

# Lesson 12

## Words in Context



### Learning Target



By noticing when authors are using words and phrases in special ways, you can better understand and enjoy a story.

- ▶ **Read** Words and phrases may have more than one meaning. For example, a “clown” is someone who works for the circus. That’s its **literal**, or usual, meaning. But, if you call your friend a clown, you don’t *literally* mean that he or she is a circus clown. You just mean that your friend’s behavior is silly. You’re using the **nonliteral** meaning of “clown.” *Nonliteral* means “not literal” or “not usual.”

Authors often use nonliteral language to describe story characters, settings, and events more colorfully. If you come across a word or phrase with an unexpected meaning, use **context clues**—nearby words, phrases, and sentences—to figure out its meaning.

**Read this passage. Notice the underlined phrases.**



Arthur liked nothing better than to stay up reading, long after he was supposed to be asleep. He would pull his blanket over his head like a tent, turn on his book light, and get lost in his story. Tonight, though, his dad caught him. “Turn off that light, night owl,” said his dad. “You’ve got school tomorrow.”

► **Think** The chart below shows how to use context clues to find the meanings of nonliteral words and phrases. First, look at the literal meanings. Then read the context clues from the passage. Finally, write what you think the phrases mean in the passage.

Literal Meaning	Context Clues	Meaning in the Passage
<p>night owl: a big-eyed bird that is usually awake at night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stays up reading</li> <li>• should be asleep</li> <li>• awake later than he is supposed to be</li> </ul>	
<p>get lost: not know where you are or how to get where you want to go</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lost in his story</li> </ul>	

► **Talk** Why is “night owl” a good way to describe Arthur in the passage?



**Academic Talk**

Use these words and phrase to talk about the text.

- **literal**
- **nonliteral**
- **context clues**

# Seaside Surprises

by Wendell Riley

1 I didn't know what to expect when my family went hiking on the Oregon coast. I'd never seen the Pacific Ocean before. But I sure knew what I wanted to see—a whale!

2 After a picnic lunch, we hiked through a thick rainforest. We saw chipmunks, a lizard, and a hawk. The trail gently snaked its way up the steep mountainside to the top of a huge rocky cliff with a great view of the ocean. But I couldn't spot any whales. Then we heard something move through the woods right behind us! We turned, and there stood a huge elk with giant antlers. We all froze in place, barely breathing, until the animal slowly walked away. Then we finally relaxed. We all started laughing and jumping around in excitement.

3 Next, the trail wound down to a sandy beach. Waves hammered the shore. We saw seagulls, crabs, clams, and even some seals happily basking themselves out on the warm rocks—but no whales. It was fun, but then it was time to go.

4 Everyone else started walking back to our trail, but my eyes were locked on the ocean. And then it happened. Not just one whale but a whole pod of them broke the surface of the water. I was so stunned that I could barely shout, "Look!"



## Close Reader Habits

Which words and phrases are unfamiliar, or used in unusual ways? **Underline** details that help you figure out their meanings.

**Explore**

**How can you figure out the meanings of words and phrases with nonliteral meanings?**



When you read a word or phrase whose literal, or usual, meaning doesn't make sense, look for context clues that help you figure out what the author really means.

**Think**

- 1 Look at the phrase *froze in place* in paragraph 2. Complete the chart to figure out the meaning.

Literal Meaning	Context Clues	Meaning in the Passage
<p><i>froze in place:</i> turned from water into ice</p>	<p>• barely breathing</p>	

**Talk**

- 2 Look at the phrase *seals happily baking themselves* in paragraph 3. What is the literal meaning of *baking*? What does the word *baking* mean in this passage? Use context clues to help you decide.

**Write**

- 3 **Short Response** Look at the description of the waves in paragraph 3. Describe the literal meaning of *hammered*. Then explain how *hammered* is used in the text. Tell which context clues helped you figure out the meaning. Use the space provided on page 206 to write your answer.

**HINT** Use what you know about *actual* hammers to picture how the waves must have looked, sounded, and felt.



# The Wind and the Leaves

by George Cooper

- 1 “Come, little leaves,” said the wind one day,  
“Come over the meadows with me and play.  
Put on your dresses of red and gold, —  
For summer is gone, and the days grow cold.”
- 5 Soon as the leaves heard the wind’s loud call,  
Down they came fluttering one and all.  
Over the brown fields they danced and flew,  
Singing the soft little songs they knew.
- Dancing and whirling, the little leaves went;  
10 Winter had called them, and they were content;  
Soon fast asleep in their earthy beds,  
The snow laid a coverlet over their heads.

### Close Reader Habits

What words in the last stanza have nonliteral meanings? **Underline** words in lines 9–12 that would normally be used to describe people. **Circle** clues that help you figure out what the words may mean here.



This is a poem, so look for words used in unusual and creative ways.

## Think

**1** How does the poet use the word *dresses* in line 3 of the poem?

- A** to describe leaves changing color in the fall
- B** to describe girls getting dressed for a party
- C** to describe the sky changing colors at sunset
- D** to describe the movement of the wind

**2** Read these lines from the poem.

**Soon fast asleep in their earthy beds,  
The snow laid a coverlet over their heads.**

The poet uses the word *coverlet* to show that

- A** the snow looks like a blanket.
- B** the leaves have fallen.
- C** the snow looks like a dress.
- D** the singing has stopped.

## Talk

**3** How do the words the poet uses help you picture what is happening to the leaves?



## Write

**4 Short Response** Tell how the poet uses nonliteral word meanings to describe how the leaves look and sound when they fall. Use the space provided on page 207 to write your answer.

