Was the definition in a sentence of its own or was it set apart with commas? (The definition has been highlighted in red.)

### III. Practice:

Teacher: Now that you have seen an example of how a definition clue is used to learn the meaning of an unknown word, you are going to have a chance to practice. Today we are going to read a paragraph about the desert. The desert is a type of land that the Ute Indians lived on. There are two words that you are going to come across in this paragraph that you might be unfamiliar with. These two words are...

- a. New Words: 1) indigenous (2) succulent

Step 5: Have the students make a prediction as to what they think the terms could mean before reading the text.

Step 6: Read the text (see below) out loud to the students while letting them look at a copy of their own as you read.

The **indigenous** people of the lands now known as Salt Lake and Utah were the Ute Indians. This means that is where they were born and they naturally belonged in that area. Since many Utes were from this area, they new the land very well. The Great Basin Desert was one of the areas they knew well. It covers parts of Utah. A desert is a dry land that receives less than 10 inches of rain a year. The Great Basin may be dry, but it is surrounded by mountains on both the east and the west. The Great Basin desert is considered to be a cold desert because it snows in the winter. Cold deserts get water from snow while hot deserts only get water from rain.

Cactus is a type of plant that can be seen in the desert. A cactus is a **succulent**, which is a plant that stores water it its leaves, stem or roots. Therefore, cactus is more likely to be seen in hot deserts because it is able to live with very little water. However, they can be seen in cold deserts as well.

Teacher: **When we talked about antonyms we saw that sometimes there were key phrases given that helped us to recognize when there was going to be an antonym clue, such as “in contrast to” or “unlike.” There are also key phrases that help us know when there is going to be a definition clue. In this paragraph, the phrases “this means” and “which is” are used that help you to recognize that a definition is being given.**

Step 7: Have students look at the paragraph again and underline the unknown words and read the sentence before and after the sentence with the unknown word. (Step 1 and 2)

Step 8: Go back to the text with them and directly point out the definition clue that is given for each unknown word. (They are highlighted in red) Circle the definition.  
(Step 3) Record the definition on Day 13's worksheet.

Step 9: Replace the unknown word with the definition and check for understanding. (Steps 4 and 5)

WORD 1: The people that were born and naturally belonged in Salt Lake and Utah Counties were the Ute Indians. (indigenous exchanged with "people that were born and naturally belonged")

WORD 2: A cactus is a plant that stores water in its leaves, stem or roots. (succulent exchanged with "plant that stores water in its leaves, stem or roots")

Step 10: The students write them down on their Day 13 Worksheet.

- Indigenous: originating in a particular region or country; native
- Succulent: a plant that stores water in its leaves, stem or roots.

Step 11: Have students fill out a concept wheel. The top left corner is filled in with the vocabulary word and the other three parts can be filled with any word or phrase that have a connection to the vocabulary word that will help the student remember the definition. This can include words that represent the meaning, or it can be examples or synonyms etc. Specific examples will not be given for each concept wheel that the children produce because there is not one specific write answer. The information that is put into the concept wheel should be student generated, yet teacher led (to ensure it is correct information.)

Step 12: Have the students retell what they learned in the passage. This is a group re-telling. Decide how you want to structure it so that one or two kids aren't the only ones who do the retelling. Everyone should participate. Use the teacher re-telling worksheet to take notes on the students retelling.

Teacher: **Now that we have read through the paragraph, I want you to work together to retell the information that you read. Retelling means that you are going to tell me all of the main points and important ideas from the paragraph that you read. However, rather than just reading it back to me, you put the ideas into our own words and tell me the things you can remember. Let's take turns. Who wants to begin?**

Retelling: Underline everything that is repeated by the group. Record any extra details.

