

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Using context clues to figure out the meaning of words

### Part 1:

Circle the correct answer: a, b, c, or d for each question.

1. When you see a word in a sentence and don't know what it means, a good thing to try to do is:
  - a. skip the word and forget about it
  - b. look at the part of the sentence before and after the unknown word to try to figure out its meaning
  - c. look up the word in the dictionary, read the definition, and forget about what you just read
  - d. stop reading and watch Youtube videos with talking dogs

2. You're reading this short story in class:

I helped my neighbor clean out his garage last week. I moved a box, and there was a dead squirrel behind it. It was really gross and it smelled terrible.

You raise your hand and ask the teacher, "What does "gross" mean?" The teacher answers, "It means disgusting." You now understand the sentence and you move on.

The next day, you read this sentence:

The clothing store used to be busy, but now it's almost empty of customers. The owner is bringing in a little money, but her gross profit isn't enough to keep the store open.

The teacher asks, "What is gross profit?" You answer, "Disgusting profit!"

The teacher says, "No, that isn't right." What should you do?

- a. Tell the teacher that he's confusing, that school is confusing, and then put your head down
- b. Argue with your teacher and say, "But you JUST TOLD US that gross means disgusting!" in an arrogant tone of voice
- c. Blindly write down what your teacher says on your paperwork but put absolutely no thought into what you're writing
- d. Remember that words can mean different things in different contexts. In the second passage, "gross profit" means "profit before paying taxes, rent, and payroll." Now you know the two different meanings of "gross" and are a better reader. When you're asked to write a sentence that uses "gross", you write two sentences, like this:

*I saw a gross scene on TV where a big snake threw up an animal that it had eaten, but that was too big for it to digest.*

*When you own a business, it's important to make enough gross profit so that you have enough money to pay your employees and keep the business running.*

3. You're reading this passage in class:

My cousin Jorge likes telling **weird stories**. One day, he joined us at dinner and started telling a particularly **confusing** story about two ducks carrying briefcases and singing inside a Target store. He went on and on, but **nobody knew what he was talking about**. My father looked at him with a bemused expression on his face, and then said, "Jorge, **I don't know what you're talking about.**"

You want to use context clues to figure out what the word bemused means. What's the best thing to do?

- a. You think, "well, bemused sounds like amused", so it must mean he's laughing."
- b. You ask your teacher. You don't completely understand her explanation, so you say nothing. You don't want to look like a dummy, do you?
- c. You look at the words in context (highlighted above), which might give you clues. You raise your hand and say, "Does bemused mean really confused?" The teacher says that you're right.
- d. You stare at the wall during the entire lesson, thinking about skateboarding and your friend's birthday party this weekend, then get frustrated when you don't get a good grade on your next assignment.