**HINT** Look at lines 5–9 for words that tell how the leaves move.



**Write** Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 203.

# Seaside Surprises

**3 Short Response** Look at the description of the waves in paragraph 3. Describe the literal meaning of *hammered*. Then explain how *hammered* is used in the text. Tell which context clues helped you figure out the meaning.

**HINT** Use what you know about *actual* hammers to picture how the waves must have looked, sounded, and felt.

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Don't forget to check your writing.



**Write** Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 205.

# The Wind and the Leaves

**4 Short Response** Tell how the poet uses nonliteral word meanings to describe how the leaves look and sound when they fall.

**HINT** Look at lines 5–9 for words that tell how the leaves move.

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### Check Your Writing

- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?





**WORDS TO KNOW**

As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- massive
- boulders
- exploration
- granite

# Yosemite Morning

by Hilary Dumitrescu

- 1 It is quiet in the park when my brother and I wake up. We pretend we are the only ones here, and not one of thousands of tourists. Fresh snow has fallen overnight and blankets the ground, the rocks, and the massive boulders with a silent quilt of white. I take a deep breath. The air smells green and icy. Suddenly, nearby, I hear a soft thump. I hear my brother gasp. When I turn around, he is standing there with his head covered in a thick crown of snow. He laughs and points up. The branches above him hold armfuls of snow. They are ready to have a snowball fight with us.
- 2 We walk further into the woods, our boots crunch, crunch, crunching in the snow. My brother walks ahead. At one point, his entire left leg sinks down into the snow. I run to help, and I, too, sink completely into the surprisingly deep snowbank. We are laughing, trying to free our legs from the snow's grip. I pull my foot out, finally, only to find that it's just my sock that has escaped. My boot is still buried. The forest echoes with our giggles, clear as bells.
- 3 We finally roll, exhausted, away from the deep snow. We continue our exploration. We wander deep into the woods. It feels like we are all alone. I wonder what it must have been like for the first people who lived here. What was it like before the cars, the tour buses, and the fancy hotels came along? Did they walk, quiet as rabbits, on the new-fallen snow? Did they stare up in awe at the great granite face of Half-Dome?

- 4 We come to a clearing. My brother holds up a hand, signaling me to stop. At the far edge of the clearing is a small creek, cutting an icy path through the snow. At the creek's edge, a deer is watching us. We freeze. The deer freezes. Slowly, never taking her eyes off of us, she dips her head quickly to the water. She takes a long drink. Her head suddenly shoots up, alerted to sounds only her deer ears can hear. In a flash, she is gone. In the woods, her white tail waves her goodbye.
- 5 We decide to head back to our cabin, as the cold air and snowy walk have left us famished. We talk about the breakfast we will have, pancakes with golden butter and syrup. Our parents, we know, will be waiting for us. They have been watching all along, sipping steamy cups of coffee on the porch of our cabin. Later, we will take them into the woods and show them the silence.



**Think** Use what you learned from reading the story to respond to the following questions.

**1** Read the following sentence from paragraph 1.

**Fresh snow has fallen overnight and blankets the ground, the rocks, and the massive boulders with a silent quilt of white.**

What do the words *quilt of white* mean in this sentence?

- A** warm blanket
- B** layer of snow
- C** slippery ice
- D** pebbles and dust

**2** The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

**Part A**

Read this sentence from paragraph 1 about the author's brother.

**When I turn around, he is standing there with his head covered in a thick crown of snow.**

What does this sentence really mean?

- A** The brother has made a crown from the branches.
- B** The brother has a pile of snow on his head.
- C** The brother is turning in circles to look at the snow.
- D** The brother is wearing a thick cap to keep off the snow.

**Part B**

Underline **two** details in these sentences from paragraph 1 that support the answer you chose in Part A.

**Suddenly, nearby, I hear a soft thump. I hear my brother gasp. When I turn around, he is standing there with his head covered in a thick crown of snow. He laughs and points up. The branches above him hold armfuls of snow. They are ready to have a snowball fight with us.**

- 3** Read these sentences from paragraph 2:

**I pull my foot out, finally, only to find that it's just my sock that has escaped. My boot is still buried.**

What has happened to the narrator?

- A** The narrator has buried her boot and sock in the snow.
- B** The narrator has lost her sock during the hike.
- C** The narrator's boot is still stuck in the snow.
- D** The narrator's boot and sock have been taken.

- 4** Read the following sentence from paragraph 4.

**In a flash, she is gone.**

The author uses the words *in a flash* to show that the deer runs

- A** through a bright light.
- B** in a clumsy way.
- C** very quickly.
- D** when lightning struck.

- 5** When the deer runs away, the narrator says, "In the woods, her white tail waves her goodbye." Which is the **best** literal restatement of this idea?

- A** The deer turns and waves goodbye from the woods.
- B** The deer's tail begins twitching as she enters the woods.
- C** The deer uses her tail to wave goodbye to the children.
- D** The deer's tail is the last thing the narrator sees as the animal leaves.

6 What does the word *famished* mean in paragraph 5?

- A tired
- B hungry
- C unhappy
- D confused

7 Read these two sentences from the story. Both use words in nonliteral ways. Write what you think each sentence means.

**The air smells green and icy.**

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**Later, we will take them into the woods and show them the silence.**

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 **Write**

**8 Short Response** The author described several things the children saw in Yosemite. Which description did you like the most? In your answer, include examples of how the author used both literal and nonliteral word meanings in the description.

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 **Learning Target**

**You've practiced figuring out the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases by using context. Explain how using the nonliteral meanings of words can help an author make the writing more interesting.**

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