

# KINDS OF CONTEXT CLUES

## CONTEXT

The words, phrases, or sentences around an unfamiliar word often provide clues about the word's meaning. In some cases, *signal words* can act as clues. See pp. 173–174 for further discussion of context clues.

### Restatement Clues

Look for words and phrases that define an unfamiliar word or restate its meaning in familiar terms.

**EXAMPLE** The dried rose was as *fragile* as a butterfly's wing. **In other words**, its delicate petals can be damaged easily.

From the context, readers can tell that *fragile* means "damaged easily." The phrase **in other words** signals that the words *easily damaged* restate the meaning of the word *fragile*.

#### Restatement Signal Words

in other words      that is      these

### Example Clues

Examples sometimes give us hints to a word's meaning. If an unfamiliar word means a certain type of thing, action, or characteristic, examples of the type can be excellent clues to the word's meaning.

**EXAMPLE** When our neighbors travel, they always look for comfortable *accommodations*, **such as** a beach cottage, hotel suite, or mountain cabin.

From the context, readers can tell that the word *accommodations* means "a place to stay." The words **such as** signal that the list of places to stay provides examples of *accommodations*.

#### Example Signal Words

for example      such as      in that  
likewise      especially

## Contrast/Antonym Clues

Look for words or phrases that are the opposite of a word's meaning.

**EXAMPLE** Knowledge is a *remedy* for many environmental problems, **but** knowledge without action cannot cure the ills.

From the context, readers can tell that *remedy* means "cure." The word **but** signals that *remedy* contrasts with the phrase "cannot cure."

Contrast/Antonym Signal Words			
but	not	in contrast	on the other hand
however	still	although	some . . . but others

## Keyword Clues

Look for words or phrases that modify or are related to the unfamiliar word.

**EXAMPLE** The two characters in my story believe it is their *destiny* to be enemies. Their elders have taught them that this is **meant to be**.

From the context, readers can tell that *destiny* means "something that necessarily happens to a person." The words *meant to be* signal the meaning of the word.

## Definition/Explanation Clues

A sentence may actually define or explain an unfamiliar word.

**EXAMPLE** Alan will help the woman once she **escapes** and becomes a *fugitive* from her troubled country.

From the context, readers can tell that *fugitive* means "runaway." The word *escapes* signals the meaning of the word.