

Context clues

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Practice

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Context clues are *hints to the meaning* of a difficult word. These hints can be in the same sentence or in the sentences before or after the sentence that uses the difficult word.

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As you read about sound, pay attention to the underlined words, and any *hints to the meaning* of these words.

How We Hear Sounds

When a sound is created, it travels from its source in waves, called sound waves. Different sources, or causes, of sounds create different kinds of sound waves. The part of the ear that is outside our head is called the pinna. The pinna helps to catch the sound waves around us and guide them inside the ear. As a sound wave enters the ear, it hits the eardrum. The eardrum is a thin layer of skin called a membrane that separates the outer ear from the middle ear. The eardrum is stretched tight, like the top of a drum, causing it to vibrate when sound waves hit it.

Just behind the eardrum are three tiny bones called the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup. These are the smallest bones in the human body. All together, they are no larger than a pea. When a sound wave hits the eardrum, it begins to vibrate and press back against the tiny bones in the inner ear. The bones pick up the sound wave and pass it on into the inner ear. In the inner ear, a spiral-shaped tube called the cochlea carries the sound wave along and transforms it into the kind of energy that the brain can detect.

From the moment the sound was created—by a car horn, or a dog's bark, or a whistle—the sound wave has a certain pattern that is different from other sound wave patterns. This pattern never changes as the sound wave travels through the air, hits the ear drum, moves on to the middle and inner ear. The pattern of the sound wave tells the brain what caused the sound.

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Select which context clues give a hint to the meaning of each of these words.

1. sources
   A. …travels from…
   B. …or causes…
   C. …different kinds…

2. pinna
   A. …helps to catch the sound waves…
   B. …different kinds of sound waves…
   C. …part of the ear that is outside our head…

3. eardrum
   A. …enters the ear…
   B. …thin layer of skin…
   C. …stretched tight…

4. membrane
   A. …the eardrum…
   B. …causing it to vibrate…
   C. …thin layer of skin…

5. the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup
   A. …three tiny bones…
   B. …just behind the eardrum...
   C. …no larger than a pea…

6. cochlea
   A. …the inner ear…
   B. …spiral-shaped tube…
   C. …carries the sound wave…

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7. In the second paragraph, what words tell you that there is a context clue for the meaning of the terms “the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup”?

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