The Utes are originally from (indigenous) to Utah \_\_\_\_\_

The Great Basin Desert is in Utah \_\_\_\_\_

A desert only gets about 10 in. of rain a year. \_\_\_\_\_

The Great Basin is a cold desert because it snows. \_\_\_\_\_

Cactus store water succulent) and they are most likely found in hot deserts. \_\_\_\_\_



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Day 13 (Key)

**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

#### New Word

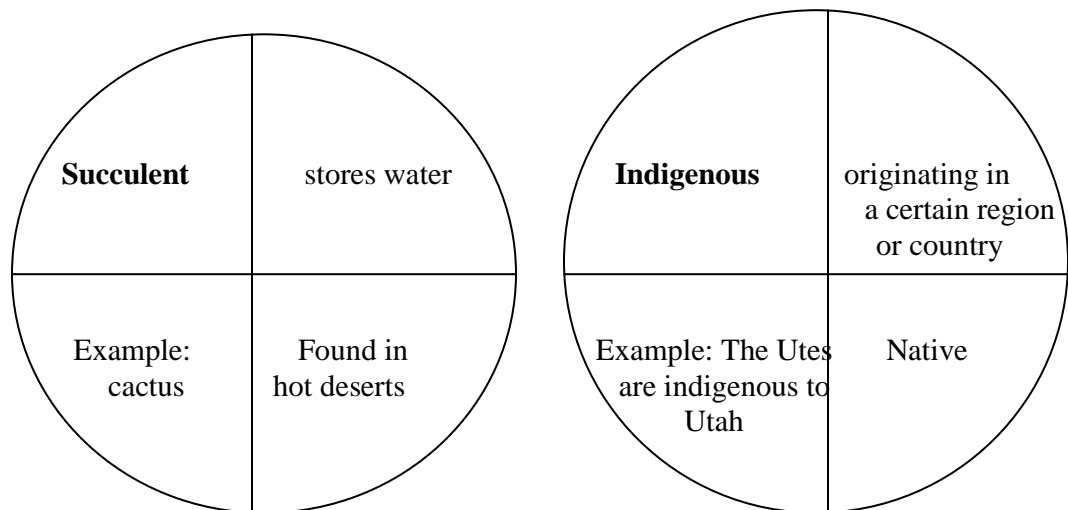
Definition for indigenous: originating in a particular region or country

Definition clue changed to a synonym clue: native

Definition for succulent: a plant that stores water in its leaves, stem or roots

Definition clue changed to a synonym clue: no synonym

### Graphic Organizers



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Day 13**

**Vocabulary Terms:** Write down the definition for the following vocabulary words.

New Word

Definition for indigenous: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

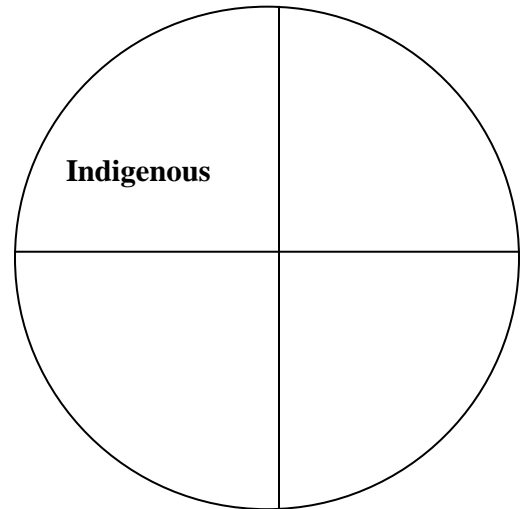
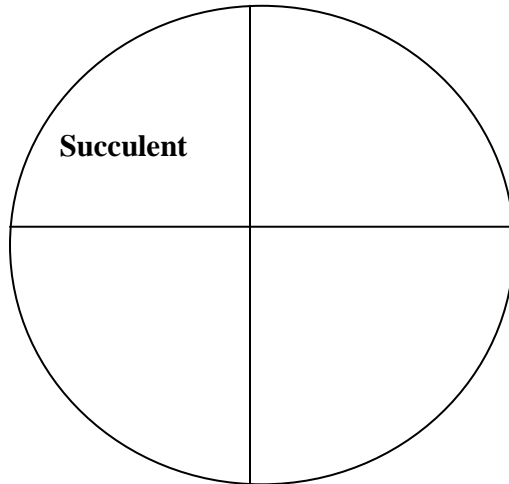
Definition clue changed to a synonym clue: \_\_\_\_\_

Definition for succulent: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Definition clue changed to a synonym clue: \_\_\_\_\_

**Graphic Organizers**



Day 13: Practice with Definitions  
Student Worksheet