

Reading and guessing meanings in context

Reading requires making inferences that depend on your previous knowledge. Guessing the lexical and contextual meanings is the first step in understanding a written message. Below given are some suggestions which would help you to recognize the meanings of words in context in which they appear.

- Unless you are familiar with the subject you will not be able to comprehend the meaning. So try to understand the technicalities. Only a fair knowledge of the subject will enable you to infer the meaning.
- Do not stop reading if you are not able to get the meaning of a certain word. Continue reading and gradually you will learn.
- Try to understand the syntax-the sentence structure and guess the meaning of the words with the help of context clues, signal words and derive at the meaning of the unknown words. Prefixes and suffixes and root words can help you.
- You can also get the clue to the meaning of the word from the context. For example,
- Her prolonged illness has made her very weak and she is not able to walk long distances.

From the above sentence you get the meaning of the word prolonged by understanding the conditions mentioned as an effect of illness.

- You may infer the meaning of an unknown word through its extended definition or qualities mentioned. Example:
- In order to be forgiven for her carelessness Shyla rendered profound apology to her teacher.
- You may guess the meaning of profound (as heartfelt, sincere) from the reason stated
- If you come across an antonym of the unknown word you may be able to guess the meaning. Example: Few years ago, real estate was a dull business. While today, it is a very lucrative one.
- The meaning of lucrative (making large profit) is derived from the word dull.

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

Monsoons have arrived and so have the mosquitoes. As drains get water logged and stagnant pools form in the by-lanes, mosquitoes seem to breed in millions. Incidence of malaria increases manifold and no part of the city remains devoid of the problem.

People use various means to protect themselves from these little biting, blood sucking vampires. Whatever the season, some like to sleep under the mosquito net. There are others who feel safe after switching on mosquito repelling machines or applying mosquito repellent creams. Some go mad trying the various new contraptions introduced in the market every year. The grumbling sorts spend their nights clapping and trapping, hitting sundry objects and pillows. But the mosquitoes are the ones to have the last laugh. Blessed are those to whom any number of mosquitoes playing orchestra near their ears makes no difference.

However, we are as much to be blamed for the problem as is the weather. Coolers are no longer used but the water is never changed or coolers emptied making them a breeding place. Municipal staff claims that delisting and cleaning out drains is done regularly. But the choked sewers and drains overflowing with polythene bags tell another tale. People do not understand one plain fact that garbage is not something which will vanish in the air once it is thrown out of their house. It will very much remain outside the colony from an area or city. Mosquitoes do not demarcate between colonies. Diseases do not choose people. When they strike, they strike everywhere equally. When we act, we don't reach at the root of the problem. We only look for cures but it is already too late for prevention.

Examples:

I. Match the table of the words with their meaning given:

- a) Delisting— Helps to drive away the mosquitoes.
- b) Stagnant – Removing mud and sand.
- c) Repellent – Strange looking devices.
- d) Contraptions – Still water

II. Find the opposites of the following words from the passage.

- e) Decrease

- f) Cursed
- g) Few
- h) Filled

Answers:

I. Match the table of the words with their meaning given:

- i) Removing mud and sand
- j) Still water
- k) Helps to drive away the mosquitoes
- l) Strange looking devices.

II. Find the opposites of the following words from the passage.

- a) Increase
- b) Blessed
- c) Manifold
- d) Empty

