Lesson 10: Determining Word Meaning Using Context Clues

Lesson Length: 40 minutes

Literary Focus: Vocabulary Development – Using Context Clues

SEL Connection: Curiosity & Confidence in Learning
Students practice noticing clues, asking questions, and building confidence when encountering unfamiliar words instead of shutting down.

Text: *Planets* by Elizabeth Carney

Standards Addressed:

- **ELAGSE3RI4** – Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic area.

Essential Question:
How can I use clues in the text to figure out what a word means?

Materials Needed

- *Planets* by Elizabeth Carney
- Word Meaning Graphic Organizer
- Pencil
- Optional: Student Lesson Worksheet
- Optional: Highlighter or sticky notes

Lesson Sequence (40 Minutes)

1. Whole Group Opening: What Do You Do When You Don't Know a Word? (5 minutes)

Say:
"Sometimes when we're reading, we see a word we don't know. What can we do when that happens?"

Allow responses, then explain:
“Today, we’re going to practice using **context clues**—the words, pictures, and information around a word—to help us figure out what it means.”

Quick Review:

- Fiction = made-up story
- Nonfiction = real information

Introduce the text:
“Today’s book is nonfiction. It teaches us about **planets**.”

Ask:
“What do you think a planet is?”

Clarify with student-friendly language.

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2. Shared Reading & Guided Practice (15 minutes)

Read page 7 together. Model fluent reading.

Pause and point out text features:

- Pictures
- Labels
- Information boxes

Say:
“This page tells us that planets do not make their own light. They **reflect** light.”

Ask:

- “What do you think *reflect* means based on this page?”

Continue reading the text, stopping to explore these vocabulary words using **context clues and visuals**:

- gas (p. 5)
- star (p. 5)
- orbit (p. 6)
- reflect (p. 6)
- gravity (p. 11)
- weather (p. 24)

Tutor Tip:
Model thinking aloud:
“I’m not sure what *orbit* means yet… but the picture shows the planet going around the sun. That helps me!”

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3. Learner Engagement: Word Meaning Graphic Organizer (15 minutes)

Students complete the **Word Meaning Graphic Organizer** with tutor support.

Directions (say aloud):
“Let’s use what we read—and the pictures—to fill in the missing words.”

Encourage students to:

- Look back at the page
- Use pictures and surrounding sentences
- Explain their thinking out loud

Support Options:

- Read prompts aloud
- Offer word choices if needed
- Allow oral answers for emerging writers

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4. Wrap-Up & Exit Reflection (5 minutes)

Ask:

- “What helped you figure out a word today?”
- “Did the picture help? The sentence? Both?”

Exit Prompt (oral or written):
“When I don’t know a word, I can _____.”

Celebrate effort and curiosity.

Lesson 10 Worksheet

Using Context Clues to Figure Out Word Meaning

Name: _____
Date: _____

Essential Question

👉 *How can I use clues in the text to figure out what a word means?*

Part 1: Warm-Up — What Do I Do When I Don't Know a Word?

Circle all the things that can help you figure out a word:

⬜ The picture
⬜ The sentence around the word
⬜ The title or headings
⬜ Giving up
⬜ Asking, "What would make sense here?"

✏️ **When I don't know a word, I can: _____.**

Part 2: Read & Notice

You will read *Planets* by Elizabeth Carney with your tutor.

As you read, look for:

- Pictures
- Labels
- Sentences that explain ideas

These are called **context clues**. They help us understand new words!

Part 3: Use Context Clues to Fill in the Missing Words

Read each sentence carefully.
Use clues from the text and pictures to choose the best word.

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1. The sun is our _____.
2. Planets are made of _____ and rocks.
3. There is no _____ on the moon to wash or blow footprints away.
4. Most stars have planets in _____ around them.
5. The strong pull of the sun's _____ holds the planets in place.
6. Planets _____ light from stars.

Part 4: Show Your Thinking

Pick **one** word from above.

✏️ **The word I figured out is: _____**

✏️ **I know what it means because:**
⬜ I used the picture
⬜ I used the sentence
⬜ I used both

✏️ **Explain or draw how the clues helped you:**

🖍️ *(You may draw your answer instead of writing.)*

Part 5: Exit Reflection

Finish the sentence:

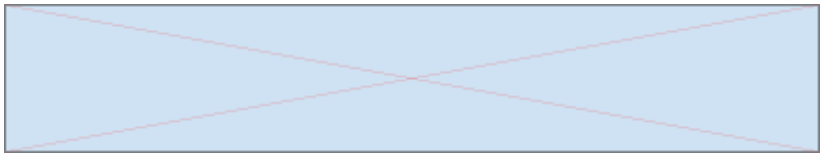
🧠 **When I see a word I don't know, I can _____.**

⭐ Great Reading Strategy!

Good readers **don't skip hard words** — they use clues to solve them!

Word Meaning Graphic Organizer

Directions: Use the context clues to fill in the missing word below.



1. The sun is our _____.

2. Planets are made up of _____ and rocks.

3. There is no _____ on the moon to wash or blow the footprints away on the moon.

4. Most stars have planets in _____ around them.

5. The strong pull of the sun's _____ holds the planets in orbit.

6. Planets _____ light from stars.

Tutor Lesson Walkthrough – Lesson 10

Welcome to Lesson 10!
In this session, students practice **determining word meaning using context clues** while reading a nonfiction text.

Focus Skill: Vocabulary strategies
Big Win: Helping students feel confident when they don't immediately know a word

Key Tutor Moves:

- Model curiosity, not speed
- Think aloud when defining words
- Keep students going back to the text

Encouragement Tip:
Praise effort more than accuracy:
"I love how you used the picture to help you!"

By the end of the lesson, students should feel more confident using text clues to unlock meaning—an essential skill for upper elementary reading.